

POSSIBILITIES FOR AN INCLUSIVE PRAXIS: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF
DISCOURSES OF MINDFULNESS AND INCLUSION

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

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Abstract

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Amidst the growing trend toward the use of yoga and mindfulness in K-12 classrooms, there has been an emphasis in research on the use of mindfulness as a tool for supporting the learning and behavioral needs of children. Educators, school leaders, school counselors and mental health workers are implementing mindfulness and yoga as activities and strategies to support their classroom teaching practices, and in turn, there is a growing body of classroom curriculum, children's literature, and school-based activities that focus on the implementation of mindfulness and yoga in schools. This rise in pedagogical practice is accompanied by an increase in research that focuses on the effectiveness of mindfulness and yoga as interventions for learning and behavior; however, there has been little to no critical analysis of these practices.

In this dissertation, I take the position that the incorporation of mindfulness and yoga in learning environments can greatly benefit from an understanding of Feminist Pedagogy that emphasizes the embodiment of learning and the empowerment of learners in order to create and sustain inclusive learning communities. Thus, a critical discourse analysis of mindfulness and yoga curriculum in this study illuminate possibilities, and potential pitfalls, for an Inclusive Praxis. This research explores the potential for Feminist Pedagogies, mindfulness, and yoga to

contribute to what constitutes what is introduced as an *Inclusive Praxis*—the process of creating and sustaining inclusive learning spaces through the intentional practice of embodiment and empowerment, and the active recognition and rejection of exclusion.

Centering the question: “How can mindfulness and yoga curriculum support an Inclusive Praxis in schools and diverse learning communities?” Major findings included how overarching themes in the curriculum materials analyzed consisted of: Supporting ‘Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion; Cautioning of Oppressive Forms of Empowerment; and Possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis. The study offers possibilities for teachers, school leaders, and policy makers; and identifies entry points for disrupting dominant discourses of exclusion in learning environments providing a unique and much needed contribution to the overall research on mindfulness and yoga for youth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of Problem	3
Purpose of the Study	4
Definition of Key Terms	4
Background and Context.....	6
Mindfulness in Schools	7
The Intersection of Inclusion and Mindfulness: Towards an Inclusive Praxis	9
Theoretical/Conceptual Framework.....	10
Feminist Theory.....	10
Disability Studies.....	12
Research Methodology.....	13
Organization of Chapters	15
CHAPTER: TWO CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	19
Normalcy, Inclusion, and Schools.....	20
Feminist Theory, Poststructuralism & Feminist Pedagogy.....	25
Feminist Pedagogy	29

Critical Disability Studies/Ideology of Normalcy.....	32
Inclusive Praxis, Discourse, and Emerging Discourses of Exclusion.....	38
Discourse and Discursive Practices.....	40
Emerging Discourses of Exclusion	42
Conclusion.....	45
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	47
Discourse Studies & Critical Discourse Analysis.....	47
Critical Discourse Analysis	51
The Role of the Researcher	53
Positionality and Self-Reflexivity	56
Purpose of the Study	57
Overview of Methods.....	57
Phase 1.....	58
Selection of Curriculum: From Curriculum Studies to CDA of Curricula	58
Categorical Coding: Organizing Curriculum into Mindfulness Categories.....	60
Phase 2.....	61
Feminist Pedagogies: Coding for Embodiment, Empowerment, and Community	61
Phase 3.....	63
Discourses of Exclusion: Organizing and Coding for A Critical Discourse Analysis of	
Materials.....	63
Writing as Method: “I write entirely to find out...”.....	67
Conclusion.....	68
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSES OF EXCLUSION	69

