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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

MODIFYING SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN THE CLASSROOM: CASE STUDY REGARDING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN LEARNING IN THE FACE OF EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

REESE H. TODD
Norman, Oklahoma
2003

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MODIFYING SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN THE CLASSROOM:

CASE STUDY REGARDING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN LEARNING IN THE FACE OF EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my colleagues, the classroom teachers everywhere whose belief in their students has made possible transformations in education. They have nurtured the dreams that make the future become the present.

For my granddaughter and her generation, I hope their educational experiences will embrace the differences among them. I hope she and all her classmates not only imagine, but can experience, a world of tolerance, reconciliation, truth, and peace. I hope understanding, justice, and fairness are part of every child's experience growing up.

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ABSTRACT

MODIFYING SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN THE CLASSROOM: CASE STUDY REGARDING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN LEARNING IN THE FACE OF EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

Major Professor: Dr. John J. Choido

Reese H. Todd

Schools are in an awkward position today, balancing the expectations of multiple segments of society with their commitment to educating young persons. State leaders, in an effort to raise the academic achievement in public schools, have implemented a system of prescribed curriculum and assessments. While these reform initiatives have improved some school practices and performances, they have also denied some students access to full participation in the education programs of their schools. In response, teachers engage in practices to bring all their students into a learning environment that respects the cultural pluralism of American society.

Using cross-case analysis, this qualitative study documents the practices of six teachers in a mid-sized urban district as they investigate factors that limit educational opportunities and try to mend a growing fragmentation in their classrooms between students who are academically successful and those who are not. In modifying curriculum, ordinary teachers act on their belief in the democratic ideals of justice and fairness of opportunity to keep alive the hopes and dreams of the students in their community. Their resulting knowledge and insight about teaching and learning contribute

to achieving the goals of citizenship in social studies education and strengthening the quality of education for all.

In studying this group of six teachers, four themes emerge to describe classroom practices to engage all students in learning. Teachers negotiate learning space to include diverse perspectives and cultural pluralism; teachers claim professional space for participating in an educational dialogue; teachers act from a belief in the democratic ideals of justice and fairness in obtaining access to equal opportunities in education for all students; and teachers imagine the legacy of their work lived out in the realization of the hopes and dreams of their students. In all their practices, successful teachers continually engage in processes of knowing, connecting, and imagining to enrich educative experiences for all learners.

MODIFYING SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN THE CLASSROOM: CASE STUDY REGARDING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN LEARNING IN THE FACE OF EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

CHAPTER 1

The Research Problem

Background of the Problem

Schools are in an awkward position today, balancing the expectations of multiple segments of society with their commitment to educating young persons. State leaders, in an effort to raise the academic standards in Oklahoma's public schools, have implemented a system of prescribed curricula and assessments for all K-12 students. With the outcomes clearly defined through the Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) objectives and regular, standard testing of students, schools are graded on their ability to reach these levels of achievement with their students. While these initiatives have improved some school practices and performance, they also deny some students access to full participation in the educational programs of their schools. Even with state standards for achievement, the report cards of schools range from As to Fs. In schools receiving failing scores in successive years, the state department of education prescribes programs administrators and faculty must implement to improve the quality of education for their students.

However, programs designed to meet specific needs may exclude some students from rigorous curriculum. In response teachers engage in practices to bring students back into the learning environment (Fine,1987; Furman, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1999). They try to mend a growing fragmentation in regular classrooms between students who are academically successful and those who are not. Research shows (Nieto, 2000; Ladson-

Billings, 1999; Ogbu, 1994) that students who are unsuccessful academically (typically three out of four in low-achieving schools) are likely to drop out before graduation. When students leave school, many are stepping into a cycle of low paying jobs, substandard, housing, limited access to health care, and a cycle of isolation from opportunities, relationships, and dreams for the future. Today 40% fewer high school graduates have the skills needed to participate in our complex post-industrial society than fifteen years ago. The quality of education has not changed as much as the demand for higher level skills in the work place (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Thus, our focus in this study is on the ways teachers modify the curriculum for student achievement in the process of their education.

Inclusive practices in middle schools are based on cases from ghetto schools of major metropolitan areas (Anyon, 1983; Kozol, 1995) or on exceptional schools such as magnet schools, charter schools, professional schools, or other model schools (Darling-Hammond, 1996). However, in this study, the grassroots practices that bring educational change are viewed in ordinary public school classrooms in a mid-sized city. The stories of teachers, with their struggles and their successes, suggest directions for school change that reflect the many different perspectives of teachers and students in the classroom.

In forums on educational reform, educators discuss questions of democracy and justice as foundations for the changing practices in the classroom (Banks, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Greene, 1988; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1991; Sleeter & Grant, 1988). They seek opportunities to provide equitable access to education for all their students. according to these ideals. In their everyday work, successful teachers build learning communities with supportive relationships with students and colleagues in an academically rigorous environment. To accomplish changes in schools, teachers become

masters of balancing the needs of the array of students with the requirements of their school and community. Their work in the classroom informs the research of this project.

Statement of the Problem

This study addresses the problem of the exclusion of a growing number of students from school learning communities. Demographics of today's public school population show that increasing numbers of students are non-white and non-middle class and have a wide array of overlapping cultural identities. On the other hand, the teachers are predominately female, white, and middle-class. Traditionally, curriculum has been an expression of the teachers' expectations and assumptions based on their own experiences, education, knowledge, and professional preparation. Therefore they may have overlooked students who were culturally different from themselves and left them "to get along the best they could" (Dewey, 1938, p. 37).

Having less engagement with the established curriculum, these "others" may have lower academic performance, conflicted relationships, and a lack of interest in school, according to their teachers (Shields, 1997). They may see themselves as part of more than one cultural group with indistinct or overlapping boundaries. Their relationships and their interests forge bonds that go beyond ethnicity, gender, family income, or academic achievement (Banks, 1993; Calebresy-Barton, 2001; Fine, 1987; Furman, 1998; Obgu, 1992;; Rasool & Curtis, 2000).

Pushed out to the edges of the dominant school culture, students often show resistance to learning and a loss of trust in their teachers (Ogbu, 1992). Calebresy-Barton (2001) quotes two ten-year old girls explaining their poor performance in school. They

could easily do the assignments as shown by their participation in an after-school activity program. However, they refused to do the work in school. Why? "I hate my teacher. I won't learn from her. She'll know I hate her if I don't answer her questions and do her assignments" (p. 908).

Teachers, committed to student success according to the academic standards of their school, work harder to find ways of engaging these students and feel guilty when their efforts do not produce the expected outcomes (Hargreaves, 1994). In fact, some of the fragmentation within the classroom may come from the very practices endorsed by the guidelines of the school district.

Accommodations and classroom practices among students culturally different from their teachers may create boundaries that leave people out rather than bring them together with positive shared experiences. A single curriculum for our pluralistic society discounts the professionalism of the classroom teacher and the relationship between teachers/students. Furthermore, it leaves a curriculum separated from the voices of the community, from the potential richness in cultural knowledge, from relationships of concern for persons and ideas, and from the creativity, flexibility, openness, and imagination needed to live in a changing world.

Purpose of the Study

By documenting the ways that teachers modify the standard curriculum to engage students in their classrooms, we open discussions about policies that are isolating teachers and students from equal access to quality education. The expectations for students to score high on tests of fact and recall, reward those whose backgrounds

support the official knowledge of the texts and standards while devaluing other knowledge (Apple, 1995; Sleeter and Grant, 1988).

Ordinary teachers in moderately performing schools bring knowledge and experience to the question of what contributes to the educational success with their students and, conversely, what is contributing to their low performance. To connect with students who are being left out of successful academic achievement in the current educational system, this study examines teacher practices that invite diverse students into active participation in the learning community. Refocusing the curriculum and instruction to respond to the plurality within the population strengthens the knowledge, skills, and understanding students need for living in a global environment. From the findings in this study, advocates for school change can evaluate policies and programs that will improve the quality of schools as the population becomes more heterogeneous.

The purpose of this study is to find out how teachers are modifying curriculum to engage their culturally mixed students in learning and why they believe they need to make these changes. The tasks of adapting methods for particular learning communities and also teaching for understanding of subject material presents professional classroom educators with great challenges. Knowing about their work, its complexities, and the relationships within the learning community, we can develop curriculum and instruction that encourage learning and foster student success in changing environments. As effective teachers build bridges with the students, classes encounter diverse perspectives of the "others" knowledge, experiences, and understandings.

Research Questions

The primary question of the study asks how the classroom teacher intentionally modifies the standard curriculum to include the diverse experiences and perspectives of both teacher and students in an academically rigorous learning community. To explore this further, the following questions will aid in the development of the research:

- What kinds of learning experiences in the classroom do teachers perceive as inclusive?
- What strategies do teachers employ to encourage academic achievement?
- Are some practices beneficial to both teachers and students?
- Why do educators think they need to make changes while state and national reform programs are being implemented?
- What role do teachers have in school reform policies?

Asking these questions assumes that teachers believe that some students are not included in the curriculum and that teachers want to education to be otherwise. The study considers the issue of the discrepancy between the practices in the classroom and the ideals of public education.

The study is situated in the school reform/restructuring movement as it responds to the cultural diversity in the social fabric of our society. It draws upon work in the field of multicultural education for perspectives on race, ethnicity, and gender with attention to the voices of educators contributing to the dialogue on just and caring relationships. Classroom observation notes the use of collaborative projects, narratives, dialogue, and problem-solving activities that are inclusive of these "other" middle school students.

The subject of the study is the classroom teacher and her/his decisions in using

curriculum with students in a social studies classroom. This study recognizes the teacher's voice and its essential role in developing understanding and collaboration among diverse students. As Goodson (in Hargreaves, 1991) has described,

> The teacher's voice articulates the teacher's life and its purposes. To understand teaching therefore, either as a researcher, administrator, or colleague, it is not enough merely to witness the behavior, skills, and actions of teaching. One must also listen to the voice of the teacher, to the person it expresses and to the purposes it articulates. Failure to understand the teacher's voice is failure to understand the teacher's teaching. Our priority should be not merely to listen to the teacher's voice, but also to sponsor it as a priority within our teacher development work (p. 249).

Significance of the Study

Choosing between what teachers know is good educational practice for their students may conflict with the demands of policy makers who have a political and economic agenda. It is taking the heart out of teaching (Hargreaves, 1993) and taking teachers out of the classroom. Identifying ways to reconcile this conflict of interest opens a dialogue with the potential for redefining the school learning environment. The ideals of democracy are put into practice when all students have access to an equitable and just school education.

Being included in the decisions of the learning process, pursuing real issues, and searching for innovative solutions to life concerns keep students engaged in education. They learn the skills to become participators in a democratic society where the people's

voices are heard. The larger issues of society draw on educated, creative, and imaginative citizens to sustain this multi-cultural community. While some students have benefited from recent educational reforms seeking to raise academic standards, subtle exclusionary policies and practices are separating some students from equal access to quality education, making them invisible in the learning process and unprepared for participating in the life of their communities.

In the increasingly diverse classrooms the contrasting expectations of teacher and groups of students may impede the learning process. So teachers work harder to maintain control and restructure classroom activities. By opening dialogue with students, teachers can enrich existing curriculum with stories from multiple perspectives. Themes common to human experiences build bridges to community and memory making. With more common memory, stories of understanding begin to be added to the classroom experience in ways that promote democracy, justice, care, and rigorous scholarship. We create community by recognizing the multiple variations in school cultures and celebrating the differences woven through a foundation of shared beliefs and experiences (Noddings, 1992; Pinar, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1988).

This study contributes to the body of academic knowledge by describing practices that value the richness and strength of many voices in our communities over a single–perspective curriculum. The interdependence of those in the learning community can be compared to the greater sustainability of natural habitats when greater complexity and diversity exist. Single species habitats risk extinction to one disease or hazard. The weakness of Dutch elms to blight destroyed one whole segment of urban forest while mixed species forests adapted to the changed environment. Similarly, single perspective

communities are vulnerable to destructive behaviors, ideas, and beliefs without the balance of representative voices of justice and care.

Building an inclusive educative community is at the heart of the reasons teachers modify curriculum in their classrooms. Teachers believe that students have a right to learn (Darling-Hammond, 1997). They also believe that achieving the goals of education is worth fighting for(Fullan, 1993). The case study then focuses on the practices employed to achieve this environment.

Limitations of the Study

1. My experience in the classroom over nearly three decades contributes perspective to this research. I bring my experiences in elementary and middle school gifted education and social studies education, learning skills classes at community college, and a strong commitment to issues of democracy and justice in the local and global community.
2. Combined with this experience and perspective is an acknowledgement of my feminist outlook and my life of middle class privilege as a part of the racial majority in the United States during the second half of the 20th century.
3. The study's setting in a southwestern urban school district presents only one view of diversity and is limited by its sample size and local characteristics. Yet, the choice of case study design in itself limits the generalizing of findings to other schools and their unique features.
4. Furthermore, the impact of a large military training facility in the community sets it apart from other schools of similar size and composition. In addition to bringing a mobile population to the community, the structured and hierarchical nature of military life on the

post may influence the decision-making process in the school district which employs teachers and administrators with military experience as active duty, retired, or dependents. I recognize these limitations in pursuing the questions of this study.

Definitions

In this study the term culture extends beyond traditional characteristics of ethnicity, race, gender, class, and income (Rubenstein, 1992) into the places of people's lives where such categories diffuse and begin to overlap with one another. Adaptations and revisions of traditional meanings redefine cultures as people share a different set of meanings for the symbols and practices of their everyday lives (Knox & Marston, 2000). The idea of culture moves from "a sense of whole integrated, self-contained social group" into a "highly mutable, flexible, [community] open to shaping from many directions at once" (In McDowell, Marcus, 1998, p 6). In this process people confront their daily environments using inherited patterns of believing and behaving to help interpret daily life, but "culture does not simply flow through passive individuals like water through a pipe" (Sleeter and Grant, 1988, p. 186). The "cultural turn" (McDowell, 2000) of research studies reflects an emphasis on questions of meaning and relationships, shared experiences and common memory more than race or ethnicity or homeland. The notion of culture as a flexible, changing community of persons describes the situation of the students in this study. Traditionally defined groups are replaced with bi-cultural and pluralistic cultural beliefs, values, and practices that affect the dynamics of learning in the middle school classroom.

Curriculum in this study refers to the myriad of processes and experiences that

teachers and students weave into the content material as they become involved in learning. As Dewey (1938) suggests, the process of education considers the whole child and is not fully understood if we focus on a curriculum that is either subject-centered or child-centered. Rather, curriculum is multi-faceted and is shaped by the people and environment that comprise the learning experience. Doll (1993) further describes curriculum not as the "course-to-be-run" but as a process of "development, dialogue, inquiry, and transformation" (p. 13). He draws on Pinar's idea of curriculum, *currere* (*to run),* that "emphasizes the person and process of running the course and the experience an individual undergoes in learning" (p. 13). These perspectives on curriculum suggest the scope of the work of the teacher to establish and maintain an appropriate learning environment.

Summary of Chapter 1

Teachers are situated in the position of carrying out an official curriculum established by those outside the classroom, even when it excludes an increasing number of students from success in the processes of education. Some teachers find ways to modify this curriculum with practices that encourage a "positive endorsement" of their students' cultural perspectives. With less restrictive content criteria in middle school social studies programs, some teachers make learning space for dialogue about differences within the contexts of their community. They invite an exchange of stories and experiences that contribute to an inclusive, broad knowledge and understanding among the learning community rather than limiting public school education to fact/recall/memorization of official knowledge without room for conversation.

Recognizing the variety of overlapping cultures within a middle school context gives teachers and students opportunities to be part of a school reform movement that de-emphasizes traditional boundaries and encourages flexible creation of new cultures. In middle school classrooms, young adolescents are on the edge of maturation, trying to define themselves and claim an identity of their own in relation to the cultural environments in which they live. The ways teachers modify the curriculum and relate to these students recognizes and values the very heart of teaching. Teachers can remain in classrooms, students can pursue their dreams, and democracy can be practiced in public schools.

In the following chapter is a review of literature relating to four factors that may influence the decisions of educators about appropriate curriculum for their students. Democracy, justice, care, and academic achievement have shaped individuals and societies in the past and continue to define relationships in the public sphere of schools today. School reform measures spark a broad range of responses from educators, both theorists and practitioners, as they seek the best education for their diverse educational communities.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

The process of determining the appropriate curriculum in a particular classroom is influenced by a complex array of reforms that emerge from the changing climate of the society as a whole. The frequent fluctuations in the political, economic, and social environment continually shape proposed reforms in American public schools. These reflect conservative-liberal swings of the political pendulum, economic ebbs and flows of prosperity and recession, and attitudes toward elitism and public welfare within communities. During periods of economic prosperity, conservative leadership, and emphasis on individual success, society's institutions strive to maintain traditional standards. Periods of economic depression, civil unrest, and political chaos are more likely to see sweeping changes in the established systems. Reform measures thrive on getting rid of the old and bringing in the new to improve existing policies and practices.

In curriculum reform, movements characterized by creativity, cooperation, innovation, and student participation are often challenged by reforms supporting subject-content standards, school traditions, competition, and uniformity in structures and practices (Zais, 1979). While one group decries the lack of a unified common curriculum, the other laments the loss of individualized student interests (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). How these beliefs are manifest in society creates both the strength and fragmentation of the democratic system and the schools within it.

Along with reforms, teachers' perceptions of democracy, justice, and equality influence ways they modify curriculum in their classrooms(Darling-Hammond, 1997; Sleeter & Grant, 1988). In the past two decades, more voices representing the multiple cultural perspectives of the student population have called attention to the needs for curriculum reforms relevant to a culturally diverse nation (Ogbu, 1992; Fletcher, 2001; Doll, 1999). At the same time there are voices advocating additional standardized testing procedures and assessments to measure effective, efficient, and successful school programs(*Nation at Risk*, 1983; *No Child Left Behind, 2002*). The choices complicate the selection and modifications of curriculum materials and practices to uphold principles of democracy, justice, and equality in American schools today.

In the following sections, I consider four critical aspects of curriculum decision- making among professional teachers as they plan and carry out educative experiences with their students on a daily basis. These include 1) democracy, 2) justice and equity, 3) relationships, and 4) academic achievement. Teacher beliefs about democracy and justice provide a foundation for their choices about building relationships and pursuing in depth academic inquiry.

Democracy

The first influence on the way teachers modify curriculum comes from the foundations of democracy in our nation. The ideals of a democratic state form the basis of the American system of government, the values in society, and the practices in schools. While this form of democracy does not mean agreement of all members of the society, it does require from its citizens an openness to discuss

and debate their differences in public forums (Greene, 1988). The exchange of knowledge and understanding among informed citizens may bring to light strong feelings and deep-seeded differences. Yet, a strength of a democracy is the acceptance of diversity (Greene, 1988; Sleeter and Grant, 1988; Banks, 1995) and the expression of these differences is both a right of the other person and "a means of enriching one's own life-experience" (Dewey in Gouinlock, 1994, p.270).

Dewey continues to describe this strength of democracy in the value of educative experiences that promote a "better quality of human experience [and a] regard for individual freedom and decency and kindliness of human relations" (Dewey in Gouinlock, 1994, p.17). The value of an experience is judged by what it leads toward, not as an end in itself. Educative experiences include an awareness of others and a knowledge of one's surroundings. They are part of a process that promotes further investigation. The ends-in-view gives direction to decisions that uphold the moral and ethical values as society changes in response to the consequences of choices of its people and environment. However, Dewey recognized the reality of people living together engaging in experiences, behaviors, directions of inquiry that are mis-educative when they have the "effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience." (Dewey, 1938, p.11).

Public school education is part of this educative process in the American democracy. Falk (1999) notes that "each of us sends our children to school in good faith that the school will teach them" (p. 161) and that the right to learn will

be given to every child. W.E.B. Dubois (quoted in Darling-Hammond, 1997) explains this right to learn in our schools:

> Not only what we believe but what we do not believe; not only what our leaders say, but what the leaders of other groups and nations and the leaders of other centuries have said...to give our children such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is and what its greater minds have thought it might be (p. 11).

To honor this contract with our democratic society and accomplish the tasks of insuring educative experiences for our children, we have engaged in debates about what will make the best quality of experience in schools. As Dewey noted, "it would not be a sign of health [in our democracy] if such an important social interest as education were not also an arena of struggles, practical and theoretical" (Dewey quoted in Gouinlock, 1994, p.3).

Dewey (1938) was writing to teachers about the conflicts of traditional and progressive education. Democracy required more than docile students in a classroom, receptive to transmission of knowledge from the teacher to student minds, the *tabla rasa*. Traditional education had not included the uniqueness of the learner in the educational structure. Progressive education, Dewey suggested, focused on experiences, creativity, and imagination of the students in a learning process that tied the present to both the past and future. The critical thinking of this system encouraged democratic ideals of civic participation, problem-solving, and social interaction. It was a holistic approach to education integrating the

interests of the students, the content of the disciplines, and the commitment to educate children for living in society. The freedom of the individual pursuit of knowledge and wisdom was held in check and balance with the consequences of those actions and how they might be affecting the other members of the school community.

Democracy in practice does not remain fixed, with guaranteed outcomes for all times and all conditions. Rather democracy is understood in transactions in the community, among those living shared lives (Greene, 1995, p.62).

Understanding of democracy and our commitment to it as a way to live together comes from putting the ideals into practice (Darling-Hammond, 1997). She suggests, students develop social understanding as they actually "participate in a pluralistic community, talking together, making decisions and coming to understand multiple views" (p. 30). These experiences honor individual freedoms and the democratic community.

Democracy at work teaches skills of respect, discussion, disagreement, and understanding of diversity. Students learn "to think well and independently, to use what they learn to produce high-quality work, to take initiative, and to work effectively together"(Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 5). She offers as a model example New York City's International High School, an interdependent learning community where educative experiences are responsive to student learning. With the sound of many languages, often limited English, students are in a physics class, clustered around tables, gesturing, talking, manipulating materials, sketching, making mathematical notations. Teachers also participate in this

activity based curriculum, encouraging students to examine ideas and test their views against reason, evidence, and alternative perspectives. Working in collaborative teams, teachers share learning/teaching strategies and review practice. Darling-Hammond borrows Friere's (1970) description of the democratic learning community as one that hums with the sound of purposeful learning that is both rigorous and joyous. She suggests that this is "education as democracy that gives students access to social understanding as they participate in a pluralistic community, talking together, making decisions, and coming to understand multiple views "(Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 30).

Sizer (1984) contrasts this model of a democratic learning experience with many schools he studied where dialogue is strikingly absent, and opportunities to challenge ideas in a systematic and logical way is limited. Democracy in education is hidden in authoritarian and coercive forms of social control and social stratification. This is the situation professional teachers seek to mediate as they seek the best curriculum for engaging their students in educative experiences in public schools based on the democratic ideals of our nation.

Justice

A second factor influencing ways teachers modify curriculum is that of justice. Teaching is not just a job, but a life commitment (Hargreaves, 1994) that manifests itself in ethical behaviors in relationships with one another and in the pursuit of knowledge. While justice does not always mean equal treatment, it does mean fair treatment (Jarrow, 1999). Therefore, for teachers to act with justice and

fairness they must recognize the uniqueness of individual experiences, traditions, beliefs, and talents, and then respond to those differences.

Teachers, however, do not function separated from their communities. Schools reflect the cultural values and traditions of the society, so when injustice becomes the accepted value in a community, injustice also comes into the classroom (Dewey, 1916). Confronting unfair, oppressive, and inhumane treatment (Freire, 1970), often prejudiced by race, ethnicity, gender, or social class, is a task involving the larger community.

In our own nation, communities and schools across the nation struggled with questions of justice and racial integration in the socially turbulent 1960s and 1970s. Until Brown v. Board of Education (1954), students in schools were legally separated according to race. Classroom teachers supported this community value in separate schools: Black teachers in Black schools, White teachers in White schools. When the courts took up the issue of equity and fairness, the justices declared that separate schools were not providing equal access to education and that schools should be integrated racially.

The implementation of this court decision, challenged teachers in schools across the nation. Kohl (1994), a white teacher in a black school in Harlem, describes his experience in 1967 with 36 children, and their antagonistic voices declaring, "I won't learn from you." In Texas, angry minority students fought the symbols of injustice by destroying all the class pictures of white graduates at North Dallas High School 1965-1971. Racial integration was not peaceful in the classroom, nor was it just.

But gradual social changes brought efforts for schools to be more culturally sensitive. Sleeter and Grant (1988) note the development of multicultural curriculum in the 1960s and early1970s. They identify several stages of this development, beginning with curriculum to increase awareness of cultural differences. Greater understanding was the goal of the human relations approach which led to a single group studies approach focusing on one race, one gender, one ethnic group. Not until the later 1970s and 1980s did redesigned multicultural education begin to celebrate human diversity and equal opportunity. It began to reflect the "concerns of diverse cultural groups with a different orientation to the whole education process" (Sleeter and Grant, 1988, p.175) and to create education that "better served the interests of all groups of people, visionary, and grounded in everyday experience."

The new curriculum meant more than adding a lesson here and there or even choosing a culturally different focus. Multicultural education involved social action and social reconstruction (Sleeter and Grant, 1988; Banks, 1991) and is continuing efforts to " to close the gap between Western democratic ideals of equality and justice and societal practices that contradict those ideals" (Banks, 1989, p. 34*)*. All these approaches can still be found in practices in our schools to serve the interests of diverse cultural groups. But *what* is taught is only part of the picture of justice, equality, and fairness. How is it taught? Are all students engaged in learning (Singer, 1991) or are some silently pushed away (Fine, 1987) by too much teacher talk or exclusionary talk? Issues of justice and fairness in the classroom can be seen in both text and talk in the following study.

Bigler's (2000) study focused on the text and talk in literature classes to compare two classrooms for the level of trust and engagement of students in learning. In one, the teacher selects all the reading material from what she believes students need to know, from the traditional English canon. Nearly all have white male protagonists. Spelling, grammar, and sentence structure dominate the criteria for writing activities. Questions about literature focus on meanings of words and comprehension of the storyline.

In the other class, literature includes selections from multiple cultures and multiple perspectives. Questions about literature begin with students' experiences and seek thematic connections with the literature. Spelling, grammar, and sentence structure take second place to the expression of ideas, though subsequent revisions address these issues. The second class invites "cultural and linguistic diversity into the classroom" (p.1) through a multicultural context. Cultural identity is affirmed; alternate knowledge is valued; and trust and justice find support.

In the first class teacher talk, teacher direction, and teacher answers dominated conversation. In a lesson on the "Road Not Taken," the teacher explained, "This represents life" . . . and alternate questions were brushed off with the comment, "No. That's reading to much into the poem" (p.11). In the second class, the teacher chose multicultural texts and questions about a poem began with "What can you tell me about the narrator?" and later " Why might parents want to take the child who is extremely ill back to Puerto Rico where he

was born?" Student questions received teacher follow up and comment from other students.

Bigler (2000) concludes that when the cultural and linguistic capital of the school is reconfigured in such a way as to allow students to draw more successfully on their own resources, greater success may be achieved with children who typically perform more poorly in schools"(p. 4). Friendly space is also critical space for " establishing the trust needed for non-mainstream students to consent to learning" (Bigler, p.7). Otherwise, the dialogue is silenced, participation in education is closed, and justice in the classroom is averted.

Merrett (2001), working from a geography education perspective, also believes that how we teach is as important as what we teach if we are going to help create a more egalitarian society. He questions the goals of the Geography Standards Project (1994) which seek to prepare "internationally competitive students" in favor of concentrating on preparing "internationally *cooperative* students who value social justice and tolerance of others" (p. 207). Noting the work of Kropotkin, a Russian geographer of the 1850s, Merrett contends that such a social justice position has a long tradition in geography. Describing the importance of geography, Kropotkin wrote, "With its focus on travel, attractive landscapes, and faraway places, geography was the best subject to awaken the desire of knowing [in children]. Once a teacher has sparked student interest in foreign lands and people, geography has the ability to teach us...that we are all brethren whatever our nationality"(Kropotkin [1855] quoted in Merrett, p. 207). Kropotkin used geographic education to promote peace and cooperation during a

time of rampant imperialism, racism, and nationalism and, today, Merrett challenges us to teach geography that addresses socially relevant issues in a rigorous fashion.

Singer (1997) involves students in rigorous inquiry using resources from the community as social studies curriculum. Critical evaluation of information supports practical justice and democracy as students learn to evaluate information by asking about 1)the evidence presented, 2) the perspective of the informant, 3) the connections to other information, 4) the suppositions or assumptions underlying the work, and finally 5) the relevance to students' knowledge and experiences. These resources open opportunities for paying attention to the needs and interests of students and for academic achievement in the classroom.

For teachers to modify curriculum for justice in the classroom, "Education within a pluralistic society . . . should help students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they will need to participate in civic action to make society more equitable and just." (Banks, 1989, quoted in Rasool, 1991, p. 24).

Maintaining justice in the educative community invokes the professional educator's sense of moral and ethical behavior in classroom interaction. Awareness of the obstacles for justice in learning connects with research concerning ways teachers relate with students, other teachers, and their content material. Paying attention to the uniqueness of the situation and its participants gives direction to the professional teacher's decisions for creating a positive, inclusive learning environment.

Relationships

A third factor in ways teachers modify curriculum is based on relationships and an ethic of care. Teachers get into the teaching profession because of this ethic of care and of wanting to make a difference (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Falk, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994). Their behaviors in the classroom testify to this belief as they spend countless hours and dollars to provide the best education for their students in the face of national criticism (Berliner and Biddle, 1995; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993; Falk, 2000; Grant and Sleeter, 1988). Furthermore, kids do better in a climate where people pay attention to who they are and what is important to them (Noddings, 1992). Ironically, the move to create a more rigorous curriculum in the 1960s and 1970s by consolidating small high schools, led to a loss of this sense of connection among students whose teachers no longer knew their names, their families, their talents, or their dreams (Noddings, 1992). Professional teachers do care deeply about students, but the manner of expressing this care may be interpreted as demeaning, antagonistic, or disrespectful in translation across cultural boundaries. Tatum (1997) found that students whose stories are excluded from the classroom seek other ways to express their beliefs and claim their identity in relation to their teachers and peers. In surveys that ask students what qualities are found in a good teachers (Shields, 2000), students identify teachers who respect students, who care and understand, who enjoy teaching, who make the subject interesting, and who explain the ideas well.

When students and teachers recognize the importance of these qualities, they are describing a reciprocal relationship of trust and respect in learning together. The roles of teacher and student can be interchanged in the process of inquiry as each gives attention to the knowledge the other offers. In this type of experience, teachers are modeling cooperation and collaboration skills for living in a democratic and just society. They are also paying attention to sustaining a learning community by inviting the participation of people in the situation. Such participation plants seeds of understanding and contributes to the school climate which can help or hinder the growth and development of both students and teachers (Hargreaves, 1994). Noddings (1992) notes the importance of interactions between teachers and students in affirming educative experiences and encouraging respect and understanding. Students may not realize what an impact they can have on the educational experience by their involvement in the learning activities.

Teachers' interactions with colleagues can counteract the isolation and fragmentation of schools divided organizationally by grade levels or by departments or ideologically by school politics (Hargreaves, 1994). Some schools further separate teachers by gender, ethnicity, college affiliations, or social class. Taking time to develop mutually supportive relationships is useful in reflecting on current practices and envisioning future possibilities while providing affirmation in periods of stress. Furthermore, teachers' modeling cooperation in the learning community offers students a mirror for approaching their own diversity with confidence.

In addition to relationships among persons, ideas connect in ways that create rich, new knowledge and understandings. Noddings (1992) notes that not every person has the same intense passion for mathematics as she does. So, those who love literature can learn some mathematics and delve deeply into literature with their time and energies. Mathematics can be explored from the perspective of its relationship to literature or through secondary relationships through the arts. Then working from a perspective of collaboration among learners, acceptance of alternative ideas gives space for rigorous study, for reconsidering previous thoughts in different contexts, for critical reflection both personally and in community. Building relationships across disciplines and among people sharing different knowledge creates a new dimension for imaginative, intellectual growth (Doll, 1993). Ideas connect to the stories and experiences of those participating in education and the generation of new connections.

Opportunities for exploring these new dimensions can exist within the classroom curriculum. However, traditional success is generally defined by white, middle-class values and beliefs, even though increasing numbers of students in public school are children of color (Anyon, 1995). The task of building relationships among students different from their teachers, often means that students accommodate these values into their own experiences or assimilate into the dominant culture of the school to be successful (Ogbu, 1992).

Another group of students may resist the primary values of the school culture and reject reciprocal, positive interactions with teachers and other students (Ogbu, 1992). They also refuse to participate in the learning experiences that

connect them with common human experiences across cultures. They achieve failure by rejecting teachers' views of success (McDermott, 1987). Ogbu (1992) has described these as the involuntary minority, those whose ancestors or current family members have experienced oppression in the dominant culture.

Among these classroom resistors are those who hide their cooperation and learning, by clowning around or secretly studying, so they will not be ostracized by their peers in the neighborhood. Others openly engage in conflict with teachers and peers as a manner of pride and cultural identity different from the school. These generally drop out of school as adolescents, separating themselves from the part of society that controls the jobs, the wages, the opportunities for economic independence. For example, Flores-Gonzales (2001) reports that only 62% of Latinos have completed high school, putting them at a disadvantage in relating to the larger community.

The education in a democratic, pluralistic society can be nurtured in schools when differences are valued. Bellah (1985) suggests a community of memory and hope is one with shared experiences and visions over time. Furman (1998) considers the community of others, those outside the circle of privilege, joined by their differences rather than their similarities and negotiating what norms constitute the center of this group. Shields (1997) calls this a "community of otherness" and focuses on the strengths of the diversity, even within school groups that seem homogeneous. Barth (1990) describes a learning community with shared goals of school achievement in spite of cultural differences.

Sleeter & Grant (1988) find students have more avenues for expression of their values and less need to resist learning when the school culture mirrors the multiple cultural identities of students. The strength in the classroom comes from building respectful, trusting relationships by the inclusion of more persons in the processes of learning based on the principles of a democratic and just society.

Democracy and justice, understood as one common core of knowledge, de-emphasizes the importance of diverse viewpoints (Fletcher, 2000). Seeking a more unified educational experience for students, educators determine the most appropriate curriculum that is considered best for all students (Hirsch, 1990). The choice of essential knowledge values the continuity of ideas across diverse groups of students, in a manner that is planned, efficient, and tested as effective for its times. Often referred to as traditional education, it values order and control in the classroom and the assimilation of cultural differences into one American system. Critics (Giroux, 1987) note the tendency for categorization of people and ideas in tightly bounded boxes. Dualistic thinking rather than networks of multiple points of connections sets up a system of power and control. Some have privilege in society; others do not (Sleeter & Grant, 1988). The values of those of privilege are imposed on those without privilege and taught through the official school curriculum (Apple, 1995). Those whose understanding of democracy brings unity of beliefs, values, and thinking provide teachers with an established curriculum and tolerate little variation in its implementation. Multicultural educators (Ogbu, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2001) and women in education (hooks, 1990) have worked toward reform of this type school curriculum because it silences "others"

that include racial and ethnic minorities, women, the poor, learning challenged, and any others with non-standard perspectives.

Learning and Academic Achievement

The fourth factor in ways teachers modify curriculum comes from their perspective on successful learning and academic achievement. Textbooks, standardized tests, and formalized course objectives provide one measure of academic achievement and an overall continuity within subject-centered curriculum (Goals, 2000; National Coucil for Geographic Education, 1994; National Council for the Social Studies, 1993). Some limit the extent of the work of the school to its academic curriculum, and subsequently measure student success by the mastery of this core of knowledge (Hirsch, 1987). Others broaden the scope of curriculum to include the experiences within the school environment that influence life-learning and academic achievement (Pinar, 1995; Zais, 1979). With this approach to curriculum in the classroom, the content of study in the classroom and the relationships in the environment join together into a holistic, interconnected process of learning for teachers and students. The discussions of curriculum offer several perspectives on the questions of what is going to be taught in schools and how it is taught for achieving the goals of successful schools.

State of Curriculum

In 1983, the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education attempted to "define the problems afflicting American education" (Gardner, 1983) and made recommendations "in light of the urgent need for

improvement"(p. 23). These recommendations in the areas of content, standards and expectations, time, teaching, and leadership and fiscal support gave impetus to the development of national, state and local standards in academic disciplines (Goals 2000; National Geography Standards; National Council for Social Studies; Oklahoma Priority Academic Skills). With the adoption of these standards, school districts appoint curriculum committees responsible for aligning what is taught in the district with the state and national standards (Local Public School Curriculum Guide for Social Studies, 2000). In our state, the committees review textbooks from the state adoption list, and select materials that support their district's curriculum guidelines. The next step in the process is the use of this curriculum in the classroom. Sleeter and Grant (1988) found that most teachers select sections and chapters from the textbooks that reflect their own interests and cultural understandings, avoiding issues of controversy, disagreement, cultural diversity, regardless of the diverse perspective offered in the curriculum guide, the text or its ancillaries. The recent National Education Association report (2002) shows that more than 80% of teachers are white, female, and middle class so their selection of content tends to support traditional knowledge. Darling-Hammond (1997) notes the selection of what is taught is also strongly influenced by emphasis on test results that show academic achievement in the school, resulting in continued, or increased, distribution of public school resources.

Apple (1995) identifies this as the official knowledge, the body of knowledge representing traditional western European perspective of history, culture, literature, science, and human development. The extent to which teachers

decide to deviate from this format varies within schools and even within districts (Barth, 1991). One compromise for teachers is to use the basic textbook as an organizational tool for the course content at a particular grade level, adding material relevant to their students and the cultural environment. Abandoning the text and constructing curriculum from the unique experiences and interests of the learning community (Pinar, 1995) is a less common choice, although in schools with inadequate numbers of books, teachers have little choice. In some instances with classes staffed by non-professionals, the decisions are not well informed. Yet, one single curriculum cannot define the best education in each unique situation for teachers' and students' learning (Banks, 1991; Barth,1991; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Greene, 1993; Pinar 1995; Sleeter and Grant,1988).

Shields (1997, 2000) reports that even well-informed teachers may hold inaccurate perceptions of their learning community. In her study she describes ways teachers misread the importance of education to Navajo families and were unaware not only of the cultural obstacles but also the support for school among students. Variations on the standard curriculum in this situation still did not provide the quality of meaningful education for the students in the classroom.

Barth (1991) supports changes in curriculum that address the concerns and experiences of particular school communities. However, the school climate's tolerance in supporting a community of differences affects the level of risk teachers will take in creating lessons with their students. Contributing to this decision is the degree of isolation, guilt, and time commitment required (Hargreaves, 1994) versus the support among teachers from collegiality and

authentic communication (Barth, 1991). The learning community is more likely to investigate ideas beyond the official curriculum when teachers and students work in an environment open to a pedagogy of inquiry (Greene, 1993). In such places, curriculum includes all the activities that go on at the school, the story of the whole person not just the subject matter (Pinar, 1995).

Sound of Silence

Critical theorists including Furman (1998) and Fine (1987) have considered the issue of teachers and students being left out of the dialogue concerning curriculum development. Lack of support, trust, authority to pursue authentic investigation brings about a silencing of both teachers and students. Barth (1991) has noted when teachers do not speak out, they leave a void that attracts external experts who claim the power of decision making to fix the schools (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Nation at Risk, 1983).

This kind of reform leaves teachers without the excitement of finding their own solutions to school problems or the authority to implement the ideas. Teachers do not have space to pursue their own vision. Pinar (1995) uses the image of postal workers delivering someone else's mail to teachers delivering official curriculum to the classroom. Being able to take the risks associated with creativity and transformation makes learning vibrant for both teachers and students. It reclaims for schools the power of the vision of a good school. (Barth 1991; Fullan 1999; Hargreaves, 1996.) Having this direction, Pinar notes, "A school that proclaims its own visions achieves and deserves some measure of

diplomatic immunity from random prescriptions from the outside"(Pinar, p.152). Official knowledge can be negotiated within the learning community.

Another area where the sound of silence occurs in school classrooms is in the social relationships and social meanings (Erickson/Schultz in Pinar, 1995, p. 184). In addition to the teacher/student interaction are the peer relationships and the ways in which the gaze of other students can change the gaze of the teacher and the trust and legitimacy of the learning task.

One study of conversations with middle school teachers and students describes classroom conversations that silence students and breech the trust in classrooms (Collins, 1995). Collins found teacher comments such as "we'll wait while you find the answer" accompanied by bored looks of classmates, silenced the efforts of the student to participate in the learning activities. Other students deriding a classmate's comment with " that doesn't make any sense" accompanied by negative non-verbal signals establishes those students outside the learning community as the "others" whose words and actions carry little influence. Silencing perpetuates the status quo of the official curriculum and separates further the subject material from the experiences of learners (Erikson/Schultz, 1995; Fine, 1987).