Mindfulness in Schools	69
The Mindfulness Curricula Analyzed: (Im)Possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis.....	73
The MindUP Curriculum: Educating Hearts and Minds	74
Everyday SEL.....	76
Empowering Minds: Empowering Education	77
Dominant Discourses in the Curricula	79
The Discourse of Mindfulness and Yoga in Support—or Undermining—of Feminist Pedagogy and an Inclusive Praxis	81
Yoga.....	85
Visualization	86
Breathwork	88
Mindfulness and Yoga Discourses in Relationship to Discourses of Exclusion.....	89
Reinforcing Value Hierarchy and Separation of Mind/Body Binary over the Mind/Body/Emotion Balance.....	90
Undermining Community, Reinforcing Individualism	98
Ownership, Management, & Control	102
Conclusion.....	105
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	106
The Research Questions	107
Supporting “Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion”	108
Cautioning of Oppressive Forms of Empowerment.....	110
Possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis.....	111
Implications and Recommendations	114

Teachers, School Leaders, and Policy Makers.....	115
Recommendations for Future Research.....	117
Conclusion.....	119
REFERENCES	121

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Preliminary Categories for Mindfulness Practices	60
Table 2: Feminist Pedagogies Preliminary Codes	62
Table 3: Discourses of Exclusion Preliminary Codes.....	63
Table 4: Discourses Supporting/Undermining Social Justice Codes.....	65
Table 5: Macro-Themes for Discourses of Exclusion	66

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Research Design Overview	58
Figure 2: The Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion Connection.....	109
Figure 3: Resonance and Harmony of Feminist Pedagogies with The Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion Connection	113

Dedication

This is dedicated to my mom, Connie Ward—everything important I’ve ever learned has been
from you.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As a former special education teacher, school counselor, and behavior specialist in the K-12 setting in San Diego, CA and Boston, MA, I often worked with children who were so overwhelmed with life stressors, dangerous learning environments, and navigating trauma experiences that learning was significantly impacted and negative behaviors replaced communication of feelings and needs. In the classroom, I would find myself constantly reflecting not only on *how* and *what* I was teaching, but also on *why* I was making certain choices in pedagogy and classroom management when it was clear that what I was doing often didn't work toward my teaching goals. At the same time that I began having these doubts, I was also diving deeply into my personal practice of yoga and meditation and experiencing growth and transformation in profound ways. It didn't take long for me to begin making connections between what I was learning in my own yoga practice—to listen to my body, to trust my instincts, to work toward balance of mind/body/emotion, to practice self-regulation and find safety and comfort in my own body—and what I could be teaching my students that might mean so much more than the behavior charts and reward systems I continued to use without success. So, I started bringing my practice into the classroom, slowly at first with breathing breaks and stretches at our desks every morning, and then leading into Sun Salutations and guided meditations. Soon, our morning breathing and stretches became the only time of day that all of my students participated without issue. They were attentive and engaged. They asked questions and laughed and shared stories from home. During this time, fifteen years ago, I began to realize the possibilities for teaching and learning that involved deep connection and trust and communication. I found the space in my own teaching to illuminate the potential possibilities of

promoting peace in ourselves and in our classroom by centering learning on principles of mindfulness.

At the same time there were, and still are, powerful things taking place in schools that are profoundly oppressive to particular types of learners and that work to reproduce racism, sexism, classism, and ableism. It struck me that to be in school ought not mean learning to function in and submit to the authority of a culture of tremendous abuse, exclusion, and violence. In fact, it had become overly apparent to me that schools were and are preparing too many people for an unjust future in a very unhealthy and, in many ways, broken society. However, despite deep commitments in our society to ignore the need to support the whole child, there are educators and educational leaders in schools and communities of learners that are working hard to consider the emotional, mental, and physical health and well-being of students as part of the learning process. It is in recognition of this and commitment to it, that I set out to do feminist research that seeks to work with, and for, the many children and teachers in schools who are committed to rethinking what it means to participate in a healthy learning environment.