Conversation and Dialogue

The sounds of silence can be overcome by those who are willing to take a public stand for authentic dialogue. Miller (1982) characterizes "the sound of silence breaking [as] harsh, resonant, soft, battering, small, chaotic, furious, terrified, triumphant. The tentative first murmurs are becoming a chorus"(p.11).

From this cacophony emerges the public space needed to share ideas and preserve freedom (Greene, 1993) . The freedom of possibilities in learning and continual re-creation and re-forming of self and community is part of the process of engaging students in learning. Barth (1991) recalls his most profound learning seemed to occur when he was out on a limb but, he notes, "schools seem to launder out risk taking" (p. 164). Opportunities for stepping-out-on-a-limb have a place in the learning process to encourage curriculum dialogue.

Partnerships in Learning

Opening the classroom to such academic exploration, also opens opportunities for unexpected and unofficial directions of learning (Doll, 1993; Pinar ,1995;). Doll's (1993) work examines perspectives on curriculum and notes that a teacher actively responding to the students' questions may deviate significantly from the standard curriculum, yet in this pursuit rigorous and rich learning may take place. Drawing on investigations in chaos and systems theory, he explores ways related ideas begin to re-occur in different disciplines and an integrated system of knowledge begins to grow within the school classroom. In this ever-changing environment, teachers and students learn from one another across boundaries of traditional disciplines.

Kohl (1988) describes his year in Harlem with sixth grade students as just such an experience. At the beginning of the year he worked with the sixth-grade curriculum "as written in the NYC syllabus, ignoring as long as possible the contradictions inherent in such a task. . . for the next six weeks I tried to use the books assigned and teach the official curriculum. It was hopeless" (p. 20, 26).

Then Alvin asked, "Can't we study the language we are talking about instead of grammar and spelling?" Kohl reports, "We started out talking about words and ended up with life itself (p. 34)...a dialogue between the children and myself was developing" (p. 44).

Doll (1993) describes this kind of shared learning and inquiry as a way of recognizing the value of knowledge in the experiences of the students. Having a climate where learning is "rigorous, relational, rich, and recursive" opens the classroom to possibilities for critical thinking and the development of meaningful learning.

The Environment Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Community Atlas Project is another example of learning with curriculum modified for student experiences and inquiry. In a model project from Stillwater High School in Minnesota (2001) students studied the effect of urban sprawl in their community on the quality of life for people and the environment. With this un-official curriculum, students developed skills of geography mapping, analysis of data, interviewing residents, observing changes, and presenting learning in an accurate and academically appealing manner on a website. The resulting knowledge came from the students' own investigation of a place of special interest. Their particular situation and perspectives on their community invited active participation in this curriculum uniquely adapted to these students.

Summary

Understandings about democracy and justice provide a context for the decisions teachers make in using curriculum with their students in their

classrooms. Curriculum choices can be a means for meeting requirements of the district and state and measuring the acquisition of knowledge by the students using established tests. It can also be viewed in the broad scope of learning experiences and relationships within the school community. Professional, knowledgeable teachers engage in the complex tasks of connecting students with meaningful learning. They balance traditional academic disciplines with an openness to new knowledge and understandings, inviting inquiry that contributes to the growth of the student in a democratic and just society.

The following chapter describes the methodology of this study. Interviews and observations with classroom teachers are framed within narrative inquiry guidelines. These interviews focus on the stories and experiences of those selected for this case study over two semesters of observations in a junior high school. This qualitative design uses narrative conversations with teachers about their perceptions of the learning environment. Informal talks with students give another perspective to the experiences in the classroom and the interactions of the school community. School documents and field texts complement the interviews and observations in investigating the ways teachers modify curriculum to reach their goals for educative practices with diverse student population. In-school observations extending over two semesters provide descriptions of the context of the school experiences. From these teaching/learning stories of school experiences, common themes emerge and form a framework for future curriculum reforms in middle school classrooms.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

This study emerges from a deep commitment to recognizing the importance of the work of classroom teachers and the relationships they develop with students in the learning environment. The successful teachers combine traditional methods with creative, non-traditional strategies to engage all their students in meaningful education offered in the community's public schools. To gain perspective on the role of the teachers in a time of national school reforms, this will be a qualitative research study using the case study method. "A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and the meaning for those involved" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

Even with current initiatives for school reform and policy changes, too many reluctant students are pushed away from education and do not finish high school. The reluctant students are not defined primarily by ethnicity, gender, class or academic ability; they do not qualify for special programs. Yet, for many, learning activities in the structured format of the curriculum bear little connection to their own experiences and little incentive for academic achievement. With students' failures, teachers suffer because their work centers on the success of their students. To understand how teachers act as change agents in schools in America's culturally diverse communities, this study centers on the everyday practices in the classroom. It is a case study of six teachers in an ordinary junior high school and their work with their students (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Grant & Sleeter, 1988; Merriam, 1998).

By listening to teachers describe ways they are modifying curriculum and instruction, this study recognizes the importance of their work in engaging a varied community in successful

learning. As Baruth and Manning(1992) noted, "Effective teachers already possess the appropriate knowledge, attitudes, and skills to create a classroom climate that promotes positive intercultural interactions" (p. 111). Teachers, acting on these beliefs, change the learning dynamics in classrooms and can positively influence ties between overall school reform initiatives and the work in the classroom.

Today, cultural identities overlap in ways that have altered the work of the classroom teacher. The changes in communities across the United States have redefined traditional boundaries based on ethnicity, gender, race, class, or academic ability (Anzaldua, 1988; Banks, 1994; McDowell, 2001). As a result, the varied experiences of teachers and students who have been outside the traditional mainstream thinking of public education have an opportunity to influence classroom practices (Furman, 1994; Shields, 2000). Documenting meaningful interactions that are taking place in the margins of the structured curriculum opens public education to the richness of multiple perspectives.

During my teaching career, encompassing more than 25 years, some of these non-majority group students have found a place in the learning community. These included a group of sixth grade boys in a remedial math class in rural setting, some high IQ students in a gifted education program in a suburban setting, several socially inept students involved in significant research projects in an urban school, and community college students overcoming high school failures.

To arrive at an understanding of these interactions, I have turned to the methods of qualitative research to select the participants, derive the data, and validate the research. The personal reflections of professional teachers and their interactions in the activities of a regular school day become the field texts that overlap the documents influencing their work. Particular

attention is given to allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than fitting the data into predetermined theory. These methods challenge the researcher's tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty as the tentative findings are continually subjected to new data analysis. Such openness to variability as research progresses demands recursive strategies of evaluation of data and ongoing interpretations and revisions to arrive at significant understanding of classroom practices.

Design of the Study

Qualitative Case Study Design

Case study research is one type of qualitative research prevalent throughout the field of education (Merriam, 1998). Stake (1995) pinpoints the case study as a unit of study and Merriam (1998) has concluded that the most defining characteristic is delimiting the object of the study. In this research, the unit of the case study is the classroom practices of the bounded and integrated system (Stake, 1995) of a middle school in an urban community. Nine social studies teachers are responsible for courses in geography, civics, and American history. Within this "bounded context" (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the heart of the case is the seventh grade social studies teachers and their classroom practices.

After careful consideration and consultation with an experienced qualitative researcher, I have chosen a multiple case study approach. First, each participant is treated as a single case and submitted to "with-in case analysis"; then the cases are treated to cross-case analysis. "The level of analysis . . . can lead to categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from all the cases"(Merriam, 19998, p. 195). Parallels are built across cases to better understand the phenomenon as a whole.

Case study in education can be qualitative or quantitative with the kind of data gathered dependent on the case itself (Stake, 1995). For this case concerning the practices within the classroom, the qualitative data comes from the experiences of the participants within the context of the school setting. Merriam notes that a qualitative case study in education is appropriate when the "questions, issues, and concerns [are] broadly related to teaching and learning" (Merriam, 1998, p. 37). The question of ways classroom teachers modify curriculum is an ongoing teaching and learning process including establishing a positive classroom climate, determining particular needs of students, selecting specific and relevant curriculum, engaging students with the curriculum, and evaluating learning. To study the practices of teachers in modifying curriculum and instruction in an inclusive learning environment, the data derive from interviews with educators, observations of interactions in classrooms, and analysis of documents influencing curriculum and instruction in the school. Verification of the data from each of the three sets comes from an individual analysis of each and then compares resulting categories across sets.

Case study research provides a means to understand these integrated processes. (Merriam, 1998). Merriam explains that case study knowledge resonates with our own experience. It is rooted in the context as are our experiences, is developed by reader interpretation, and the reader's reference is to the population more than to generalizing to all populations. Integrating the study of the phenomena and its context, she describes as naturalistic inquiry that "helps us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible"(p.8). Defining naturalistic inquiry is this way is in keeping with Guba and Lincoln's (1985) explanation emphasizing understanding from first-hand experience in the naturally occurring setting and representing the life-worlds of those one studies

faithfully. Multiple perspectives can be represented in such inquiry.

District and School Setting

The context of the investigation is a community of 100,000, one of the West's cities that grew up overnight as land was claimed by lottery. Adjacent to the city, the U.S. Army post predates the establishment of the town and remains as a primary training facility with 20,000 people. Oil, wheat, and cattle form the agricultural base of the region. The military is the largest employer, joined by health care facilities, several manufacturing companies, a regional university and a technology center. The Native American tribal structure provides some employment and services for Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache members. Patrons of the arts support a major museum, art galleries, theatre, ballet, and philharmonic orchestra. The city functions as a hub for business, agriculture, transportation, and education in the region.

The community claims to be one of the most ethnically integrated cities of its size based on housing data reported by *Newsweek* magazine.. The urban renewal of the 1960s and the racial integration of the Army contribute to this claim and are discussed in greater detail in a later chapter. Two of the three high schools are among the largest in the state, with the third just slightly smaller. The two newest were built at about the same time (1965, 1968). Four junior highs, one alternative school, and 22 elementary schools complete the picture of the structure of the third largest district in the state. Two elementary schools are located on the post and are part of this city's school system.

County demographics (U.S. Census, 2000) indicate an average income of $31,000 with 27.8% of the population under age eighteen; however, averages cover up the large disparity in income between rich and poor. Many mobile, young military families are part of the community and the schools.

The influence of the military mindset moves into the educational system as retirees and spouses remain in the community in civilian jobs. Schools are expected to maintain orderly, respectful conduct and are accepting of hierarchical decision-making to a greater degree than other school systems where I have taught in the state. As an indication of the extent of this military influence, the university data shows 55% of the enrollment at the university is active duty military, retired, or their dependents.

At the school chosen for this case study, there are strict rules of behavior and no nonsense discipline for nearly 1000 7th, 8th, and 9th grade students. On state required testing (2000-2001) for the eighth grade students, 48% received satisfactory scores in mathematics, 64% in reading, 61% in writing, 55% in history, and 39% in geography. It is a typical junior high for the region in its courses, its activities, and its population.

In this mid-sized urban district is a rich, multi-cultural heritage that has valued the diverse perspectives of its people. The settlement by lottery initially brought together a diverse group of men and women who learned to live and work together in this isolated area. They shared resources with the Native American population and the military already on the land, although. these groups did not always work together harmoniously. When other cities struggled with racial integration of schools at mid-century, this community drew on its history of accepting differences with a determination to achieve integration without major conflict. Today's challenge to include a wide variety of students in the school curriculum also draws on this heritage of collaboration among many diverse groups of people to achieve quality of life in the whole community. Its ethnic diversity and its socio-economic character make it a rich community for this investigation of educational practices. These many perspectives are all represented in the area served by Plainview Junior High.

Methods

Collection of Data

According to Yin (1994), the complete case study method must attend to designing an investigation, collecting the pertinent data, analyzing the data, and reporting the findings. The qualitative case study method needs several sources of data that provide trustworthy data for the study.. Yin (1994) notes that "a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence...the need to use multiple sources of evidence far exceeds that in other research strategies" (p. 91). In keeping with these guidelines, this study includes formal and informal interviews with teachers and multiple classroom observations in addition to a review of public resource documents and school source material

Selection of participants and interviews

My interest in the education of young adolescents led to the selection of participants who are in daily contact with a diverse group of these students. I visited several school sites and finally focused my search on the faculty at moderately performing junior high school in a mid-sized community. Within this environment, I found that the seventh grade teachers were receptive to the project and invited me into their classrooms for observations. In this school, the seventh grade teachers are divided into three teams, but the social studies teachers were not part of the core team. As a result, they teach a full range of students across the grade level, including mainstreamed students.

From the group of educators, I then selected six participants with knowledge, experience, and practices that would provide insight into ways teachers create an inclusive learning environment with students (Merriam, 1998). Some participants are longtime residents of the

community; others have moved into the area from other parts of the state or from other states. From their years of service in the district, all have an understanding of the policies and expectations of the district and the community, including the military influence. Several have lived and taught other places as a result of their family associations with the military. Furthermore, selecting educators interested in social studies was beneficial to the study. The seventh grade world geography content itself addresses cultural and physical diversity, making a natural association between the subject and the learning activities for understanding diversity.

Among the faculty, 70% are female, white, and middle class. In this school are sixty- two regular faculty members in addition to eleven special education classes with certified teachers and aides. All those in the study, as far as possible, reflect the demographics, experience, and practices of rest of the faculty. All are licensed to teach in the state through standard certification criteria, have three or more years of teaching experience. One participant previously taught at this site and currently teaches at the high school the students will attend. She is included in the case because of her knowledge of the bridges between the two secondary schools in this district. The selection of social studies teachers gives a representative view of the school curriculum and instruction across the structure of the seventh grade teams. Five participants are female and White which is representative of the faculty. In administrative positions, the principal and one vice principal are African-American males; the other vice principal is a White female. In the counseling department, one of the counselors is an African-American male, and three are White females.

Interview data collection begins with biographical information as a context for understanding the perceptions of the participants and establishes a rapport with interviewer. for subsequent conversations according to Clandinin (2000). The format of the interview is based

on interview guides which "shift the focus from right answers to interaction" (Clandinin, 2000, p. 111) and results in a more intimate participatory and collaborative relationship between the researcher and the participants. The interview guide for this study (appendix A) includes conversation about the interactions of teachers with others, their perceptions of students over time, and the cultural environment as it influences learning. From these questions, formal and informal discussions suggested factors that influence teacher work with students and issues that are important to them as professional, practicing educators.

Merriam (1998) suggests that gathering thick and rich description from the sample of teachers through observations, field texts, conversations and interviews is needed before seeking to interpret and theorize about the practices. During the first semester, the primary task was becoming acquainted with the situation. That was achieved through weekly volunteer service at this school site in one of the classes. In this phase, I began in the role of observer, gradually finding more opportunities to take the role of participant observer during the second semester. At times, I introduced part of a lesson and provided individual instruction to a student. At other times I prepared maps and bulletin board or tended to piles of paperwork. These activities established a positive working relationship with both teachers and students in the classes I observed.

Case study lends itself to more intimate and informal relationships between the researcher and those observed as they spend more time together (Cohen & Manion, 1995).
Since this study extended over two semesters, by the second semester informal conversations with teachers frequently occurred between classes, during lunch, or in the teachers' lounge. These are recorded in the research field texts which were written after each observations period. More formal interviews took place away from the school setting, when possible, in order to

create a more casual and personal climate for dialogue (Vaughn, 2000). These were scheduled during the semester to clarify meanings about what is observed, to extend reflection on related practices, and to understand the perspectives of professional educators. The formal interviews are audio taped and transcribed for review and analysis of findings (Merriam, 1998; Vaughn, 1994, 2000). Teachers are not asked to keep journals, change their routines, or alter their usual practices with their students and colleagues. The study does not ask for information specific to a particular student and his/her school achievement or behavior. Teachers and students remain anonymous in all reports.

. The formal interviews remained informal and open-ended, offering participants space to share strands of their story with particular significance to them at the time of the research(Connolly and Clandinin, 2000). This format captures some of the uniqueness of their practices to engage students in learning. Stepping into the school setting puts the researcher in the midst of ongoing experiences, without some of the common memory shared by those already in the situation. Geertz reminded us:

> It is impossible to look at one event or one time without seeing the event or time nested within the wholeness of the metaphorical parade. We know what we know because of how we are positioned in the parade. If we shift our position in the parade, our knowing shifts. They [participants] are in the midst of the stories when we arrive as researchers. Their lives do not begin the day we arrive nor do they end as we leave. Their lives continue. Furthermore, the places in which they live and work, their classrooms, their schools, their communities are also in the midst when we researchers arrive. Their institutions and their communities, their landscapes in the broadest sense are also in the midst of stories (in Connolly and Clandinin, 2000, p. 64).

Observations

Observations of the school and classrooms provides knowledge of the context and specific incidents to use as reference points for understanding the modifications teachers make in the curriculum and instruction in their classrooms (Merriam, 1998). The setting, the participants, the interactions, the conversations are all part of the observation and are recorded. Room arrangement, bulletin boards, location of supplies give some insight into what is important in that environment (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). For this study observation is focused on detailed description of the teaching/learning practices and interaction of teachers and students and administration. Awareness of non-verbal responses is a valuable part of this observation data and were recorded in the field texts. Direct quotations from teachers and students enrich field texts, but taking notes during activities interferes with interaction and makes participants uncomfortable. Field notes can adequately be completed immediately after the observation or occasionally in a private place on site (Merriam, 1992).

Clandinin (1995) suggests the term "field texts" rather than field notes or field journals for observations. Field texts include notations of both the observable description of the interaction objectively recorded in field notes and the personal, reflective commentary found in journal entry. Qualitative researchers have varying techniques of dividing the pages into separate columns or using different fonts in typed material. That invites analysis and synthesis from two perspectives. For me the use of italics for my own reflections within the observations worked well.

My observer role was combined with my role as a school volunteer, so my presence did not particularly disrupt the normal routines. However, subtle changes in classroom behaviors did occur and those were noted as they became evident over time. Casual interactions with teachers

and students contributed to maintaining a natural setting for the study without losing track of my role as researcher (Merriam, 1998). I recorded observations and informal conversations in field texts immediately after each session to maintain the validity of the data for this study.

Observations of student behavior and relationships in the cafeteria, on the patio, in the halls, and after school offer an informal setting for incidental conversations and provide further insight into the interactions in the classroom.

Documents

Statistical data on the geographical region, the state educational systems, and the school district is available as independent data. One example of such information on the school is the census data. It shows distribution of population, economic diversity, racial and ethnic identities, educational levels of families, movement patterns, and income levels. Information from the census and National Center for Educational Statistics reports are used in qualifying a school for Title I funds and seeking outside funding from educational grants.

These influence the selection of textbooks, the courses taught, the employment of faculty and staff, and the general quality of the school (Anyon, 1985; Kozol, 1995).

Review of state and district reports establishes the parameters for modifications of the curriculum. The curriculum in the school is structured by objectives and skills determined from state guidelines. State report cards indicate the achievement levels in content areas as determined by standard tests. It compares this school with others in the district and the district with other districts in the state.

Merriam refers to the importance of using the "wide range of written, visual, and physical material relevant to the study at hand"(p.112) to verify information from other sources. Documents suggest questions for interviews or things to look for during the observations at the

site. Newspapers and school newsletters present a public image of the school and give an historical perspective to current events.

A wide array of photos and newspaper articles from the public sphere show exemplary learning projects and give insight into expectations of the school system and a community image of the schools. A collection of yearbooks and some personal documents offer data not otherwise evident, not only in the content of the document but also in an assessment of the nature of the data. Working lesson plans show the ways the teacher intends to use the text material and potential modifications. Planbooks also note conferences with parents and special assignments for individual students. Public display of student work is another source of data and includes displays in the classroom and in the hallways highlighting exemplary projects. Other artifacts and physical traces (Merriam, 1998) may include non-written materials, but contribute to the overall understanding of the research problem.

Data Analysis

Cases

Situating the case study in a single school minimizes the effect of external variables. The teachers in the study work with the same school administrative policy and structure giving the study consistency and leaving the classroom interactions as the primary area of variance. While "no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable" (Stake, 1994, p. 241), the perceptions of several teachers at the same sight serve to clarify meanings as the researcher continues conversations back and forth among the teachers. Conversations and observations with all the teachers more broadly inform the researcher's understanding of practices.

Treating the relationship with each of the teachers as a separate unit offers "insights and

illuminates meanings that expand the readers' experiences" (Merriam, 1998, p. 40). Much of the time, teachers engage in little collaboration with one another in developing curriculum, in relating with students, or in establishing personal support systems (Hargreaves, 1996). Furthermore, establishing a set of sub-units can serve as an important device for focusing a case study inquiry (Yin,1994).

The public documents reviewed in conjunction with the other artifacts related to the school environment provide another perspective into the events under study. "Documentary data are particularly good sources of qualitative case studies because they ground an investigation in the richness of context real-world issues and day-to-day concerns" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 234).

Coding and themes

Common threads in the stories of successes and failures come from analysis of the data. By separating the themes and laying the strands together in different patterns, the complexities draw more authentic pictures of the situations and the interconnected relationships that influence learning in the classroom (Merriam, 1998). The coding process emerges from the continued and recursive analysis of the data.

The first stage of analyzing the data was primarily description. Then the interview, observation, and document data sets were coded into themes or categories using the procedures discussed by Merriam (1998, p. 178-187). Categories were constructed by reviewing all the data and identifying recurring regularities in the bits of information from the different data sets. These categories were tentative at first, but the "concepts are sorted into groupings that have something in common"(p. 179). Construction of the categories is actually the data analysis which then leads to tentative findings. Further intensive analysis substantiates, reviews, and reconfigures the

categories so that they reflect the purpose of the research. Merriam's guidelines note that the categories must also be mutually exclusive, sensitive to what is in the data, and what is conceptually congruent. From this type analysis themes emerge in the data. These original categories were primarily descriptive, though they eventually led to a synthesis described in the next chapters. The importance of the moral commitment to justice and fairness within the community of learning became a thread tying the parts together in a dream of civic responsibility and future opportunities.

Peer Review

To confirm my analyses, I returned to the classrooms several months later with the themes in mind as I observed the interactions. I then discussed the coding with the teachers and received confirmation from them that what I have reported is indeed what is happening in the classroom. I also spent a day in a high school classroom with one of the participants who has moved from the junior high school. I observed the practices and interactions taking place in an advanced placement class and with a low-achieving class to verify my findings. I also was invited to observe in another classroom with a teacher exploring alternative methods of instruction. I noted the same themes emerged in her classroom and in conversation with her.

Summary

This qualitative case study method investigates practices of teachers in social studies classes as they engage diverse groups of students in the learning process. The study takes place in a particular middle school setting among seventh grade geography teachers. Within this bounded system, data is collected through the analysis of documents and artifacts, interviews with the selected participants, and observations in classrooms. It includes the observation of

interactions among students and teachers in field texts. The procedures for the collection of data are described and information on the setting and the participants is included. Verification of data comes from the design and the methods of interdependence of data sources.

Chapter four describes the historical context of the study and its heritage of inclusiveness of its citizens. The following chapter will then report the findings of the research on classroom teachers' practices as themes derived from the interviews, observations, and documents.

CHAPTER 4

Historical Context: Influence of the Community on School Practices

Community Values

This chapter describes the shared experiences of the community where the research takes place and how these experiences have influenced school practices for educating a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse population of students. The role of the community in education is critical in a democratic society (Darling-Hammond, 1996). As Maxine Greene (1982) reminds us, if we are to create a public space for democracy, schools must consciously create community from the sharing of multiple perspectives and develop kinds of conditions in which people can be themselves.

Communities that have developed habits of thinking and acting in an atmosphere affirming cultural differences support school curriculum that also respects and affirms the diversity among its students. One-dimensional and ethnocentric views within the community lead to school curriculum that excludes those who do not conform to the majority culture. Such views separate groups of students based on a single characteristic and discourage interactions that might foster understanding among people. Erickson (1990) notes that "conceptions of culture do matter; when we think of culture in fixed terms, we create educational practices that support the status quo, and when we think of identity and culture in more fluid terms, we can develop practice that is more transformative" (p. 22).

The continuing influx of new people into the Plainview community has discouraged single-perspective thinking and has supported an understanding of various cultural beliefs and values. Making choices that recognize the value of many points of

view has brought growth and development to the area. Citizens have taken risks to make changes and have relied on the strengths that diversity brings to the community.

The First Fifty Years

From the beginning, those who live in the community have been a heterogeneous group. A century ago an influx of people came across the country by train, by horseback or wagon, and on foot with a dream of land ownership. Ownership of desirable property depended not on wealth and power but on the luck of the lottery system held on August 6, 1901. Everyone had the same opportunity to acquire available property. Grassroots democracy ruled the settlement of the land at the railroad depot and along Cache Creek. The 10,000 newcomers represented people of many races, cultures, and ethnic heritage. Some came with money and resources; others came with only a dream of a better life. Both men and women came; some by themselves, and others with their families.

The new town was 75 miles from the nearest major city and people had to depend on one another for survival in times of adversity. They built a town where people gathered to exchange goods and services. Schools, hospitals, churches, banks, and general stores anchored the community immediately. The military presence provided a sense of security in a community committed to building a good life.

Justice and fairness were not always carried out in the interactions of the various groups of people living in the area. However, the people in the community insisted on schools for their children regardless of the differences in their cultures. For a time, separate schools for Whites, Blacks, and Indians existed. But in more recent times, combined classes have challenged teachers to respond to these varied cultural

experiences of their students.

Education played an important role in the first years of the city on the prairie. One of the first public institutions of the frontier town was a public elementary school opened in November of 1901. By the following year, the county had 61 schools with five more opened in 1903 (Oklahoma Historical Society, 1998). The names of the schools/communities—Harmony, Prosperity, Midway, Pleasant Valley, Victory, Hillside, Junction, Post Oak, Big Sandy, Stony Point—told the stories of frontier dreams and the southwest landscape. The town experienced moderate population growth through the first half of the twentieth century, settling into patterns of life supported by agriculture, the military, and then oil production from the Anadarko basin. By the 1930s it had a stable population of about 30,000 people, mostly engaged in agriculture and the businesses that supported family farming and ranching.

Turbulent 1950s and 1960s

Population Explosion

The small town became a city in the 1950s almost as fast as it had first come into existence in 1901, and it had to confront new issues that such change brought. The population of the city increased from 34,000 to 61,000 between 1950 and 1960 with the nation's post-World War II economic prosperity. The diversity in the population increased as people moved between continents as easily as early settlers had moved across the country fifty years earlier. The Army post added to its population of young soldiers by bringing in more families, and by 1968 had increased to an all-time high of 63,000.

As the population grew, the infrastructure also expanded. The Interstate Highway

system connected Plainview to Oklahoma City and Wichita Falls by 1962, a shopping mall was proposed for the downtown area. Meanwhile, Lake Worth provided a new water supply. From 1950 to 1970 the community added two high schools, two junior highs, and ten elementary schools. Federal funds, state funds, private companies and local bond issues tried to keep up with the demand for sewage, power, and roads. In 1973 economic development efforts brought a national tire industry to the region and it provided jobs to more than 2000 employees.

Urban Renewal and the Military

The 1950s also saw a racially integrated military that brought bicultural families from posts around the world, especially Korea and Germany. During the Viet Nam era, Army personnel were rotated to Viet Nam and the community and the military struggled to provide affordable and adequate housing and schools for these families in neighborhoods throughout the city.

This need for additional housing occurred about the same time as the schools were deciding on ways to appropriately comply with federal desegregation mandates. Military families diffused the impact of school integration by their presence and by increasing the need for so many new schools at one time. They brought experiences living in other cultures and raised community awareness of being connected to a global community.

The military newcomers brought their love of the symphony, ballet, international dining, and traditional celebrations which became a part of an increasingly diverse cultural environment. The community benefited from their presence in defining diversity as more than racial integration. Established families built personal relationships with the

new families. Many of the military dependents took jobs in the schools or the community, enrolled in college classes, and volunteered in the community. They created a need for the junior college to become a four-year university in 1970. Finding classrooms, teachers, and materials made the response to the school integration overlap and merge with concerns for economic development.

Urban Renewal and Economic Development

Urban renewal also added to the overlapping of issues faced by the community in the 1960s. Under the Civil Rights Acts (1965) and the Urban Renewal Acts (1949) blighted areas of cities could be torn down to make room for a modern cityscape; undesirable tenants and dilapidated buildings could be removed and their occupants relocated, all with federal dollars. These changes were seen as means to a better quality of life for the inhabitants of the city. However, some social geographers (Harvey, 1987; Ley, 1980, 1992; Knox, 2000) question whether urban planners discounted the importance of community values, social issues, and the livability of the city in changing so much of the built environment at one time.

Urban renewal allowed city leaders to close bars and brothels that attracted young soldiers and rowdies to 2nd Street at night. They also condemned sub-standard housing in "The View" on the south side of town and used urban renewal funds to build homes and relocate families in other neighborhoods. The commission closed or moved 378 businesses in twelve square blocks of downtown but also razed a number of well-maintained 1920s homes near downtown in an effort to create a landscape attractive to the market place and to promote economic progress.

Knox and Marston (2000) note that was not an unusual occurrence in urban

planning at the time, but it was an unsettling experience for a community. In the place of family-owned businesses and homes, an outside developer built a shopping mall surrounded by a large parking area. South and east of the mall, small businesses struggled to turn a profit. Some low-cost, small houses remained. North and west of the mall, new buildings went up, others were remodeled, streets were widened, and parks were landscaped. In decades to follow, gentrification occurred in the Old Town North Neighborhood where prominent citizens built their homes in the 1920s.

These changes created invisible walls that separated groups in the community on the basis of economics. The citizens no longer shared a common downtown space where poverty and affluence had to meet face to face in everyday routines. People often did not have a nodding acquaintance with those unlike themselves. Some in the city forgot what justice and democracy in the community meant.

Urban Renewal and the Group

While some forgot, others began meeting weekly in homes to plan ways of promoting "peaceful and dignified" change. These citizens, identifying themselves simply as "The Group," began the process of breaking the color lines in the community (Plainview Constitution, Century in Review, Nov. 13, 1999). These potluck dinners, Dr. Valerie Wynn says, "began as an effort in friendship to promote better feelings among blacks and whites in an atmosphere of socializing." The black leaders saw injustice in owning stock in the elegant Plainview Hotel (opened 1955) but not being able to eat in its dining room or to take their children to the movie except by going up the back stairs to the balcony after the movie started. The only swimming pool at Doe Doe Park remained a whites-only swimming pool until 1968, when the owners closed it rather than allowing

others to swim there. It was the sight of one of the few racial confrontations in the city in July, 1966. Otherwise, respectful conversations among citizens brought peaceful integration of other businesses. "The Group" disbanded after a couple of years as businesses, restaurants, housing, and schools became racially integrated, but the inter-racial friendships and relationships continued to tie the community together. Each year these visionary leaders are honored at the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. banquet that recognizes the ongoing work of service for the good of the whole community.

Diversity in the Schools

That wisdom, respect, and spirit of cooperation carried into the school system during the changing times. Until 1954 all the white secondary students attended classes in the same school building, the "Negro" students attended Douglass High School, and some of the Indian students attended the Army Post Indian School. Buses brought students from Army post into town for school. In 1954 the current Central High School facility was opened, separating for the first time the younger and older secondary students.

New Schools with Growing Pains

By 1958, all junior high students attended either Central Junior High in the old building downtown, or Plainview Junior High located in a middle class neighborhood on the growing west side. Douglass High School, became a special services center, and its teachers and students moved to one of other schools. The principal at Douglass took one of the administrative positions at the integrated high school as part of the vision of working together for "peaceful and dignified change" in the community.

When Plainview Junior High opened in the fall of 1958, assignment to this new

junior high school favored students from a neighborhood to the north where doctors were building expensive homes near the site of the new hospital built in1951. Although the district drew from other neighborhoods also, bus transportation routes limited students who needed to be transported to the old junior high. Students from the Army post and from the poorest areas south of town were thus separated from the more affluent students living close to the new school. In another decision affecting the equitable distribution of students , the superintendent announced that pupils in Pecan Grove, Westwood, Rolling Meadows, and west of the hospital, "could attend the school of their choice." Those choices were often thinly disguised practices for maintaining racial separation in the schools.

This separation did not last long as the need for new classrooms resulted in two additional high schools and two additional junior highs and redrawing of district boundaries within five years. School buses then served all the schools.

Today all the secondary schools are racially and ethnically mixed as is the community. A new wave of people moving out of town redistributes the wealth of the district. New housing additions built in formerly rural areas, fall within the boundaries of neighboring small districts. Like the growth of suburbs around cities in the 1960s, these districts are building new schools to accommodate the new students. In one developing area, traditionally serving a high percentage of Native American families, the school population is now more than 85% white, upper middle class. Tax money for funding the growing school comes from the industry established in a rural area in the mid-1970s.

Beginning a Second Century

Plainview Junior High still draws students from neighborhoods of professional, high-income families and middle class neighborhoods in addition to low-income neighborhoods and apartment complexes. The challenges for interaction among culturally diverse students remain in today's classrooms with professional teachers using their knowledge and experiences to negotiate the space for learning in a climate of justice and fairness. The following chapter reports on this work in some junior high classrooms.

Summary

From its beginnings as a tent city, this community has accommodated other groups of people into its culture. By the 1950s, the city faced the challenges of the issues of racial justice raised by Brown v Board of Education (1954). At that time, members of the community joined together to lead the community in seeking justice and understanding of one another across traditional racial boundaries. Then, urban renewal, a new college, and influx of international families nudged people to address problems of housing and education in ways that welcomed diversity in the city during the 1960s and 1970s. This work offers the community a model for continued acceptance of differences among its citizens. The legacy of a frontier spirit of independence and the work for justice remains in the cultural memory of the community. Chronicling the story of the history of the city will show this spirit (Centennial Project, 2001).

CHAPTER 5

Findings of Case Studies

Introduction

The findings of this study describe the practices teachers use to integrate a wide range of students into learning experiences in the classroom. At Plainview Junior High, the diversity of both teachers and students in the learning community strengthens the educative experience and encourages academically rigorous learning. From interviews, observations, and documents this research focuses on interactions of teachers and students in the social studies classes. The quality of instruction in these ordinary classes with ordinary teachers suggests that teachers do have the knowledge and skills needed for students to achieve success. Furthermore, they incorporate these into their work with students while teaching standard curriculum and meeting state and district objectives.

As I have considered the diversity in the community, in the school, and in the standard curriculum, several notions about successful teaching are woven into teachers' work to shape the ways they modify curriculum. These threads are heard in the conversations with teachers and seen in their actions but are seldom addressed directly. Yet, they continue to reappear in the data from all the participants and provide a basic foundation for the observable practices of this study. The first is the teacher's knowledge of the content of the subject s/he is teaching and knowledge of adolescents in the classroom. Teachers in this study have formal education in their fields to certify them in the courses they teach. They add to this body of learning through workshops and classes they chose to take through the years. They also have knowledge of the psychological and

social concerns of young adolescents. Successful education is influenced by many facets of the student's life as it relates to the learning processes. Beyond their school responsibilities, the teachers are part of the community with its varied beliefs and expectations. Knowing the community and the hopes and dreams for the children give teachers a broader purpose for curriculum and instruction. It is the basis for building a learning community that includes the multiple perspectives of the citizens.

A second thread of successful teaching comes from a belief in the interconnectedness of learning and a wholeness associated with educative experiences. Teachers try to teach toward a wholeness of persons who are connected to other persons, ideas, and issues beyond rigid, fragmenting boundaries. The content of the standard curriculum offers a core of knowledge through the teaching and learning of subject material. However, a more inclusive understanding of curriculum includes making connections at a personal level. Positive relations teachers build with students and with one another contribute to an enduring quality education. The process of building connections is a vital part of education. Building ties with the community brings the support of the citizens and parents, and with that support come resources for educating children. Awareness of relationships also offers students opportunities to reach out to the global community and explore the interconnectedness of people and ideas different from what they have previously experienced.

A third thread in the work of successful teachers is a vision of the future. Teachers envision the legacy of their work in the achievements of their students. To keep dreams alive, they invest themselves in the practices that contribute to the quality of life of both individuals and communities. Imagining what might be possible and working toward that

possibility is the measure of success in education.

These three beliefs provide a foundation for the themes that are found in the practices of the teachers in this study. The first theme that is evident when teachers modify curriculum is deciding what is acceptable within the learning environment of the classroom and may address social behaviors, academic inquiry, or the shape of the curriculum itself. The teachers all negotiate the learning space of the classroom to some extent with the students and with the rest of the learning community. A second theme focuses on the professional space educators claim for themselves and the voice they have in matters that affect their life and work. A third theme related to curriculum modification responds to the moral dimension of education in a democracy. When some are separated from opportunities in the society in ways that are not just, fair, or equitable, the whole society is diminished by the loss of these persons' contributions. Teachers modify curriculum to make public education more just, more fair, more equitable to all students in the society. Finally, the fourth theme relates to the changes teachers make from imaging what the future might hold for educated students. The vision and promise of a new generation looms larger than plaques or awards for teachers. The legacy of teaching is measured in the lives of students participating in the tomorrow's community.

Individual Cases: The Educators

Dana

I first met Dana as she returned to her "trailer" after lunch, wearing a large floppy hat and overalls, hardly the attire of a professional educator. Her costume brought much conversation and comfortable laughter from her social studies students, a mix of 7th

grade geography students and 9th grade civics and Oklahoma history students. Crazy hat day at this junior high engaged the school community in a school spirit activity as a salve for spring fever.

With an easy smile and an energetic gait, she led me to a portable building with 30 desks crowded into a make-shift classroom. Posters encouraging positive attitude and self-esteem decorated the walls along with maps and announcements. As the bell rang, Dana announced they were playing Geography Bingo today; the students' enthusiastic response indicated this was a familiar and popular activity. Terms from their Mid-East unit were on the overhead and students began folding and marking notebook paper to create bingo cards. As I settled into an empty student desk, nearby students helped me fill out my card as I asked about which words to include and they asked if I knew what certain words meant. Similar conversations were taking place around the room.

Dana's professional preparation for teaching includes an undergraduate degree in history and behavioral sciences from a regional 4-year university. She is certified to teach World History, American History, Geography, and Oklahoma History. This range of areas of certification brought her to the junior high where both world history and Oklahoma history are taught in 9th grade. She describes her experience with a summer seminar, *Great Expectations*, as having an encouraging and positive influence on her professional growth. As a young teacher, she was doubting whether she should even be teaching, so she credits this connection with building her confidence and keeping her in the classroom for four years.

MaryBeth

Being around MaryBeth, I was reminded of the music of the symphony orchestra

with patterns of quiet calm broken by crescendos of power and strength. Sounds from the various instruments at times blend to create harmonious music, then unexpectedly draw the listener's attention to just one section. At other places in the same piece, the harmony breaks into a frenzy of overlapping sounds, repeating some patterns of other instruments and seemingly racing independently toward a resolution. Yet, in all its manifestations, the composer has created a framework that shapes the piece as a whole. MaryBeth's classroom climate works much like the orchestra with a measured ebb and flow of learning activities. A sense of an ultimate orderliness and predictability underlies her way of modifying curriculum and instruction for her students and creates a climate of safety and security for students. Like the music she loves, her classroom maintains this sense of order.

On my first visit, I noticed MaryBeth greeting students at the door and gently reminding this one to bring colored pencils and another to pick up a misplaced library book from the table. Within the classroom are maps on stands, pull down wall maps, desk maps, and maps on transparencies ready for daily use. Posters on the bulletin boards present pictures of diversity in physical environments and cultural patterns. Supplies are stacked neatly on the front table and the week's assignments are listed on the side board. As the bell rings, students settle into the predictable patterns of instruction under MaryBeth's voice of strength and calm. Students politely acknowledge my presence and share only whispered comments as I help them with their lesson.

When she began college, MaryBeth intended to pursue a degree in music performance, but soon decided her talent and the intensity of that life-style were not what she wanted. Her grandmother had taught geography and history, and she shared that

interest in social studies. She completed a bachelor's degree in history/geography with a minor in vocal music. She directed church choirs for a while, but then decided to get her teaching certificate and has been in the classroom with junior high students the last fifteen years. She is considering applying for national board certification in the near future as another step in her professional development.

James

As students enter James's classroom, the abundance of maps and posters of notable places around the world clearly identify this as a geography class. A crepe paper American flag, covering over one-third of the writing space at the board, emphasizes the importance of patriotism and behind his desk a framed display of U.S. Navy knots and patches next to a clock with golf balls further indicate his interests.

James's manner suggests his 21 years of military life tempered with a sense of commitment to influencing young lives. The sign across the front of the room reads, "You are the author of your own life," a reminder to students of their responsibility in the choices they make. These all shape the learning climate he establishes with his seventh graders. Encouraging students to take more responsibility for themselves, he says, is one step in the process of making the transition to junior high school. His conversations with students are punctuated with a sense of good-natured joking. He asks about tonight's football game and comments on the high school game over the weekend. At the end of class, he even has one player pantomime holding onto the ball as he moves from the back of the room. This playful climate fit around a formal lecture about physical processes changing the earth's landscape. Students knew the distinction between work and play and behaved accordingly.