This study analyzes curricula to identify and critically examine discourses of “inclusion” in an effort to explore possibilities for how educators might teach with such curricula in ways that support a holistic wellness for students in the classroom as an interdependent and peaceful community. The research project explores the potential for feminist pedagogies, mindfulness, and yoga to contribute to what constitutes what I’m calling an *Inclusive Praxis*—the process of creating and sustaining inclusive learning spaces through the intentional practice of embodiment and empowerment, and the active recognition and rejection of exclusion (Ward, 2015). To engage in an Inclusive Praxis, one must commit to understanding how exclusion works in learning communities through patterns of discourse that produce and reproduce oppressive

schooling practices for children. The disruption of these discourses can feel like an impossible task, given the assumptions of normalcy that exist within hierarchical systems of schooling, but the aim of an Inclusive Praxis is to create opportunities for empathy, honesty, and community-building by creating spaces that prioritize emotional learning, understanding of self and other, and the value of lived experience. The practices of mindfulness and yoga in learning environments may create spaces for embodiment, empowerment, and inclusion. Certainly, the growing popularity of mindfulness and yoga in schools warrants an examination of these potentials. It is my intention that this study will provide an example for how existing curricula can be of use to schools and other diverse learning communities. In the following pages, I introduce a feminist content analysis of mindfulness and yoga curriculum to examine closely and communicate the dominant discourses of the materials, as they work to support or undermine teaching for mindfulness and inclusion in schools and communities.

Statement of Problem

“How can mindfulness and yoga curriculum support an Inclusive Praxis in schools and diverse learning communities?”

There is a growing trend toward the use of yoga and mindfulness as prominent practices in western industrial culture for maintaining health and wellness. Increasingly, there has been an emphasis on the use of mindfulness as a tool for supporting the learning and behavioral needs of children. Educators, school leaders, school counselors and mental health workers are implementing mindfulness and yoga as activities and strategies to support their classroom teaching practices, and in turn, there is a growing body of classroom curriculum, children’s literature, and school-based activities that focus on the implementation of mindfulness and yoga in schools. This rise in pedagogical practice is accompanied by an increase in research that

focuses on the effectiveness of mindfulness and yoga as interventions for learning and behavior, however, there has been little to no critical analysis of these practices (Cox, Ullrich-French, Howe, & Cole, 2017; Noggle, Steiner, Minami, Khalsa, 2012). In this research, I take the position that the incorporation of mindfulness and yoga in learning environments greatly requires an understanding of Feminist Pedagogy that emphasizes the embodiment of learning and empowerment of learners in order to create and sustain inclusive learning communities. Thus, a feminist analysis of mindfulness and yoga curriculum to illuminate possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis and identify entry points for disrupting dominant discourses of exclusion in learning environments provides a unique and much needed contribution to the overall research on mindfulness and yoga for youth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is not to communicate one grand solution from mindfulness and yoga, nor to suggest these practices are a one-size fits all curriculum; rather I consider it an invitation to an ongoing conversation that openly works through the importance of understanding the diverse, situational influences affecting how educators might work with children in schools in ways that promote the overall health and well-being of diverse learners. More specifically, the purpose of researching mindfulness and yoga curriculum is to better understand how such curricula present opportunities and possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis.

Definition of Key Terms

The definitions of key terminology aim to provide readers unfamiliar with the variety of terminology clarity of understanding and to help avoid misinterpretations (Nenty, 2009).

- ***Critical Discourse Analysis***: the interdisciplinary study of language as a form of social practice, focusing on how power is established and reinforced through language (van Djick, 2008).
- ***Discourse***: a complex, layered, multidimensional object or phenomenon shaped by, and actively shaping, the relational exchanges between language forms (words, phrases, sounds, images, etc.), meanings (often internalized socially constituted sets of valued and shared cultural meanings), and actions (practices and behaviors) (van Dijk, 2011a). An analytical category that describes the relational meaning-making resources, events, and experiences (Fairclough, Mulderring, & Wodak, 2011).
- ***Inclusion***: an effort to maximize the participation of all learner in the school community by meeting the needs of a diverse set of learners (Baglieri, 2017).
- ***Inclusive Praxis***: the active pedagogical process of creating and sustaining inclusive learning spaces through the intentional practice of embodiment, empowerment and community-building in conjunction with the active recognition and rejection of exclusion (Ward, 2015).
- ***Mindfulness***: awareness and acceptance of thoughts, feelings, and physical body without judgement or expectation in order to improve health, balance, and well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).
- ***Yoga***: the union of mind and body through a practice of physical, mental, and spiritual practices (Kenny, Elgelid, & Bose, 2011; Kenny, 2015).
- ***Community***: In a feminist classroom the connection, care, and mutual relations that are built when all students share a sense of responsibility in the learning and contribute to the decision-making process (Shrewsbury, 1993).