James entered the navy just out of high school and completed his undergraduate degree in history/geography while serving in the military. When he retired from the military, his civilian life included being a lay preacher at a community church and getting his teaching certificate. He has been teaching and coaching for twelve years and is thinking about a second retirement, he says.

Liz

Even leopard-patterned pants did not hide Liz's self- assurance and leadership as I met her at her office for our scheduled interview. Currently she is the only female administrator at Plainview Junior High but is looking forward to the day when she has a school of her own. What she says she envisions for that school is an environment where inter-personal relationships are a high priority. She is confident that "when the relationships with the kids work, the learning comes along with it, and test scores reflect this positive learning." The stories she tells of the school culture emphasize her belief in the importance of working on these relationships among teachers and students.

Now that she has an office, she lets the decor speak of her own interests. Liz's office has flowers, a framed painting, pictures of her kids, and a wall of professional diplomas and recognitions. The soft light of a floor lamp and chairs in front of the desk invite conversation, reinforcing her belief in the importance of positive interactions among people in the learning environment. Notebooks and folders of materials are neatly organized on shelves and the credenza, with a day planner in the middle of the desk. As we walked through the office, she warmly greeted office staff and commented on work-in-progress in addition to reporting she had been to the doctor and was feeling much better. Later, she was on the phone re-assuring a parent that she had talked with the

student about her class schedule and the issues they had discussed were being resolved.

Liz competed an undergraduate degree in government and history with a minor in psychology, and, at one time, considered attending law school instead of getting a teaching certificate. She found that teaching offered her the opportunities and rewards she wanted and, after several years in the classroom, earned a masters degree in administration from a major state university. She currently holds a principal's certificate in addition to a standard teaching certificate and says she is looking forward to having a school of her own. With her experience, she thinks a junior high school would be a good choice. She has served on state level curriculum committees and has been involved in developing programs for at-risk and minority students. She seems to be constantly exploring creative ways to make school a better place for learning.

Sarah

In conversation with Sarah, both students and colleagues quickly realize that language is more than "whatever comes out of your mouth." Whichever word comes to mind will not do; for her each word is carefully chosen for its precise meaning in context. She clearly identifies with those who insist that thinking should precede speaking. A petite woman, Sarah has a strong voice, treating the English language as a treasure entrusted to her by generations of scholars.

The work of the best writers she can find are the ones she purposefully brings into the classroom. She guides students in dialogue with the masters and prompts them to challenge those interpretations on the human condition from their own experiences, not just accepting the words of the "dead, white guys," and the traditional British literary canon. Meaningful conversations challenge perspectives of writers and integrate literature

and history. Sarah had to read aloud Chaucer to overcome the reading deficits of some students, but once they knew the story, they had plenty to say.

Although Sarah now teaches high school English, her previous work at this feeder junior high draws her into the conversation of this study as a participant. She presents a perspective from a position on the learning continuum that is a glimpse into the future of junior high students.

Professionally, Sarah attended college at a regional four-year college near the rural community where she grew up. She received a bachelor's degree in English and later a masters' degree in administration from a large state university. She participated in professional growth at the state level as president of the state organization for English teachers, editor of the literary magazine, and on the board of directors for the National Council of Teachers of English. As Sarah reflects on this involvement in professional organizations, she says she gained confidence in the classroom and skills of critical review of practices in the schools that have stayed with her more than thirty years in public school.

Virginia

In the back seat of Virginia's car are stacks of books she is either reviewing or returning to the book dealer. Her desk at school and her desk at home have unending stacks of catalogues, videos, discs, and more books. Far from being a dusty librarian, Virginia considers anything that entices students to enjoy reading as fair game for her work.

She greets by name each person that comes and goes through the library and seems to know everyone's family story as well as the books they like to read. With

regular library visitors, she shares stories of their favorite authors and continually looks for books reluctant readers will enjoy.

Recently she was talking about meeting a local illustrator whose family had grown up in the area. She showed a group of Indian students some of the local Native American symbols the artist had included as an enticement to read to the book. She invited students to review several books and recommend which ones to buy with Book Fair money. She guides those who want more information through a computer search, because, she says, students must learn to use technology to live in the 21st century. If it is not available at home, she says, the school must provide an opportunity to develop those skills. What better criterion for a librarian than a person who loves books and loves kids?

Virginia's professional career began in a two-room rural school in Arkansas. She has a bachelor's degree from a teachers college in Arkansas with a degree in reading and language arts. Her masters degree from a regional four-year sate university is in library science. She has been on the board of the state library association and an active member of the state education association for almost thirty years. She often represents school librarians at continuing education workshops and directs programs with the literacy council and various state reading programs.

Cross-Case Study: Understanding Differences

Although the participants are quite different from one another, they share common commitment to student success at Plainview. Their particular life experiences and academic credentials give them insight into understanding multiple perspectives in a community. All are fully certified by the state board of education for their positions and

have prior years of teaching experience.

One of the surprises from the interviews was the extent of the military connections among these educators. James, himself, spent twenty years in the Navy before entering the teaching profession as a second career eleven years ago. Three of the women have been married to men who chose the Army as their career, moving their families to this area and then to military facilities around the world. Two grew up in military families and lived on posts in Europe as children. Three have adult children who are in the military. Only one, Sarah, is truly a civilian. Though the census reports 23% of the population of this county are veterans and 14% are active duty military, the school system has attracted a high number of persons with military ties.

An advantage of this military connection is the teachers' own experiences as outsiders new to a community. Dana, MaryBeth, and Liz lived in Germany where they had to learn some of the language and culture as outsiders. MaryBeth and Liz both speak some German, a way they relate to some of the military families coming to Plainview Junior High from bases in Europe. Germans and Korean comprise the largest number of foreign-born residents in the county (U.S.Census, 2000). Dana specifically talked of her own experience living in Germany as a time of building connections with the people with other cultural experiences She gained an appreciation and understanding of other traditions as her family celebrated Ramadan, Hanukkah, and Christmas with this extended family in the apartment complex and shared favorite foods with one another throughout the year. Dana reflected, "When you are out of the country, you have to get along with whoever is there. You have to respect what others offer." So when one of her students offered to bring enchiladas to class, she says, she accepted and created a whole

lesson around the festival idea.

Becoming intimately connected to people in other cultures increases the awareness of these teachers for cultural differences among their students. Kim with her Korean background was unfamiliar with some family customs discussed in class one day. MaryBeth took time to clarify the reference for Kim and several others in the classroom. Later she said Kim's bewildered look reminded her how confusing some jokes and stories were to her when she first went to Germany. Dana tells the story of her own ways of being a minority—female in a male social studies department her first year of teaching, Mormon in an after school program at a Baptist church, white in a biracial neighborhood. Yet, she reminded one student from Georgia who was struggling to fit into her new school, we are all the same underneath: "We all make mistakes; we all bleed when we are cut."

Virginia's method of connection with diversity is conversation about books. A student wandering into the library alone usually leaves with a book in hand. "Young adult literature is after all", Virginia says, "filled with social issues young people encounter. Finding a friend in a book can be a bridge for a student feeling isolated from a peer group." She too has moved from a small town in Arkansas into a global community with a military spouse.

Liz's experience in different cultures is what strengthens her belief in the importance of relationships. Her father was an officer in the military and she lived on several different posts as a child. She knows the importance of peer relationships among young adolescents and often connects students with others with similar interests or experiences during the lunch period when she is talking with students informally. Being

the only female administrator, she notes that many of the girls will come to her rather than one of the men, so she has a somewhat gendered perspective on student concerns. Gender identity is a major developmental task with junior high students.

The movement of people in the community is not unusual. Only 42% have lived in the same place for five years (U.S. Census, 2000) Some move with the area, but many others come from other states and other countries. These teachers understand the concerns of students faced with moving. When Kelli announced her family was moving back to Japan for three years, MaryBeth assured her, "You have done well academically at Plainview Junior High, and you will do just fine in Japanese schools." MaryBeth then spent several minutes talking with her about the move and the military base there.

James relates his own military experiences with other cultures to the students in his class. He says he has seen too many African American males get into trouble in junior high, and then they are expelled from school. He tries to handle discipline in the classroom, just the way he would with his own kids, before a situation gets out of hand. That way he keeps kids in school where he can still teach them. Underneath that tough façade, he has found these kids are all pretty much the same. "What I want for my kids is about the same as what their parents want for them—to stay out of trouble, grow up, and find a job and have a family." He has little tolerance for any kind of racial discrimination. He notes that "there is no room on a ship for that kind of stuff." He mentioned the way the integrated military blurs the color lines and that is true, he believes, in this school.

Virginia talks about understanding differences among students by balancing the books she buys according to race, ethnicity, and gender. In the Book Fair she made sure many cultural traditions were represented in the books and posters, not only in the

characters in the books but also with the authors. Sarah expresses a similar approach to diversity in the classroom. She tries to balance the literature selections but is limited by the standard curriculum for each grade level. She notes there are excellent writers with non-white male perspectives that are never included in curriculum. Sarah's growth in awareness and understanding of differences has come intentionally. From a socially active college campus in the 1960s, she has become involved in politics and in social services programs in the community. These have led her into the neighborhoods of her students and face to face with some of the obstacles to their school success.

Liz sums up the attitude of all the teachers in this school when she says, "When we respect what others offer, our school is strengthened by the contributions of all participants."

Cross-Case Study: Negotiating Learning Space

In my weekly visits to the school, I noted a key to understanding the patterns of interactions in the classroom began with the physical space and the location of the learning environment. Understanding the diversity in the learning community and finding ways to bridge differences in the classroom begin with the physical space allotted to each classroom teacher. How each transforms that physical space into an environment conducive to learning is an important aspect of the findings of this study.

Dana, the newest teacher, has the least desirable space: a portable classroom separated from the main building. When Dana talks about her space she also talks about her frustrations of being isolated from her colleagues and school facilities. James, on the other hand, a veteran teacher is located near the hub of the building, convenient to the

office, lunchroom, library, and his colleagues. As the rooms vary from isolated to integrated into the core space, so also the spectrum of teaching and learning practices range from a compartmentalized approach to one of knowing and reflecting with a more global perspective. How do teachers and students negotiate this learning space?

Learning Space Compartmentalized

The most compartmentalized learning I observed was in James's class. As part of his goal of teaching skills for success in junior high, he kept the class focused on the topics of a chapter review. He responded to one student's question with the comment, "We are talking about the earth's crust. Don't ask that question now; it is off the subject." Later in the class period, he responded to students individually and talked about the upcoming ballgame. The space for conversation occurred after the geography lesson was finished. The subject of the conversation was not integrated into the curriculum, so students with knowledge and experiences related to the lesson had little opportunity to share common understandings with one another. The learning space was defined by the standard curriculum from the text.

Describing his approach, James says he spends the first nine weeks with the students focusing on learning skills such as note taking, organization of materials, and personal responsibility. During this time, he also builds the foundation knowledge of physical and cultural geography that will connect students with places around the world. His own stories of geography experiences punctuate the material he presents in class and he helps students understand material from the textbook by drawing diagrams on the board while he lectures about volcanoes, wind patterns, or island formation.

Learning Space for Shared Cultural Experiences

Dana creates spaces within the curriculum in the class for students to tell stories of their own places in keeping with her intent to teach kids about places and ideas beyond the boundaries of their environment. How does she do that? She described a learning activity centered around a celebration day that gave her students an opportunity to share parts their own cultural experience. One of the hispanic students offered to bring enchiladas for the class and Dana accepted. She described the day, "The kids were really excited, and ...darn, those enchiladas were good. The student also brought music and taught us a festival dance from her country, Guatemala, I think. All of us got into dancing and really had fun. I'd like to do more things like that."

Dana connects geography to everyday events of kids by bringing into the classroom relevant movies, music, cartoons, news events. When the "Mummy" came out, she said, "We spent two days talking about what was true and what was fake about ancient Egypt. It was a good way to connect kids with the material in the textbook and it got them to read that chapter."

Learning space also has a time dimension. By choosing to have a celebration of three or four cultures over several class periods, Dana has decided to skip over information in the textbook. She says she just "hit the high points" on the history of the country, the economy, the resources, and population. Dana said she decided the Hispanic experience outweighed the textbook approach for her class.

While she is not compartmentalized in her approach to discussing subject matter, Dana is the most isolated physically of the teachers in this study.

Learning Space as Community Building Space

Liz negotiates learning space from an administrative position as she tries to find common ground throughout the school for teachers and students to learn together. Too often, Liz says, we look at school in fragmented parts—such as subject areas, grade levels, special programs, activities, school behavior-- without taking into account the whole person. Having seventh graders on "teams" with a core of teachers who pay attention to the same students across their school day is one way Plainview Junior High considers the whole child. In this kind of caring space, teachers stop by Liz's office to talk about ways to help a student that "isn't acting like himself." Sometimes that attention is enough for teachers, parents, and students to look at the whole story and solve problems together, but she says that she really spends most of her time with about 10% of the students.

Some of the conflicts come from unresolved differences that are extensions of life in the larger community. Yet, even with efforts to help students share learning space in mutually supportive ways, sometimes they lash out at one another in violent, destructive ways.

Negotiating the learning space for an administrator includes diffusing the individual conflicts to maintain a safe and secure school environment. Though she places a high priority on the social aspect of the student's education, she admits that "around here everything runs according to the Priority Academic Skills objectives." Nevertheless, she says, her door is always open to teachers who need to let off steam in a safe place before returning to the complexities of the classroom. Likewise, her office can be a place with hugs for students who are upset. She says she knows this contradicts legal advice, but "it is a shame when we are afraid to touch one another; it just makes the problems

that much worse."

Learning Space for Practicing Tolerance

For Sarah's older students, shared learning space means a greater tolerance for other points of view, whether expressed verbally or written into an essay. In responding to the subject matter, students challenge the value of Chaucer in the 21st century and Sarah gives those students an opportunity to express contrasting views. Yet it is also an opportunity to find common themes in movies and songs from modern culture that express the stories of today's travelers. She prefers scholarly debates, but admits, "real conversations can get pretty rowdy. As long as they respect others' opinions, I think they are learning. Critical thinking is definitely one of our goals in education."

Learning Space for Knowing about World Cultures

For MaryBeth, the learning space is initially structured around the selected text and the geography standards. From that starting point, she adds to each unit some lesson that extends the individual learning such as a report, a map, a chart, or a video. During this part of the unit, students bring in artifacts and stories of places they have lived or information that relates to their own experience in some way. The negotiated spaces for learning are found in these margins of the structured content. Students ask questions to make connections with other cultures. The in-depth discussions often take place at this point in the unit.

A particularly engaging activity occurred with the Africa Unit. As department chair, MaryBeth had coordinated this unit with an Artist-in-Residence, a West African storyteller. His stories brought another cultural perspective to the social studies classroom and extended the curriculum to include a connection with the culture of West Africa.

Although the stories came out of an environment unlike that of the Plainview Junior High students, they found a common bonds with the stories of another group of people.

One of the students, Jay, was describing to me what I had missed the day the storyteller from Africa came to the class. He told me, "One of his stories reminded me of a Comanche story my grandfather told me. I didn't think an African storyteller would have such good stories." Another student, Tiana, marveled at the drama of the stories with this comment, "I didn't even get bored and I can remember almost all the stories." Their connections with these stories were affirmed to the extent they shared the experience with me nearly three weeks later. Usually they have not remembered the social studies lessons from earlier in the same week. Their study of west Africa now had a face, a voice, and a story that tied them to a larger world view.

Jay's connection with Comanche wisdom stories led me to ask how MaryBeth deals with differences in beliefs of students. In response, she described a recent discussion about religions in the Middle East.

> I had listed three major religions on the board and students were identifying ways their beliefs were similar. I wanted them to understand our common bonds across religious beliefs, but then kids started asking questions I thought were not appropriate for class discussion. I try not to talk about my personal religious beliefs, but students were really into the discussion and one student kept really pushing to the point that I was uncomfortable. I don't remember exactly what he asked but it was something about Adam and Eve in the garden. I usually try to answer questions in a straight forward way because kids deserve an honest answer. This time I had to tell them we could not really pursue the questions in

class because of our keeping church and state separate. Discussing our personal religious beliefs would cross that line.

The learning space that day stretched to the boundaries. Students stepped into the space for inquiry with their teacher. The extent of questions and the answers were the tools of negotiation of the learning space.

Another day I observed different classes engage in a negotiation of learning space in relation to a picture of African poverty. In fifth hour a student asked, "Why doesn't that poor woman just go out into the jungle and find some fruits, or something?" Not a simple question to answer, but the class spent only a couple minutes talking about it. However, in 4th hour, the question about why she looked so thin warranted a ten minute exchange between the teacher and a couple of students. Investigating the geographic questions of the environment and economy were the tools of the second negotiation of learning space. The extent of the learning space varied with the group of students. But the overall space was confined by the teacher's structure.

Learning Space for Reflection

With Virginia, shared space in the library brings up some other kinds of issues about what should be included. Should The Skull of Truth be available in the library? Does the theme of having to tell the truth whenever it is in your hand override the issues of horror or the truth of homosexuality told by one character? In a junior high library the space for hot topics lies between the pages of books and is defined by the materials the school purchases. That space, then, is negotiated by choice—people who come into the library to check out a book, to return a book, to share the impact of a particular book. The librarian makes the library a safe place to hang out at lunch time or after school and

reflect on the experiences of fictional characters, real events, and personal issues touched by these stories.

Ashley was one of those boys who did not quite fit in with the boisterous group of boys in his class, but he did find other boys in the library who loved books. Virginia tells about her first encounter with him at a PTA open house. He wandered in while his dad and brother met with his brother's teachers. Virginia immediately began finding out what he was interested in and books he had read. Before long, she had given him a brand new mystery and she warned him, "The title is boring and so is the cover, so maybe no one will read it, but the story is great." Indeed it was, for Ashley was turned on to reading. He had found a place for himself at school that kept him involved in the learning community.

Thus, these examples show that negotiating the learning space is an ongoing process at Plainview Junior High. Teachers take different roles in the process as they nurture the development of the students. At the same time they are actively involved in negotiating professional space for their own growth and understanding.

Claiming Professional Space

A supportive, professional learning community offers opportunities for educators to engage in meaningful dialogue about issues affecting their work and have a voice in changing schools. Teachers negotiate their own professional space in addition to the learning space with their students. They are under contract to carry out the duties established by the district and by the community represented by the Board of Education. They teach the standard curriculum and monitor testing and assessment programs. In that position they take on leadership roles in the work of the district and in their professional

organizations. Not only do these activities contribute to improving the quality of instruction in their classrooms, the collaboration with colleagues becomes a forum for professional evaluation of current practices and future vision. Beyond the local environment, teachers continue learning and thinking about their work through experiences in more diverse environments. These include regional, national, and international conferences where broader policy decisions are discussed, analyzed, evaluated, and reformed.

Taking Leadership

Within the school and within the district, teachers in this study have taken on leadership roles. Sarah and MaryBeth serve on committees that write curriculum guidelines where decisions are made for pursuing the depth of content and for acting in the best interests of the students. MaryBeth explained the process for writing guidelines for social studies in the district. A committee with social studies teachers and two district curriculum coordinators met six to eight times during one school year to decide what they wanted to address at each grade level. The District Educational Improvement Council (2000) developed district goals and established a purpose to direct their work:

> The district is committed to the development of an exemplary curriculum that sets high expectations for teachers and results in meaningful student-learning. The purpose is to have a system that will ensure that students receive the same academic core at each instructional level from teacher to teacher and school to school. Curricular objectives are based on and aligned with the student 12th grade graduation profile. They are consistently delivered at the classroom level and are regularly assessed and evaluated. The overriding goal of the curriculum is to

> provide a firm foundation in basic skills while preparing students to be independent, self-reliant learners. It is further intended that every student will be challenged to develop strong belief systems, loyalties, and interests in t he sciences, arts, and humanities.

They aligned the courses of study according to the PASS objectives of the state. With funding from a geography grant, they set up a two day seminar for about 50 teachers from all disciplines and grade levels. The Oklahoma Alliance for Geographic Education Teacher Consultants led them through a collection of geography lessons. The second day, the group added wildlife experts to guide teachers through the Wichita Wildlife Refuge with a geographic education lens. The grant paid for all expenses, including release time for teachers. It received overwhelmingly positive evaluations at the time and contributed to geography education in the district. Its long-term effects have not been studied.