- ***Embodiment***: the recognition that learning is a whole-body process that includes thinking, feeling, and emoting (hooks, 1994).
- ***Empowerment***: According to Feminist Pedagogy, power is a critical component of education that should be defined not as domination, but as “energy, capacity and potential.” Power holds community together and the goal of Feminist Pedagogy is to increase the power of all members of the learning community (Shrewsbury, 1993).
- ***Discourses of Exclusion***: a set of communication practices, specifically in learning environments, that create oppressive conditions for students who fall outside of the accepted “norm” for learning and behavior. These conditions lead to the justification of exclusionary measures in schools (Ward, 2014).
- ***Normalcy***: a social construction that situates the “disabled” body as problematic or less than in comparison to the able-bodied ideal or norm (Davis, 1995).

Background and Context

In order to support this argument, it is important to explain mindfulness in schools and how such efforts intersect with inclusion. This is by no means an easy task. In fact, it can be so difficult that what often results are attempts that set out to be inclusive, but never really get deep enough or provide enough support in order to sustain a fundamental shift to what I previously define as an Inclusive Praxis. While I argue that there is a need for mindfulness in schools, in this dissertation research I will focus my attention on the pitfalls as well as the potentials and possibilities for some of the more accessible mindfulness and yoga curriculum for teachers working toward an Inclusive Praxis in their classrooms, schools, and communities. My position is that in this critical moment in history, we need a major shift in how we understand the world. If there is to be any action to bring about that shift peacefully and with as little unjust suffering

as possible, then we ought to explore any possible opportunity. I believe mindfulness and yoga in schools to be that peaceful possibility. In this section, I will provide some background context for mindfulness in schools and how such efforts intersect with inclusion towards an Inclusive Praxis.

Mindfulness in Schools

While there are varying definitions of mindfulness, the components universally agreed upon by those who practice, research, and teach mindfulness include paying attention, acting with intention, and openness to experience. On a larger scale, mindfulness is a way of being in the world, living in peace and stillness, committed to doing no harm through the practice of clearing the mind and opening the heart. These notions are rooted in traditional Buddhist practices of mindfulness and are critical to its understanding (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Mindfulness includes a conscious effort toward awareness and attention that comes from paying close attention to events, acknowledging and accepting them for what they are, and then monitoring our reactions to them (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005). One of the most common uses of mindfulness in schools involves short, guided meditations for students. Research shows these meditative exercises improve focus and attention to task in the classroom (Semple, Lee, Rosa, & Miller, 2003).

The use of mindful learning strategies in schools is becoming increasingly popular as mindfulness gains mainstream momentum in the U.S. education. One reason for this push toward incorporating mindfulness into schools could be as a response to years of rigid standardized testing procedures in schools and an apparent de-valuation of social-emotional learning. Many students report significant feelings of stress and exhaustion due to the high-stakes performance demands they face at school. Research on mindfulness in schools has shown a link between the

practice of mindfulness in the classroom and significant stress-reduction for students (Fisher, 2006). Mindfulness is inherently a practice to de-escalate feelings of stress through the use of deep breathing, visualization, relaxation, and yoga-based movement.

Schools have seen a reduction in unstructured learning opportunities at all levels, as well as less opportunity for relationship-building and social learning. Many schools who have adopted mindfulness strategies have done so in response to increasing rates of behavior-related discipline episodes, negative school climate, and increased need for mental health support on school campuses. There is evidence to suggest mindfulness as a tool for improving behavior and attitudes through a focus on empathy and kindness and community participation.

Much of the research conducted on mindfulness in schools has focused on mental health interventions. Research from Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, and Freedman (2006) indicates that children who practice mindfulness are more equipped to handle stress and anxiety and show improved cognitive abilities after participating in mindfulness practice. Other research shows a significant link between improvement of depressive symptoms and mindfulness practice, which may improve behavior and overall school climate. Other behavioral impacts of a mindfulness practice in school include the development of self-management skills, self-awareness, and impulse control (Semple, Reid, & Miller, 2005; Thompson & Gauntlerr-Gilbert, 2008).

Additionally, research on mindful learning supports its use in classrooms as a way to teach children sustained focus and attention (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a, 2000b). Mindful learning involves teaching students how to critically engage with material by embracing varying viewpoints and honoring a diversity of experiences and possibilities. As Rempel (2005) states, “If we teach children mindfully and they learn mindfully, they are able to hold multiple perspectives and embrace ambiguity” (p. 213). As schools increasingly make decisions about the

health and wellness of their students, we will likely see an increase in the use of mindfulness in schools.

The Intersection of Inclusion and Mindfulness: Towards an Inclusive Praxis

Most glaringly, there currently does not exist research that explicitly examines mindfulness in schools in relationship to efforts of inclusion. Given such a gap in the literature, I conducted research that starts to fill that gap by paying close attention to who gets to participate in mindfulness at school, where does mindfulness in schools happen, and what representations do we see? There is an opportunity to focus the efforts of mindfulness education on shifting the ideology of normalcy and pushing through openings for inclusive learning. The acceptance of a practice rooted in eastern thought as a mainstream strategy and intervention in U.S. schools creates an entry point for re-considering the ways we understand learning and teaching in the West. Mindfulness as an eastern tradition promotes community and empathic action. Competition can be a source of unhealthiness when it is coupled with strong connections to individualism. In traditional mindfulness practice, meditation and yoga through mindfulness are meant to distance individuals from habits of competition toward more intentional, intrinsic reflection, and direction.

Mindfulness practice—including breathing work, meditation, visualization, and yoga-based movement—is inherently inclusive. It is a practice rooted in non-competition and non-violence. Its concern is not a dualistic, hierarchical mind/body relationship of power, but one of integration and wholeness. Individuals are not in competition but rather in community with each other. Mindfulness is entirely premised upon the notion of acceptance for all and the fulfillment of the most balanced state of mind, body, emotion. No two mindfulness practices are identical, there is no normal. Mindfulness is everything we claim for inclusion, yet inclusion in schools

looks nothing like mindfulness. The mainstream acceptance of mindfulness as educational strategy, combined with specific educational theory and action, moves us toward an opportunity to develop inclusive practices in schools that both challenge dominant ideologies of normalcy and create genuine inclusive learning spaces through an Inclusive Praxis.

An Inclusive Praxis strives to move learning communities toward learning experiences that are intuitive and enriching. It is a practice grounded in Feminist Theory and Critical Disability Studies as it actively works to deconstruct discursive practices that are exclusionary and ableist as well as illuminate possibilities for inclusive teaching. Furthermore, an Inclusive Praxis reframes inclusion as an action that must be made with intention. It begins with shifting the ideology of normalcy. It is nurtured through relationships inside the learning community and beyond. It is achieved through compassionate teaching and intuitive curriculum development that includes opportunities for embodied learning, empowerment and community. Facilitating these educational spaces should foster healing, growth, authenticity, creativity, and expression, while actively rejecting practices of exclusion.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Feminist Theory

Foundationally, Feminist Theory holds these major tenets—there is an unequal relationship between women and men. Historically, this relationship is rooted in patriarchy, a system that all societies have enacted and one by which men are valued to a greater extent than women. This male dominance is present in all institutions and it is oppressive to women. Gender is not a biological category, as is sex. Feminine and masculine genders are socialized onto individuals and are not biologically determined (Weedon, 1987). The social conditioning of compulsory masculinity is oppressive to women in that it creates power differences and

inequities between men and women in society. According to de Beauvoir, a leading theorist in the history of Feminist Theory, through socialization only men are allowed to know the value of Self, while women are put in the position of objectified other. It is due to this process of socialization that women are never fully free nor authentically themselves. They exist always in relationship to the dominant male.