They also participate in leadership in the building. Both Sarah and MaryBeth are department chairs who manage the budget for the department, coordinate supplemental materials, mentor new teachers, recommend textbooks, and may suggest teachers for particular classes. Virginia manages the library budget, a staff of library assistants at several schools, the selection of materials, and has input into the use of shared space and personnel. Liz's position as assistant principal gives her further opportunities for determining what is included in the curriculum in her school. She also evaluates the teachers in the classroom on a yearly basis. It is from this standpoint she says, "When teachers have good relationships with their students, the test scores reflect that students are learning the material." She described how she spent a year observing the homeroom time, learning about alternatives, and developing a strategy to make that more effective

learning time at the junior high school. One of these strategies was introducing the video series on personal behavior. Themes such as respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness recognize the multiple facets of young adolescent growth in addition to academic learning.

Meeting Challenges

A valuable component in extending professional space is the encouragement that teachers receive from participating in state and national level conferences with colleagues. Here teachers find intellectual challenge in a climate of respect and shared visions for education. In talking about the importance of this significant personal learning time, several spoke with an added degree of determination in their voices. Dana told about going to a Great Expectations workshop:

> I thought this was really special for the principal to invite me to go to this conference and for my way to be paid. At the end of that year I was feeling like I was not doing a good job and I was not sure I wanted to continue teaching. When I got back, I had all these great ideas I wanted to try with my students. Lots of them were too elementary, you know, the rah,rah, cutsey kinds of things that junior high kids would never get into. But there were other ideas that I knew would work. I think that is a big reason I decided to stay in education (field text)

As I posed the same question about the role of conferences in her professional life, MaryBeth recalled,

> All of us that went to the Middle School Conference two years ago came back enthusiastic about our work and energized to try some new ways of working with our kids. This video series Liz is having us watch came from a conference like

this. While we were there, and in the travel time, we talked with each other about what is important to us, but when we are at school we just barely have time to grab a bite to eat and rush back to the kids. Mostly we complain about the hassles we are dealing with (field text).

One typical lunchtime six of the seventh grade teachers were talking about a fairly new student who absolutely refused to do anything in class, "Have you found any way to get him into his school work?" or another day, "How much did you pay for colored dry erase markers?" The assistant principal had decided only the black and red were visible from the back of the room, so that is all that was in the supply room. Sharon asked of her colleagues, "What about the colors I need to show the parts of the sentence," or Judy added, "the steps of solving story problems?"

Virginia talked about the importance of attending conferences by describing the books reviewed at Encyclomedia and the autographed books she bought for one school. She also remembered it was at Encyclomedia where a users group began when they were switching to a new computer system for checking books in and out. "That group," she said, "made my job a whole lot easier."

Sarah also talked about the value of professional conferences. She has recently become involved in national advanced placement workshops: leading them, creating teaching materials, reviewing test questions, grading exams. She meets others with a similar passion for literature and related interests in music, theatre, and the arts. She describes that period of time together as "one of the most intellectually stimulating experiences" in her school year. Their focus is on academically advanced students and preparing them for college scholarships. However, Sarah struggles with issues of the

appropriateness of diverting so much money into the education of such a limited number of students. While she benefits from the intellectual exchanges with the brightest students and the best teachers in her field, she says the majority of her students need more attention and more resources. She regrets that all teachers in her school do not have similar opportunities for growth.

James takes a different view of professional space. Men in the classroom, he says, are more likely to participate in events around the secondary school sports association. Maybe that is just because he is a coach, he thinks, but it is easier to talk with colleagues while playing golf or watching a ballgame. Some male social studies teachers, beyond the parameters of this study, do attend conferences and seem to find that helpful in their professional development.

Making Educational Choices Responsibly

Another aspect of negotiating professional space is balancing the requirements of the state's Priority Academic Student Skills and the state required end of instruction tests with the materials the teacher chooses to include in the course for the students.

Even though they have helped to design the district curriculum guides and participate in their implementation, both Sarah and MaryBeth admit they stray from these general guidelines as they incorporate other materials to accommodate the diversity within their classrooms. The class that Sarah says "keeps me honest" is the class that challenges the orderly spirals of curriculum. The complexities in the classroom do not fit into simple or predictable answers found in the district's guidelines. Although they would like everything to fit neatly in order, these teachers know it doesn't.

Reviewing the documents that the teachers are referencing illustrates the dilemma

they face in including diverse perspectives in their classroom curriculum. The tension comes in implementing the multiple layers of requirements in the classroom with the professional judgment of the teacher. Here is one example from the PASS American History objectives that stop at single perspective thinking.

Students are to analyze and explain colonists' dissatisfaction that led to the American Revolution, an opening to understanding the role of social action in the process of building our nation. The skills do not then require students to analyze and explain the dissatisfaction that have led others to speak out in dissatisfaction. Rigorous curriculum that includes the diverse experiences and perspectives of both teachers and students would invite the stories of other cultures and their dissatisfactions as a part of this requirement.

In geography, the richness of both physical and cultural geography is lost when students' study of geography is limited to the Priority Academic Skills tasks of identifying, defining, locating using a variety of maps. Students learn to identify differences without making the next step toward understanding the interaction of the spatial patterns of land use or settlement over time. Curriculum language teaching about the "impact of ethnic diversity" rather than the contributions of peoples creates little space for respect, appreciation, understanding, and connections needed for building an inclusive educational community in our public schools.

In World History, the multinational problems and issues for study include nationalism, urbanization, poverty, environmental pollution, famine, and population growth. With these, students are to develop the skills of "plausible solutions and possible consequences." Students whose experience is poverty, environmental pollution,

urbanization, domination, large families are taught these are problems needing solutions rather than common concerns for the larger society.

Negotiating the professional space involves the classroom teacher taking leadership in the district, connecting with colleagues at professional meetings, and balancing the tension of educational bureaucracy with the personal ethics.

Acting for Justice and Fairness

Teachers in public schools have entered into a contract with the community to teach their children. In a democracy that agreement is based on the ideal of equal educational opportunities for all students. When schools privilege education by economic success, race, ethnicity, or gender, they are no longer providing equitable opportunities for all students. This discrepancy between ideals and practices challenges the conscience of classroom teachers and moves them to act for the benefit of their students. MaryBeth described her decision to act on behalf of Brittany, "If I didn't do something, she was not going to have a chance to succeed in school." While that may be an over-generalization, it reflects the importance of social conscience being stronger than other guidelines and objectives of the school system.

Teachers in this study can look to history of the community and the democratic ideals of school for practices that are just and fair. With that heritage, they can respond to the social diversity in their classrooms by employing several strategies to engage students in education. They raise awareness of the strength of this diversity by creating an inclusive learning climate that values collaboration and responsibility in the school community and offers students connections with the community at large.

Creating an Inclusive Learning Climate

Dana's goal for her students is to "learn about the world out there." To accomplish this awareness of others, she establishes an informal climate in the classroom that encourages students to interact with her and with one another. Dana loves interacting with people and these exchanges energize the classroom. About once a week she devotes a class period to reading the newspaper and engaging in lively debate over local issues that included the effects of school budget cuts or the value of the new public transportation system.

Within this informal atmosphere, teacher and students often laugh about their mistakes--Dana's misspelled word on the board or the paper punch spilling bits all over the floor. Then they help each other solve the problems recognizing that learning is a social experience. Even while playing bingo, this informal style allows several students to talk at the same time as they participate in the review of vocabulary words. This pattern of talking simultaneously is a characteristic of some cultures. In the community this practice is seen in black churches as the congregation continually responds to the preachers, calling out "Amen" and "Preach on" and repeating important words and phrases. Verbal participation is both a social experience and a learning style for some students which, Dana notes, makes her class seem unruly according to some other teachers. But it carries a more comfortable learning style for some students.

Learning through Collaboration

Another strategy for developing social awareness in the class is of collaborative learning. MaryBeth begins most lessons by presenting information which is followed by independent practice, but she finds that collaboration can be beneficial in addressing the

diversity in the classroom. She offers several examples of students encouraging one another in their learning when they work in pairs. That pairing is usually by choice of the students rather than assigned by the teacher, creating space to combine social interaction with the structured learning tasks.

MaryBeth used this pairing to address an extreme instance of resistance to school by one of the girls who refused to speak at all at school. MaryBeth enlisted the help of another student and counted it a measured success as Briana participated in the learning activities with her partner. Previously, Briana "would not even pick up a pencil and paper." She was transferred to a special education class for most of her learning, but was mainstreamed in geography as a result of MaryBeth's inclusionary practice.

Extending this pairing to the rest of the class, MaryBeth noted that several high achieving boys chose low-achieving partners and wondered about their choices at first. However, as she observed their work, she noted how the students complemented one another's skills and both successfully completed the lessons. Their grades on tests and homework assignments did not necessarily measure their ability to learn. One of those low-achieving boys was a student with high learning abilities. I had an opportunity to appreciate his intellectual ability one class period when he talked with me informally while I encouraged him to complete a worksheet. His conversation indicated a broad range of interests and knowledge. He talked about the economics of buying a truck from his earnings and the activities of the Klu Klux Klan according to stories from his grandfather. His conversation was intelligent and informed; he described strong personal goals for his future that indicated above average abilities. Seen as challenge for inclusion in the regular junior high program, he had responded to the collaborative learning

practice MaryBeth used.

MaryBeth's classroom strategies for including students in the learning community extended into time before or after school collaborating with parents and other teachers to create ways for students to remain in the regular classroom. Marcos, for example, was being considered for placement in special education classes. MaryBeth had several meetings with counselors, parents, and a social service agency to get him glasses, medication, and structure at home that offered him success in seventh grade. When I observed him, he was functioning as an average student in the regular social studies class.

Another level of collaboration occurs as teachers and administrators work together. Knowing the options for making equal access to education available to the students is part of Liz's support for classroom teachers like MaryBeth. Liz confirmed this as she told me about teachers coming to her with concerns about "students who are just not acting like themselves."

In a school where 63% of students qualify for free/reduced lunches, designation as a Title I school makes some extra social services accessible to the Plainview Junior High community. The actions of a teacher in the classroom on behalf of one student soon connects with the resources of the larger community in a network of collaboration for student success.

Learning Personal Responsibility

James's strategies for increasing social awareness are focused on developing skills of responsibility, respect, and self-motivation within the students themselves. He pays particular attention to boys from middle and lower income families, the highest at-risk

population in the junior high. As he explains, self-reliance balances the social pressures pulling these males away from school; a strong personal character combats negative peer pressure. Self-respect encourages them to set goals for constructive lives in the community. Learning skills of respect and self-motivation offers these boys an opportunity to succeed in the structure of military service which James believes is a worthy career.

James balks at some of the individual education plans designed according to external regulations. Some of the particular accommodations for students, he thinks, limit the development of a student's personal responsibility and override his own professional judgment in the classroom. He does make accommodations in length of assignments and the amount of time for tests, but his overall goal is for kids to fit into the system at school and later, into the community. One plan he considered extreme included preferential seating, shortened lessons, modified grading, allowing the student to get up and walk around the room at any time. The student had a 3rd grade reading level and left early on special bus. He told the counselor he could not meet these accommodations without taking away from the other 110 students in his classes. This modification to the curriculum and instruction compromised the learning community in his classroom.

Learning in the School Community

Liz, in her administrative role, addresses the diverse experiences and perspectives of students as they move from the safety and security of neighborhood schools to junior high. When they come to junior high, she finds that "kids are at such a loss of who they are." These young adolescents must confront their own growing up issues at the same time they are adapting to an unfamiliar environment. To help students, she has introduced

a short film series into the seventh grade curriculum in the fall to encourage the development of positive social skills. The fifteen-minute videos run once a week during the Focus (homeroom) period. The first of these is on respect for other persons. Initially any conversation about the video is left to the discretion of the teacher, but Liz imagines ways it could significantly influence students developing their inter-personal skills and learning to resolve conflicts.

The lack of those skills was one of the first things she noticed when she moved to the administrative position at the junior high. She remembers she thought the disrespectful behaviors of kids indicated they just "did not care"; however, as she has come to know the students and teachers, she believes that many of the students have just not learned what is expected of them. She cites their unruly behavior during the playing of the national anthem at school events as one example. When they are confronted about their inappropriate behavior, they "seem a little embarrassed", so she has focused on educating them on expected behavior in the social setting of the junior high school.

Connecting with Civic Community

Sarah shares that another way teachers modify curriculum for justice and fairness occurs when they invite citizens to connect their professional experiences with student learning. For Law Day, she explains,

> We invited two very classy lawyers Erwin and Godlove and the kids asked questions in an orderly manner. But when we have Sprouls, (a spouse of one of the teachers) he is pugnacious and gets into a debate with the kids. They begin asking questions about child support, time in jail, drug laws. They really want to know about these things. It gets pretty disorderly, she says (as she hold her hand

to her forehead), but these are the students that keep me real."

The different approaches of the lawyers bring different social concerns into the learning community as students begin to understand the legal processes as they apply to situations unlike their own experiences. Virginia also uses the community connections to respond to the diversity in the schools as she brings in authors and illustrators to engage in writing workshops with students.

Becoming aware of the discrepancies in just and fair practices in public education prompt teachers in this study to act on behalf of their students.

A Legacy of Quality Education

Envisioning the dreams, hopes, and possibilities for students is a fourth theme that considers ways teachers modify curriculum for the success of their students. When asked about memorable students over the years, teachers begin telling about what one called the "small miracles." These are the outcomes of the modification and the motivation to continue investing creative energy into teaching, intentionally encouraging students to participate in the academic learning community.

Accepting Civic Responsibility

Virginia tells of an excellent first grade teacher in one of the elementary schools this year. She remembers him as one of the "orneriest kids in elementary school" and held out little hope for his success at that time. Today she sees his work as a culmination of the commitment of several teachers for a student that was not fitting into the regular classroom environment. Without them, he tells Virginia, he would not be teaching

another generation of students in this community.

Another of the stories she quickly remembers with enthusiasm and a smile is the young man who continues to send her announcements of the important events in his life: high school and college graduation, his wedding, and most recently, a baby announcement. What did she do to intentionally modify the curriculum and instruction? She shrugs her shoulders and answers, "Nothing special that I can remember." Taking time with students and building relationships of support and encouragement are part of the regular activity of a professional educator.

Running into students in unexpected places is a big part of the legacy of teaching that sustains Virginia. She enjoys watching students grow up and begin raising their own children. While Virginia was chatting with a person in the fabric store, a woman in line asked, "Are you Ms. Leslie?" Virginia began a fast-search of her memory files and responded, "Yes, are you from Lincoln?" And the memory ties were made. The relationship between a student and a teacher became one building block of a successful adult.

Reaching Goals

James also values the legacy of his teaching experiences. He tells of a young man who seemed to be in and out of trouble at school all the time. James had talked to the parent to try to resolve some of the issues of the boy's school failures. Finally, James suggested he would tutor the boy after school. The results were a turn around in the boy's behavior and a career in the Army. James said he knew they had succeeded when Michael brought his friends by the classroom after school, "Mr. Folsom, tell them I made an A on my test." Occasionally stopping by after school continued for several years and

Michael's study habits and self - respect continued to improve.

Rewarding Scholarship and Leadership

Another aspect of the legacy of work comes as students earn academic honors and scholarships leading to successful careers. Year after year MaryBeth's students represent their school at the state geography bee, a stepping stone to college scholarships. She describes one geography bee winner who graduated from high school and received a college scholarship for his academic achievements in history and geography. He said his real interest in geography began with the seventh grade activities.

At the end of many class periods MaryBeth pulls out an inflatable globe, tosses it to a student, and calls out a question. "Name the desert on the west side of South America?" A quick answer and the student tosses the ball to another student as MaryBeth calls out another question. "In what country is the canal located that connects the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans?" This frequent review of factual geographic information is more than a unit review strategy. It keeps geographic information fresh in mind. She also recalls that a recently elected state representative is another of her seventh grade achievers who is now in a position to influence the direction of geography study in Oklahoma's schools.

Sarah's story is one of a student she had in junior high who called one evening in February to ask, "Do you remember me?" After assuring the young man that she did, he asked, " Would you be free on May 4th? I've been selected as an academic all-state scholar. I can invite thes teacher who has had the greatest influence on my life to join me and my family, and I want you to come." She tells this story as tears well up in her eyes. "That might be one of the greatest honors of my life. It certainly surpasses Teacher of the

Year, and that was a big one." She says she does not remember doing anything extraordinary with this student, yet he is part of her legacy.

Dana, in her fourth year of teaching, has fewer stories of student success that define her teaching career. However, she tells of student evaluations she has received that motivate her professional commitment. One student wrote, "Ms. Scott, in five years you are going to be a great teacher." While that sounds negative, Dana sees it as affirmation that what she is doing is right for the kids. She just has some rough edges; the biggest of those she says is "getting organized." Another card in her motivational folder has the message, "You are the best teacher I have ever had." She also talks about the affirmation she receives by seeing these students around town with the same pleasure Virginia described. These evaluations from her students suggest they recognize the influence she is having on them, but the effects are not yet realized with these young adolescents.

Summary

As they describe these students, the teachers' faces light up, smiles brighten their faces, and the excitement of teaching sounds in their voices. These are students who were brought into the learning community from the edges of the classroom curriculum and instruction. They were given opportunities for success and they took them. The mixture of students includes some who are ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged, and those socially left out of the mainstream program of the school. The return on the investment in teaching is found in these long- term results and in the dreams realized. The common theme is the importance they have in the lives of these professional educators.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions

This study was designed to find answers to how teachers are engaged in school reform through the examples of their practices to create successful learning experiences with the diverse students in their classrooms. The case study asked why these changes in curriculum and instruction were needed at a time when many established national, state, and district standards are directing and assessing instruction. The study also asks what is the role of the teacher in effecting the quality of public education? The cross-case analysis sought to answer these questions from the perspectives of the six participants and their efforts to successfully engage all students in relevant education in a changing social environment.

A review of the literature on school reform and multicultural education in public schools suggested that single-perspective thinking is excluding the experiences of many students from a rich and challenging academic curriculum and instruction (Greene, 1995; Nieto, 2001). Recent assessments of educational achievements have disregarded the knowledge and experience of educators and have served purposes other than improving education for all in a democratic society (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Many teachers recognize this need for students to see themselves in the curriculum and are acting on their belief in the democratic ideals of justice and fairness of opportunity in achieving the long-term goals of education. The voices of teachers are emerging in the dialogue on school curriculum and instruction as they engage students, colleagues, educational reformers, and communities in a vision of the future of public education. As Meier (2002) writes, "By making schools better for the students most harmed by them, they become

better for everyone"(p. 36).

Learning Space Culturally Defined

While teachers are making some decisions about the physical learning space that influences the interaction in the classroom environment, the focus of this study is on their practices of negotiation of the social and academic learning space. These include decisions about the degree of divergence from the standard curriculum they will include in their classroom instruction and the amount of difference of perspective they will tolerate in class discussions and activities. It also includes the limits on certain social behaviors that interrupt the opportunities for others' education.

Physical space

Before discussing the primary issue of the practices of negotiation of social and academic learning space, a few comments are needed about how the physical environment limits teachers in creating an open and desirable learning climate for the students in the class. School district leadership and the school administrators make the decisions about the overall physical learning space. They assign teachers to schools within the district and to classrooms within buildings. Teachers have little voice in these management decisions of the school system. But within their own classrooms and in their sections of the building, they take responsibility for creating an environment that invites learning.

Teacher education methods texts (Martorella, 2000; Zais, 1979) emphasize the importance of establishing an inviting climate for learning. If students are to engage in quality learning, they need appropriate places to learn. The district is expected to provide a safe environment and essential textbooks, but they are limited by inadequate budgets

and a multitude of mandates from external sources. Yet, even within the same school, some groups of teachers and students are left without the same quality materials and assigned to inadequate space. How do teachers in these situations provide access to quality education and challenge their students to rigorous study in the face of the message, "That is good enough for education" (Kohl, 1988)? For most of the participants in this study, the physical space is conducive to learning.

During two semesters, I spent many hours at Plainview Junior High, noting the displays in the hallways and on bulletin boards and the arrangements of classrooms. I walked beside teachers through the day, had coffee in the meeting rooms, and observed students between classes and during lunchtime. Overall the hallways are wide, the space is clean, the equipment works. The large glass office space is centrally located around a commons that includes a stage, open space, benches, and the food service area. A spacious library and a gym are also part of this building. The floors always shine and trash does not accumulate. The common space is attractive to the public.

The individual classrooms, while clean and well-kept, have a limited amount of space. Thirty desks often are found in rows that touch three of the walls without any extra space for movement of students. The one door opens into the main hallway; some rooms have one window to the outside. Students spend most of their time in the classrooms where there is the least amount of space. This physical environment is one of the constraints teachers work with in establishing a classroom as a place for collaboration and interactive learning.

Only one of the participants' classrooms is outside this main building. As school population increased several years ago, the district brought in eight temporary buildings

which are still in use. Dana's portable classroom is clearly one of the least desirable locations for learning and she is one of the newest teachers. In Dana's "trailer", students were crowded together in rows four deep without space to move between the rows. Dana has space for a desk, filing cabinet, and two bookshelves. The thin carpet is wrinkled; both the window air conditioner and the heater make so much noise students cannot hear one another speaking in a normal tones. Dana works to compensate for the physical environment and to maintain an attitude that underscores the importance of quality education. Generally, teachers accept the limitations of the physical space and direct their energy toward quality teaching and learning experiences in their classrooms.

Social and academic space

Teachers continually make decisions about this learning space and the complex interplay of the social and academic dimensions of the learning environment of the classroom (Tatum, 1999). As the learning community becomes more diverse, accepting and learning from others requires the collaborative work of both teachers and students. Teachers may invite students to develop skills of cooperation and leadership relevant to their own learning experiences. They may encourage students to participate in learning activities that recognize the value of different perspectives in enriching their learning experiences. They may negotiate the learning space in ways that students see themselves and their experiences represented in the mainstream of the curriculum and instruction. The variety of practices used by the teachers in this study to create positive learning space indicates the complexity of the role of the professional educator.

In James's classroom, the learning space is carefully defined, but clearly managed to develop the skills students need for success. Strong personal character and self-

discipline is essential in this classroom. The teacher's particular concern is for males from middle or lower socioeconomic families that have been excluded from the mainstream of society. This is the group with the highest dropout rate and at greatest risk (Kozol, 2002) and when they see themselves excluded from future opportunities for success, they find little reason to remain in school (Ogbu, 1992).

James wants these young adolescents to stay out of destructive activities in the neighborhoods by completing their high school education. He offers activity on the athletic fields and life skills for leadership in the classroom. He is clearly in charge of the classroom space, but he negotiates that space for working with these students on the edges of the structured content material. For him, the curriculum includes teaching skills of leadership, of independent decision-making, and of personal responsibility within the school experience. Such skills offer the best possibility of students finishing high school (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ogbu, 1992). He puts into his classroom the goals of the National Council of Social Studies (1993) as he encourages students to become "independent, self-regulated learners" which is a stated goal of the professional organization for many social studies educators.

When students are left out of classroom learning experiences, teachers investigate underlying reasons give particular attention to bringing those particular students into the learning community. In James's class, one student who interrupted the flow of the class with a divergent line of questioning was called back to the main point of the lesson. James later explained that he wanted the student to respect the flow of the learning, listening to and learning about constructive leadership. He was teaching the student to make better decisions about his place in the learning community and the student had

shown significant improvement since the first of the year.

James does pay attention to the personal development of the students and often enters into conversations at the end of class, in the hallway, or on a sports field. However, he does this after the business of the class is finished when he tolerates fairly free movement around the room and personal conversations among students.

The ways teachers respond to their students personally is a strong factor in shaping the learning environment and research finds that caring teachers may listen and respond quite differently to their students (Noddings, 1994). While James's manner reflects his military/sports influence, MaryBeth's approach to this negotiation of space is managed with a caring, but business-like efficiency. When students have difficulty completing the assignments satisfactorily, MaryBeth begins a process of finding out why they are not successful. She begins with a conference with the student before consulting with other teachers, the parents, and the counselor. She investigates problems limiting student success that may include learning disabilities and emotional challenges.

The girl (described earlier) who would not speak at school remained in the geography class because of MaryBeth's intervention. The student began to turn in her lessons and made passing grades after MaryBeth enlisted the cooperation of another student. "Could you work with Briana? Yes, she is very quiet, but you may be able to talk with her." And, indeed, that pairing gave Briana a friend in class. That modification in classroom instruction offered access for Briana into a peer group. MaryBeth also noted this strategy improved the classroom performance of several other self-selected pairs of boys. MaryBeth's classroom learning space included the self-discipline and independence found in James's class and added to that the practice of cooperative learning that can

contribute to understanding and acceptance of differences among learners. Valuing the diverse experiences among students is another aspect of the negotiation of the learning space.

Another perspective on including other students in the learning space comes from an attitude some have toward school rules and procedures. Dana recognizes that "some problems are exacerbated by a system that creates bureaucratic rules and procedures and inhibits progress by burying the dialogue that would allow real problems to emerge" (Darling Hammond,1997, p.27). Therefore, she allows a more informal classroom than the other teachers in this study. Her own experience growing up in low-income neighborhoods gives her insight into student conflicts with the rules of the middle class community.

To overcome their resistance to school structure, Dana relaxes those school rules and allows the talking by several students at one time and the informal conversation that is more familiar to some students (Sleeter & Grant, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 1996). They participate in the discussions with one another in space unlike the structured space of James's and MaryBeth's classes and include subject connections of their own experiences as with the Law Day questions. From Dana's class, the Olympic poet laureate ended up with a rap rather than a traditional English literature poem. This alternative poetry suggests the breadth of acceptable activities Dana has negotiated in her classroom.

Another of the participants, Sarah, leaves spaces for divergent and creative tangents of interest to students in unstructured writing and class discussions. The learning space in Sarah's classroom is intentionally organized to "cover" the material in the curriculum, but she encourages students to consider diverse perspectives of other writers

and other students in a climate of respect and understanding. She pays attention to maintaining an inclusive classroom and practices what Noddings (1981) explains, "caring means stepping out of one's own personal frame of mind into the other's...[it means shifting] away from rule-bound accountability toward personal responsibility ... to increase opportunities for dialogue" (p. 32).

Frequently students engage in dialogue that challenges their thinking on issues significant to them. They invest themselves in understanding implications and relationships of ideas as they respond to questions from the teacher and from their peers. In one particular exchange I observed, Darren interrupted Darwin, "What do you mean that is greed? You just said he deserved the money?" The ensuing conversation indicated that ownership of the classroom learning space had shifted from teacher to students as stories and opinions erupted across the room. Sarah occasionally added a word, but student comments dominated for more than 15 minutes. She says such conversations occur often. She celebrates that students are thinking and steps in only if a referee is needed.

Liz also made space in her classroom for alternative perspectives. In her class, intellectual space emerged as students posted their arguments about topics related to the practice of law on an opinion board. Modifying the curriculum to make space for exploring the real questions in their lives engaged students in rigorous and reflective curriculum. Tatum (1997) has noted students whose stories are disconnected from the learning environment seek other ways to express their beliefs and claim their identity in relation to their teachers and peers. Liz explained how that opinion board interested students not usually described as academic achievers. It seemed, she said, to reduce the

students' sense of being excluded and the behaviors associated with that disadvantaged position in the social relationships of the school community.

Maintaining positive learning space of the classroom requires continual attention and is challenged by negative behaviors that disrupt learning. In another class I observed, Taylor was clowning around in class, not doing his lesson, and disrupting the study of other students. It appeared to be his strategy to claim a place in the learning environment that otherwise ignored him. This behavior was taking center stage in the classroom and the teacher had to respond because it was denying others the opportunity to learn. The maintenance of a positive learning space must consider both the individual and the community. Observing the responses to the behaviors that endanger others or deny them the opportunity to learn is one way students develop an understanding of a democratic society at work (Meier, 2000).

Three examples show how that is part of the negotiation of the learning space and the inclusion or exclusion of students. In MaryBeth's class, a small number of students were getting ready to play board games. One student shot a rubber band at a student at another table; as an isolated event, MaryBeth said she would have reprimanded the student and isolated him from the activity. However, the offended student's reaction attracted the attention of the vice principal for discipline who was in the hallway. He identified the rubber band as a "weapon" and removed the student from school for three days.

I had observed this student who was removed from class repeatedly antagonizing other students and clearly being excluded from learning activities. He lacked appropriate social skills and academic skills for the learning environment. His behavior created

tension as the anger moved from him to the other student to the teacher to the administrator and back again to the original student. Anger management took more than half the class time and required a reorganization of groups. The student who had originally chosen to work with the offending student had to find another group. She had to overcome the tension of allegiances within the class. How they negotiated their space dominated what the teacher intended as an alternative learning activity. With some encouragement, groups formed along gender lines. All the girls formed one group and the boys divided themselves into two other groups for the remainder of a tolerant class period. There were no further efforts to consider the role of the class in making the classroom more inclusive. The learning climate is fragile, but in a democracy endangering the community cannot be tolerated.

In another classroom students responded to an excluded student by making comments to irritate him, challenging his comments with phrases such as, "How do you know that?" "I saw you on Saturday and you weren't sick." He had faced this before and had found that a coping measure was to leave the conflicted environment rather than engage in argument. Finally he said, "Ms. D, I have to go see my counselor" and left the room.

While he was gone, the teacher reprimanded the students for "acting like a pack of wolves" and they acknowledged their breach of the negotiated space by their body language and exchange of looks. Confronting the negative behaviors was one step toward restoring a positive learning environment and continued over time, as Sarah told me later. The student returned a bit later in the class period and focused on the assignment. The other students ignored him. At the end of class, Ms. D. talked with him about his

irritating behavior that attracted the negative comments from his classmates. As he left the room, he offered, "I am working at it. I am sorry Ms. D. This is really a good class."

This was just one incident in the continual process of negotiating, and re-negotiating, the learning space in the classroom. Individual and group needs change in response to other people and events both within the environment and outside of it. Although the teacher verbalized the breach in the agreement, she was bringing students into the space through identification and reflective questions about their patterns of behavior. The responsibility for the learning community was shared among those within it. Meaningful negotiation takes place when people learn to negotiate from positions of strength, not from positions of powerlessness (Ogbu, 1992). Sarah was straightforward in confronting the problem and seeking resolution, engaging all those involved in rebuilding respect critical for dialogue in a learning environment. When students are not engaged, they are not successful in school and their teachers do not feel successful (Neito, 2000).

In addition to negotiating the classroom learning space with students, teachers also negotiate the requirements of the larger system with the needs of their students. Inviting a West African storyteller, the Artist-in-Residence, into the classroom shifts the focus of the Priority Academic Student Skills objectives in geography study toward the common themes of life experiences across cultures. Three weeks after the event, Monica was still eager to talk with me about the storyteller. She connected with the stories of clever and creative solutions to social problems in another culture. The wisdom of the stories offered alternative approaches to conflict situations to "save face" among peers, a challenge she faces among her peer group. Additionally, West African culture was more than facts of climate, landforms, and location and a place of real people living together in

community.

Tolerance for differences is a large bridge to cross until people can imagine the learning place that is big enough to include them both with a position of strength (Banks, 1994; Kozol, 2002, Sleeter 2001). By the year 2020, 46% of school population will be students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Some research finds that today only 62% of Hispanics finish high school. The high school these Plainview Junior High students will attend has 100 fewer seniors than sophomores, an indicator of the future of these junior high students and a signal for the teachers' concern for students. Efforts to integrate them into the learning environment is a hedge on the statewide dropout rate of 4.8% (State Department of Education, NCES, 2001).

Professional Space Claimed

Teachers invest much personal time and energy to effectively diversify curriculum and instruction with their students. However, often the structure of public school, divided by discipline and grade levels, leaves them isolated from their colleagues as they develop appropriate teaching strategies. Research shows that a valuable factor in teachers' bringing about change in their school is the sense of collegiality (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). The collaboration with one another overcomes some of the fragmentation and isolation in the school, and they find renewed energy as they engage in solving the problems encountered in the learning environment. (Barth, 1991). Additionally, as teachers work together and begin to take risks to express personal purpose, they find kindred spirits among their colleagues (Fullan, 1996). They have opportunities to reflect on their practices and integrate multiple perspectives into their ongoing work.

Teachers who extend their professional space to include others in the learning

community (Barth, 1991) increase their own understanding of diversity and experience new dimensions for imaginative intellectual growth, across disciplines by interaction with people having different knowledge (Doll, 1994) The teachers in this study are willing to take professional risks to extend the boundaries of their professional space and to reflect upon their work with educators from other regions of their own state and at the national level through their professional affiliations.

Resistance

In the classroom, they extend their professional space as they take control of the decisions that make their classroom responsive to the diverse experiences of students and teachers. One way they claim this space is through their interpretation and application of standard school policies. Having some control of the decisions that effect their work is at the heart of teaching (Falk, 1995). Lacking this control, Ogbu (1992) explains, groups feel dominated by others and resist working together for common goals. With resistant students, they exhibit behaviors ranging from clowning to outright aggression. However, with teachers who feel dominated by a larger sociopolitical situation, their resistance to the policies that impinge on their work takes a turn toward social action. Their words and action make space for success with their students.

A hint of civil disobedience surfaced in each person I interviewed as they talked about some of the issues they face in modifying their practices in the classroom. The ideals of democracy and justice met with obstacles in different places for each person, but each teacher prefaced at least one statement with "I don't care what THEY say, . . .". This note of resistance is not unfamiliar to education. As Dewey noted, "it would not be a sign of health in our democracy if such an important social interest as education were not

also an arena of struggles, practical and theoretical." (Gouinlock, 1991, p.3). These statements of resisting the official curriculum carry a level of risk to the teachers' professional status within the school community. Hargreaves (1994) found that the degree of risk depended on the level of isolation, guilt, and time commitment required, but that was balanced by support and collegiality among the faculty (Barth, 1991). Among Plainview Junior High teachers, the support and collegiality lent only minor support.

Opportunities for authentic communication did not occur in faculty meetings, department meetings, or in staff development workshops. The teachers admitted to being "out on a limb" with their views, yet all completed these statements with a strong statement of their intended action to accomplish their broader goals.

> . . . I am going to hug kids because I know that kids need to be physically touched by another human being for healthy growth;
>
> . . . I am going to let kids talk about religious issues because I know that kids need to question values and beliefs and be able to get straight answers about their questions;
>
> . . . I am going to listen to controversial issues because I know kids need to talk about events that affect them, even if the events are not part of the curriculum guidelines;
>
> . . . I am going to select high quality resources even if I have to read them aloud because I know that kids who cannot read and write need to be introduced to good writing with complex content, not just easy reading material.

In the classroom, these teachers trust their professional judgement even when

their decisions are in conflict with the district policies. Their comments are a current manifestation of the issues of Thoreau's questions on civil disobedience: "Must a citizen ever resign his conscience to the legislator?" (*Civil Disobedience*, [1849] 1998). Educators question educational policy and the abundance of standard testing programs administered in public schools. If not the legislator, today's teachers might ask if they must resign their conscience to assessment groups, textbook publishers, political agencies, and foundations that distribute money for education. While classroom teachers are finding a voice in the dialogue concerning school changes, they may heed the wisdom of Thoreau (1998, p. 649), "a man has not everything to do, but something." Teachers as change agents take on this role with a certain reluctance but with a moral commitment to their life work.

Each one interviewed for this study expressed surprise when asked about his/her goals and hopes for school. Virginia said, "No one ever asks us what we think. They just tell us what we have to do." She was commenting on the vision for the school, not the practical work teachers do in developing programs and curriculum. The way the district handled state budget cuts illustrates this hierarchical management style. The social studies department chair received a memo via inter-school mail: Social studies department [9 teachers] has been allocated $137.50 for supplies for the remainder of the school year [November-May]. Pinar (1995) described this kind of decision making in schools as teachers acting as "postal workers delivering someone else's mail"(p. 322).

Leadership

When teaching is "delivering the mail," teachers experience a lack of connection with their profession. Two teachers in this study, MaryBeth and Sarah, seek to extend

professional space by serving on the school district committees making the decisions about curriculum that influence their work with students. Their participation demonstrates the social action deemed necessary in order to bring about educational change through curriculum.

Fullan and Hargreaves' series of school reform books, "What's worth fighting for. . ." and Sleeter and Grant's multicultural works call for teachers to become agents for change within the larger educational community. These two teachers together have more than forty years of experience in the classroom and a deep commitment to successful educational practices with their students. They are department heads and work with administrators for maintaining the quality of instruction.

Both, however, stray from these general guidelines as they incorporate other materials, other interests of students to accommodate the diversity within their classrooms. The class that Sarah says "keeps her honest" is the class that challenges these orderly spirals of curriculum. The complexities in the classroom do not fit into simple or predictable answers found in the district's guidelines. Although they would like everything to fit neatly in order, they know it doesn't.

The single-perspective embodied in the district guidelines is not adequate for the multicultural classrooms in broad curriculum policy or at Plainview Junior High (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Doll, 1993). The task of the school is to teach for diversity and for understanding. Their interactions with diverse students described earlier characterize teachers in this study. They are thoughtful, reflective educators whose hope for the future of the community is embodied in their students.

Their work also suggests their willingness to continue efforts to extend

professional space to engage diverse perspectives into learning community. This is eloquently explained by Maxine Greene (1995):

> A single standard of achievement and one-dimensional definition results in injustices and also thins out our cultural life, making it increasingly difficult to bring about a common world, collaborative efforts to resolve "real perplexities" and cultivate the mind in diverse domains, favor plurality and multiplicity over one-dimensional hierarchies; teachers ourselves turn away from the expected responses and risk exploration of the unknown (p. 173).

Relating to a Broader Community

Speaking out for professional space extends beyond the classroom to educational seminars and conferences. Participation with educators with other experiences adds depth to the dialogue on modifying classroom practices for diversity. Even though curriculum guides and text materials are purportedly written for use in culturally diverse settings, professional teachers make choices from their own experiences and for their own students (Grant & Sleeter, 1998) . Broadening those experiences benefits both teachers and their students.

All the teachers in this study expressed a determination to continue their professional education by participating in conferences across district and regional boundaries. Virginia's determination to attend the conference of librarians and take with her several other librarians, is one example. She had to pay her own registration, travel, and meals, but she said, "Sharing ideas and venting my frustrations lets me come back and deal with the problems in the schools. I always come back with fresh ways of looking at my situation and I am a better librarian with the kids and teachers for it." MaryBeth

was one of a group who received a grant to pay for their participation in a middle school conference out of state. Such travel is not included in the school district's budget for staff development, but MaryBeth talked about a previous conference that opened her thinking about herself and her work. She said, "I had just never been exposed to that [national] perspective, living in the Southwest." Learning beyond the borders is what she tries to instill in her students, so why not in herself? Doll (1994) has noted in reaching out, teachers and students often discover common interests and learning takes unexpected directions with rigorous, relational, rich, and recursive educational experiences.

Education is not easily contained within district or regional boundaries. Greene (1995) describes the borders as places "outside my experience," but we can imagine "how the world looks and feels from the vantage point of persons whose world it is" (p. 4). She notes we do not give up our own heritage to accommodate the viewpoints of others. There is not a limited number of stories, but an infinite number of experiences that inform our own understanding. Furthermore, teachers survive and grow when they find colleagues who share the same hopes and beliefs (Neito, 2001, p.13). School budget restrictions that keep teachers separate from colleagues are short-sighted savings. Teachers without this collaborative nurturing cannot continue to be effective with students. They simply use up their resources and energy.

Dana described this renewed energy in talking about the Great Expectations conference she attended after her second year of teaching, at the encouragement of her principal. She received a scholarship to cover the week's expenses and her mother kept her young children. As a new teacher, she was overwhelmed by the complexities of teaching and was "wondering if I had chosen the wrong profession." She returned

enthused about a new school year with students and noted, "Even though some of the ideas were too elementary for junior high students, I've been able to adapt them and make learning more fun, for me and for the kids."

The extended professional space puts teachers in a position of influencing decisions that affect curriculum and instruction in their schools by their awareness of other perspectives.

Justice and Fairness Practiced

The findings of this study suggest that teachers intentionally modify curriculum to include diversity of teachers and students by making a commitment to justice and fairness in the educative environment. Their everyday practices include activities that document this belief, even though they are reluctant to identify them as anything but being what teachers do.

The work of multicultural educators (Banks, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1996; Nieto, 2001, Sleeter, 1988) has brought to the classroom a heightened sense of the importance of "helping all children think and act critically and beyond their limited self-interest" (Neito, p.8). Not only do students achieve school success, but also "all students of all backgrounds, including majority-group students, benefit from multicultural education because when schools are made better for students who are most harmed by them, they become better for everybody" (Neito, 2001, p. 8).