Feminist Post-Structuralism situates the essentialized views of “womanhood” within historical context to examine how discourse is enacted at differing times, in different societies to produce these relationships of power. Weedon (1987) writes, “Poststructuralist feminism requires attention to historical specificity in the production, for women, of subject positions and modes of femininity and their place in the overall network of social power relations” (p. 135). Further, Judith Butler’s (1999) work on gender performativity illustrates *how* this unequal subjectivity constitutes and reconstitutes itself in society. Butler describes gender as inscribed upon the body by discursive practices and therefore a fabrication not necessarily aligned with one’s true gender. In this way, “genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity” (p. 378). This is useful in the context of discourse because it refutes the argument for naturalized gender identities and opens up the possibility for fluidity in the way we talk about and understand the human experience of identity. Power is located and produced discursively and can thus be interrupted and untangled from hegemonic practices of oppression by challenging discursive norms of ideology within institutions.

Thus, Feminist Post-Structuralist Theory lays the foundation for re-considering the accepted discursive norms that are seemingly solidified in an ideology of normalcy in schools. Important in this discussion is the impact of Feminist Theory and Pedagogy as a way to de-center

hierarchical understandings of knowledge and expression. Inherent in an ideology of normalcy is the valuing of specific types of learning and knowing, expressing and emoting. Feminist Pedagogy, rooted in Feminist Theory, values the critical engagement of students on both an emotional and intellectual level. The classroom is a collaborative space that values the embodiment of learning and identity and centers the lived experience of students. The goals of Feminist Pedagogy include community engagement and activism, shared power and equality, and the honoring of all types of knowledge. Ultimately, if inclusion is what we seek in schools, we should be disrupting the dominantly held belief that learning is most valuable when measured and assessed against a standardized norm. Feminist Theory and Pedagogy provide one example of an opening for re-thinking and these assumptions.

Disability Studies

In the book, *Feminist Queer Crip* (2013), Alison Kafer describes her project of “imagining more accessible futures...a yearning for an elsewhere—and perhaps, an ‘elsewhen’—in which disability is understood otherwise: as political, as valuable, as integral” (p. 3). This type of re-imagining is critical to shifting our understandings of normalcy and inclusion in schools. As detailed above, Feminist Theory is an important starting point for this work, however, given the complexities of identity, experience, and subjectivity related to the understandings of normalcy and inclusion in schools, the theoretical framework would be incomplete without engaging the critical perspectives of Disability Studies.

The process of normalization that constitutes an ideology of normalcy as the basis for exclusion and inclusion involves a complex process of power production. Interrogation of this ideology must include a discussion of the hierarchical dualisms of normal/abnormal, ability/disability, and regular/special education at work in schools. As described above, these assumptions

of fixed identity are produced and maintained by discursive practices in schools and society writ large. The experience and understanding of disability is complex and diverse. It requires a trans-disciplinary theoretical approach in order to unpack the layers of oppression and assumption associated with living with a disability in a society designed to exclude and even eliminate disability from mainstream culture. Discursively, these practices of exclusion and elimination are enacted at the level of the institution at all turns. Normalcy in schools is one mechanism for maintaining these power structures through ideological assumptions of worth and contribution while these institutions simultaneously engage in organizational practices of exclusion and inclusion to continually re-affirm the subject positions of normal/abnormal, able/disabled, and regular/special education in schools.

An Inclusive Praxis strives to heal students from these violent practices and move them toward learning experiences that are intuitive and enriching. It is a practice rooted in a Feminist Theory and Disability Studies, then put into practice through Feminist Pedagogy. Additionally, an Inclusive Praxis reframes Inclusion as an action that must be made with intention. It begins with shifting the ideology of normalcy. It is nurtured through relationships inside the learning community and beyond. It is achieved through compassionate teaching, intuitive curriculum development that includes opportunities for Embodiment, Empowerment, and Community.