Justice and fairness in today's multicultural schools are a result of the intentional activities of professional teachers who invest themselves in education to include all students in relevant learning experiences. These teachers employ culturally responsive teaching strategies which include mini –lectures, stories/skits/simulations, and real/honest

questions and answers (Rasool and Curtis, 2000). The teachers in this study have routinely employed these strategies. MaryBeth opens each geography class with an mini-lecture overview of the lesson, its connection to the previous lesson, and its foreshadowing of future lessons. Like many teachers, she does not identify this as a way this can enhance cultural learning (Jackson, 1996). However, by setting up a learning framework that includes issues on which groups of people in the community may differ, she encourages real questions and thoughtful discussion. "In the water cycle, what would happen in places that have a high level of pollution?" she asks. A student responded with, "The rain would have to go through the pollution and... isn't that what makes acid rain?" Discussion continued to include locations of high polluting industries and what responsibility other members of a community might have.

In Sarah's class students developed their own interpretations of themes found in their readings. Not only did they enjoy the project and working together, Sarah chuckled at the humorous ways they incorporated their own perspectives into the class presentations. She speculated that she would not have gotten the same level of understanding if she had asked the same question on an essay exam.

Dana's sensitivity to issues of justice and fairness among minority students includes those who express opposing opinions in class discussions. She intentionally keeps the conversation open through her encouraging comments to students offering unpopular points of view. In one discussion concerning the Israeli-Palestinian settlement issues, students were equally expressive on both sides of the question. Their comments included extended explanations, which Rasool (2000) suggests is an indication of an inclusive student-centered learning environment. When students "answer in paragraphs"

instead of just reciting what someone else wants to know, they are the questions that students genuinely want answers for" (p. 101). Dana has created a class where minority student voices are not silenced by the expectation of school-type questions.

These ordinary procedures occurred throughout the observations and conversations with classroom teachers in this study. Tackling the issues of restructuring schools and the curriculum is not an easy task nor one that can be accomplished by teachers alone. But teachers and students are actively making their learning space more just and fair in response to the diversity in their environment.

As teachers include multiple perspectives into their lessons, they are creating more inclusive student-centered learning environment that carry out justice and fairness in the classroom. Sleeter and Grant (1996) have documented five approaches to multicultural education. At the most basic level is teaching that separates students who are exceptional or culturally different. Next, are two approaches that are more inclusive of diverse persons as they focus on the importance of human relations across groups and then move toward intensive studies of single groups. A fourth approach reaches a level multicultural education that assimilates study of multiple perspectives into the overall curriculum. The ideal approach offered is one that is truly multi-cultural and social reconstructionist, in which people are committed to fundamental changes in the social fabric of the community.

A limiting factor in achieving justice and fairness in the whole community at Plainview Junior High is the lack of ethnic diversity among their teachers. There are no Asian teachers, only 6 African American teachers/administrators, and 3 Native American teachers out of a faculty of 68. The faculty is mostly white, mostly female, and more than

30% have taught more than 15 years. Recent census data (Census 2000) shows 38% of Comanche county is non-white. In the school's favor for achieving cultural inclusiveness, however, is the large number of educators who have cross-cultural experiences that add understanding of other perspectives to their classrooms.

Teachers who have these cross-cultural experiences-- where they have had to grapple with being in the minority and not knowing how to act—use these personal resources in learning to include culturally diverse students in the classroom (Neito, 2001). While their experiences may not be the same as their students who are locked into the situation, these teachers have added awareness of living with differences. Dana described her cross-cultural experience of living in Germany and the sense of being a minority, an experience she says "helps me to identify with my minority students." Her story of celebrating ethnicity in the classroom by eating enchiladas and learning folk dances is an expression of this understanding and invites a further sharing of differences.

Justice and fairness encounter another challenge in the face of complex issues of economic disparity among students at Plainview Junior High. The inequitable quality of education in low – income neighborhood schools has been documented by many including Anyon (1995) and Kozol (1986, 1999, 2001), in spite of declarations of the nation's schools as places of equal opportunities for all. Approximately 20% of the population at the school site is economically advantaged, while more than 63% qualify for the free or reduced lunch through the Title I program. Achieving justice and fairness in the learning community must include the perspective of these groups of students living with issues of poverty. One who was clearly a victim of exclusion was Oregon.

Oregon's plight of being moved in and out of the school according to the

economic situation of his mother, left him with an anger against the educational system that penalized him for not having the right supplies or remembering the geography facts from a previous year. What was studied in Plainview Junior High at the beginning of his seventh grade year was different from the study in another school during the winter. When he returned to Plainview Junior High in the spring, he missed the pieces that connected the geography course together. The themes of movement of persons and the plight of changing economic conditions on his family offer a perspective that can give understanding to a group of students who have never faced cycles of joblessness in their own community. Priority Academic Student Skills objectives require students to learn about other cultural environments and this is a foreign environment to some students. Following the theme of movement engages students in an investigation of the issues of employment in many less developed nations with a greater sense of respect for economic development at a global scale. Furthermore, extending the lesson on global economics in this way helps to meet MaryBeth's stated goal: "I want them to learn about their own environment but also about the interdependence of the people and places at a global scale."

Sarah says she feels a certain discomfort with the issues of justice and fairness when her school places a high emphasis on gifted, high achievers, and Advanced Placement students through access to special funding and grants. But she says, "6th hour keeps me honest", a reminder of upholding justice in our society among non-majority groups of students.

This kind of justice in the nation begins with democracy in the classroom, giving every student the right to learn in public school (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Liz sees this

kind of democracy in the inclusiveness of students otherwise left out of the learning environment. She notes, "Kids know when teachers are ethical and fair; they may disagree but will respect the teacher and go back to the classroom, willing to learn."

Though the teachers see their inclusive practices as good teaching, the practices for justice and fairness are often found in the margins of the text, as Maxine Greene (1995) describes the creative and critical thinking that occurs in education beyond the prescribed curriculum. The real dialogue between teachers and students involves the interplay of real inquiry about issues that matter to those involved. They may emerge from literature and art as the deeper expressions of ideas are encountered through the metaphors of these creative works.

How far can a teacher go in the classroom in finding space for understanding differences of beliefs? What words can a teacher use to ask the questions on the edges of a controversial discussion? As MaryBeth says, "She chooses words carefully and tries to understand what someone else believes and tries to instill that view in her students." Teachers act as agents justice and fairness in the everyday practices and interactions in classroom. Each person's experience that "stretches toward the edges of the familiar into the spaces where they can touch the unfamiliar" (Anzaldua, 1988, p. 109) is an experience that can increase awareness and understanding for justice and fairness in the learning environment.

The Legacy of Vision Realized

For many teachers the measure of their achievement takes shape in the realization of their students' promise, hopes, and dreams. Remaining in the classroom depends on this kind of success (Nieto, 2002) and requires the teaching of content knowledge,

intellectual skills, and civic values (NCSS, 2002). The achievements are seldom captured by plaques on the wall or money in a growing mutual fund, but they are memories in the hearts and minds of both teachers and students.

In the face of the continued criticisms of public schools, teachers remain actively involved in supporting and encouraging students. Education is alive and well and contributing to the life of students beyond the classroom and into the community. Reports of failing schools have ignored the experiences of teachers with students who return to share with their teachers their stories of success. The experience of the Michelle Forman (2001), social studies teacher and recipient of the National Teacher of the Year Award is one example. When the captain of the commercial airline announced that the teacher of the year was on board, everyone cheered. Throughout the flight, people stopped to tell her about teachers who had influenced their own lives. The cheer, she said, was for all teachers that she was representing. She was hearing the words of appreciation that had not been delivered before. This is the legacy of the work of classroom teachers. What keeps teachers in the classroom are these realizations of possibilities in students (Nieto, 2002).

With a Personal Perspective

At the personal level teachers describe particular students in their classes who have shown dramatic changes in behavior and attitude. Teachers have given attention to needs of these students and have acted to engage them in education as described in the previous chapter. The positive influence on students may not be immediately recognized although its significance is felt. Some expressions of appreciation come while the student still has a connection with the teacher as with James's student who brought friends by the

classroom to share his success. Other young adolescents return to their junior high as they finish high school with words of appreciation as with Sarah's invitation to attend the Academic All-State banquet. Still others never do express to the teacher the influence of her attention to their promise, hopes, and dreams. The legacy of the teacher in the lives of students comes from secondary sources: MaryBeth hears of former geography students engaged in international studies or Liz sees debate students opening law practices. Later, when students bring their own children back to the school they attended, or serve in PTA, volunteer at school, or begin a second career in education, they are honoring the legacy of their teachers.

While the value of the legacy is important to a teacher's personal and professional life, the participants in this study did not offer the stories as examples of extraordinary teaching skills. Commonly, teachers who received recognition explained, as Virginia did, "But I did not do anything special for him." Teachers expect to achieve these goals. The mission of their work is in keeping with the purpose of social studies education (NCSS (1993): teachers help students become independent, self-regulated learners who can work collaboratively to solve authentic civic and community problems, to think reflectively and make informed decisions about real issues.

With a Professional Perspective

At a professional level, teachers join with colleagues in developing knowledge about teaching and learning that will open doors of opportunities to others through education. Teachers in this study have shown a commitment to this broader goal. MaryBeth, James, Virginia, and Sarah have served on district committees to select textbooks, to write curriculum, and to offer professional development programs that

contribute to quality education in the school district. In addition to these activities, Liz and Virginia have represented the district on state committees and have participated in discussions of policy changes in the district. They have encouraged younger teachers to attend workshops that contribute to their leadership in the school. Dana, for example, attended a Great Expectations seminar after her second year in the classroom and brought plans for involving colleagues in improving self-confidence among students. Liz, as a new administrator, attended a seminar on creating a positive school climate and brought to the school a video series with practical advice for young adolescents developing positive social skills.

The professional legacy of teacher work recognizes the value of research with teachers and what they are doing in their own classrooms that promotes learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle,1993). These researchers suggest school policy makers, willing to look at teachers' practices and insights into quality education, will find that "the benefits of this new knowledge about teaching and learning would outweigh the problems inherent in altering standard school routines and practices, and that decision making can be distributed among teachers, specialists and administrators across the school system" (p. 13).

With a Community Perspective

The vision and promise of public school education is a combined effort of the community and the ideals of democracy. In communities, such as the one in this study, with a history of diversity, the contract schools accept from the community is to uphold the values. Democratic schools seek out diversity in people, perspectives, and ideas and construct educative means to learn from those multifaceted experiences and expertise

(Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 12). The teachers in this study seek justice and fairness in the schools in partial fulfillment of this contract and trust of the community (Dewey, 1916; DuBois, 1939). In this study, the community contract includes justice and fairness for its multi-cultural population. Those who established the town brought diverse histories with them in the search for fulfillment of their dreams. Education was part of that dream for their children and has continued to hold a place of importance in the community.

Students benefit from being part of the community, particularly the interracial community (Ogbu, 1992). They need to be around people who mirror back to them the image of who they are (Tatum, 1999). Extending the learning space into the community opens opportunities for learning in ways that recognize the value of differences. Teachers--mostly white, female, and middle class—are joined in the educational process by a variety of successful adults in the business and professional community. The diversity they bring to the classroom offers students multiple perspectives on particular segments of the activities of the community.

Sarah's classes experienced the diversity of their community as the school invited speakers for Law Day. Representing two perspectives, the lawyers engaged different groups of students in conversation about law within the community. Students asked questions relevant to their lives and found answers.

Teachers look beyond their own schools to understand the whole culture of public schools. Neito (2002) summarizes this point of view, "The civic aim on behalf of the common good extends beyond individual advancement. This shared vision of what could be is the promise of education, and it explains the abiding faith and belief we have in the

public schools" (Nieto, 2002, p. 6).

Summary

The legacy of the educative practices of classroom teachers is found in their personal stories with their students, their professional efforts to improve the quality of education through school wide changes, and their commitment to the ideals of justice and fairness in a democratic society. Education in the 21st century relies on teachers who are engaged in knowing their material, connecting fragments into wholeness, and imaging learning as it might be. When achievement of these goals requires modification of a standardized program, they adapt practices in the interest of educating their students for living in an environment that values multiple perspectives and celebrates the diversity in the global community.

Implications of Teachers' Curriculum and Instructional Changes

Reviewing the Problem of the Study

Educational reform initiatives have brought modest gains in the quality of education for some in the nation's public schools. However, at the same time, they have also denied to others access to meaningful curriculum and instruction. As a result, teachers have modified the standard curriculum to bring students back into the learning processes in their classrooms. Some of these students are at risk of dropping out (or being pushed out) of school. Others remain in school with continued low academic achievement. Still others are invisible, silent, lost in the large and impersonal school environments.

This qualitative study has detailed the stories of individual teachers in the classroom to engage young adolescents in the educative processes of public school. Yet, even with the success stories, too many students in the community are not staying in school until

graduation and teachers are leaving the teaching profession.

Each week brings more state and federal cuts in school funding and reduces the resources for the classroom. Only the essentials of education will remain. Under these circumstances, what understandings and directions can this study contribute to the broader issues of education in middle school classrooms?

Valuing the professional teacher

Reforming schools to meet the challenges of the 21st century begins with respect and affirmation of teachers in the nation's classrooms (Barth,2002; Fullan,1999; Neito, 2002). Trusting the judgement of classroom teachers requires space in the curriculum for professional teachers to make decisions about the best practices for education with their students. Contrary to the "bottom line" measures of effective production in business and industry, quality education is measured in long-term growth, not short term test scores. It is multi-dimensional (Greene, 1995), uncertain, interpreted and expressed in many ways. The results of test scores are soon forgotten, but the teacher who stands with a student to face obstacles in his or her life, brings hope for a better future. The image of teachers as Dreamkeepers (Ladsen-Billings, 1997) extends beyond the Black community to include teachers across all cultural groups. The actions teachers are taking to build connections with their students and communities *do* make a difference in adolescent lives.

Affirming diversity

Another essential aspect for changing schools is affirming the value of diversity in the learning community. For teachers to be responsive to the diversity within their communities, they draw upon their professional preparation, their own experiences, and their skills of relationships. The universities have responsibility for academic preparation,

but the school community has some responsibility for the continuing professional growth of its faculty. Teachers seeking to develop understanding of diversity need experience working with colleagues who bring other cultural experiences, ethnic traditions, and educational perspectives into the conversation. Such professional exchanges can be encouraged by schools supporting teachers as they attend conferences in other regions and request sabbatical time for professional growth and reflection.

To promote creative and critical collaboration also includes working toward recruiting teachers so that the teaching profession models diversity and inclusiveness within schools and communities. Along with the changes in staffing, some of the traditional organization of school boundaries may come under review.

Most urban districts draw boundaries following the historical patterns of settlement. They are bounded by highways and major arterials that move people around the city. Economic disparities in resources of schools have followed advantaged families moving to suburbs. Imagining otherwise, as Maxine Greene (1995) suggests, might allow decision-makers to draw boundaries for secondary schools in other ways. More permeable boundaries between neighborhoods might question using expressways, railroad tracks, and shopping malls as edges of school communities and create a diversity in the population and in the resources for the school. Further study of spatial reorganization for schools might review research in city planning for sustainable communities and seek the voices of educators in developing creative solutions for equitable schools in the 21st century.

Developing school curriculum for the whole child

In addition to interest in diversity in the educational environment in schools, another

essential aspect of emerging educational reforms is an awareness of the many facets of students as persons. Students bring to school many aspects of their lives that play a part in their education. Greene (1995) reminds educators, "A single standard of achievement and one-dimensional definition of success results in injustices and also thins out our cultural life, making it increasingly difficult to bring about a common world and engage in collaborative efforts to resolve "real perplexities" (p. 173).

Bringing together multiple perspectives in the school curriculum capitalizes on the strengths of the multi-cultural learning community and integrates learning with the life in the community rather than fragmenting knowledge and experiences. It can promote collaboration that benefits students, the school, and the community. A school that has caught my attention is found in near north Dallas and has received recognition as Texas' premier International School. How these teachers have included multiple perspectives in a learning community is a future study.

Research from Sonja Nieto (2000) shows what this kind of change might mean in structuring curriculum and instruction for wholeness. In her case studies with Chicano youth, she reports students insist that they want to work with their teachers in determining the best practices for their education. In the classroom, they want longer classes, more in-depth discussion, and access to primary sources. These changes make school more palatable for students otherwise rejecting education. In classes that address real concerns, students' culture, race, and ethnicity are valued and they can figure out for themselves what historical treaties and laws meant or the important beliefs found in a young person's diary and poetry. High expectations, respect for heritage, connections with the neighborhood draw students into meaningful education.

These school-drop-outs who have returned to school suggest that students want to be engaged in discovery, discussion, their own research, self-directed learning. The are not wanting less, but more, education. These concerns are reminiscent of the goals Dewey proposed for educative experiences in his laboratory school and for teaching the whole child. Even a cursory search of recent dissertations shows a renewed interest in Dewey's work that documents practices of collaboration of teachers/students/community in educative experiences. Further study and integration of Dewey's work may provide wisdom in determining what is essential for today's curriculum and instruction.

A second example shows an enactment of collaborative learning in an informal multi-cultural setting. Two master teachers conducted a tutoring session after school in preparation for the Advanced Placement Exams. One teaches American Literature; the other teaches American History. The theme of the session was tracing the development of feminism in the United States in the 19th century through literature and historical events. Students and teachers wove together the influences of events and writers on the feminist movement of the period with a constant exchange of questions and comments. Questions and answers flowed easily with all participants asking questions and responding. The examples offered for consideration indicated the relevance of the discussion and the integration of knowledge. Through the dialogue, they evaluated their 21st century definition of feminism and the movement in present literature and events. This session achieved the goals for learning found in Neito's study: longer classes, more in-depth discussion, and access to primary sources. The educational experience was rich in content, rigorous in analysis, and relevant in the learning environment.

From this study educators can see similarities with their own students and the

learning experiences of their schools. Appropriate content material as determined by the district and the textbook explain only part of the learning equation for professional teachers. The social dimension of education initially draws people into the teaching profession, with a commitment quality of life for a younger generation through education. While the practices of the classroom teachers in this study cannot be duplicated exactly into a classroom in another place, facets of the work professionals are doing and the concerns they share are found in other public schools. Situating the conversation of school reform in places accessible to those most affected by the policy decisions recognizes the value of many critical and creative minds of our pluralistic culture of the 21st century. Under the leadership of multicultural educators and those committed to participating in education that provides equitable opportunities in the society, the dialogue now includes many voices in the conversation about quality education for all students.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide with Teachers

The interaction dimension

1. How did you decide to get into teaching? (warm-up, ideals, affirmation of career choice)
2. Describe one of your best students over the years. (balance of student-centered and subject-centered activities)
3. What is one of your more successful, or creative, projects in the classroom? (correlate with previous question)
4. What do you consider when you create your own activities for students? (issues of justice and equity)
5. How do you determine the effectiveness of particular teaching/learning practices? (assessments for justice and fairness, personal goals, caring)
6. What attitudes/behaviors do you spend the most time trying to establish in your classroom? You might call these teaching goals such as study skills, disciplined behavior, test skills, critical thinking, creativity.
7. What effect do the district/state objectives have on your classroom lessons? (teacher resistance, compliance, support; teacher role in larger view of education)
8. What keeps you in the classroom? How would you describe the rewarding experiences of teaching? (long-term calling, social service, profession, intrinsic rewards)

The time dimension

1. How do you compare this year with other years in terms of teaching and learning in your class? (professional maturity, role of control, changes over time)
2. What personal experiences help you as an educator in such a culturally diverse school setting? (dis-similarity of teacher and student)
3. If you were not so pressed for time, what might you include in your class that would draw reluctant learners into education? (role of student experiences in subject material)
4. At this time, do you cover about the same material as other social studies teachers in the system? Do your students score about the same on standard tests as students in other social studies classes? (reflection on practices, teacher collaboration)
5. Is there a particularly difficult student/situation that you look back on and wish you had had today's wisdom to draw on for your response? (professional experience)

The place dimension

1. How do you describe this school as a place for learning? For students and for teachers? How does it compare with your own middle school experience? (learning climate)
2. What do you think students would say about this school as a learning place? (perceptions of teachers compared to perceptions of students)
3. How much flexibility do you have in what social studies curriculum you teach? How do you decide what to include and what to leave out of the curriculum? (teacher choice, selection criteria, perceived voice)
4. What changes would you like to see in order to make this an ideal learning environment? (issues of democracy and justice, knowledge-content/experience)

Categories of inquiry (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000)
Purpose of question indicated in parentheses following each item (author's note)