Research Methodology

Aligned with the theoretical framework—and in connection with the research purpose and questions, the following is a critical discourse study of mindfulness curriculum materials in relationship to possibilities—and impossibilities—for implementation through Feminist pedagogies in schools and classrooms. Situated in a qualitative methodology, discourse studies inform the design of this study drawing from both discourse analysis and critical discourse

analysis (CDA) research practices and protocols. Discourse analysis is described by Gee (2014a) as “the study of language in use” (p. 8). While discourse analysis offers researchers a methodological means to examine grammar structures and the relationship between grammar, actions, and identities in relationship to meanings, discourse analysis can also offer ways for researchers to ask these same questions about language relationships but with specific attention to deeper cultural explanations. Such discourse studies can be called CDA—or as Gee (2014a) describes as discourse analysis conducted with the intent for the research process and findings to “speak to and, perhaps, intervene in, institutional, social, or political issues, problems, and controversies in the world” (p. 9).

CDA is described by Fairclough (2013a) as “a relational form of research” (p. 3) that is relational, dialectical, and transdisciplinary. In this research, the focus is on the social relational meaning making process via discourses between the curriculum and those teaching and learning in relationship to the curriculum and the socio-political cultural contexts of both the curriculum and those likely to be engaging in working to implement mindfulness curriculum into schools or other learning programs. In this sense, the study is not only focused on the curriculum materials or the potential educators, or only the social contexts, but rather the relationality between and among all three of these layers—the way discourse works throughout the relationships between curriculum, educators, and the socio-cultural context of both. This research also focuses on the dialectic of this relationality in that the curriculum and the lived experiences of those teaching and learning the curriculum can be separated as two discrete objects different from one another but via discourse they flow into each other in ways that the discourses in the curriculum and analyzed in this study are cultural and vice-versa. Furthermore, this study is transdisciplinary as the objects of study in this research—the patterns and themes in the relational spaces between the

curriculum materials in relationship to teachers and learners and the multi-layered complexities of social relationships—are constructed and analyzed drawing from theories of discourse and other relevant theories (Fairclough, 2013a). In other words, CDA primarily focuses on how discourse shapes, and is shaped by, complex and layered social relations and the role of particular discourses in the meaning-making process as potentially mediated by the discourses and discursive practices in the curriculum materials.

Drawing on methods from CDA, in this study I conducted a multi-phased critical discourse analysis of a group of mindfulness curriculum materials that were chosen based on their accessibility, frequency of citation on mindfulness blogs and in yoga communities, and that were being used by teachers and schools working to implement mindfulness practices into schools and classrooms. Following Gee (2014a), a critical discourse analysis is utilized to explore the curriculum materials to illuminate the ways that discourses of embodiment, empowerment, and community are shaped by, and shaping, Discourses In(Ex)clusion and Discourses of (Dis)Empowerment.

Organization of Chapters

This study is intended to communicate the many layers and dimensions of mindfulness and yoga curriculum materials as they are considered for implementation for learning spaces through Feminist pedagogies and with attention to inclusion and empowerment. While there exists literature on mindfulness practices in schools and the role of yoga and mindfulness in working with schools, teachers, and students there is a lack of research that examines the deep cultural assumptions undergirding—and at times contradicting—the mindfulness and yoga objectives emerging from the very curriculum materials often assumed to be aligned to empowerment and inclusion. Traditional approaches to examining mindfulness strategies,

practices, and programs in schools dominate the literature and tend to be focused on Social Emotional Learning, Academic success, and Health and Wellness. This study sets out to critically examine curriculum materials in efforts to make explicit the inextricable connections between racism, sexism, class inequality, abilities, and other forms of injustices in education and the potential for confronting such societal inequalities through Feminist Pedagogy in connection with mindfulness and yoga. Further, this study seeks to illustrate possibilities that the curriculum materials offer educators as it works through a Feminist framework with a commitment to identifying how these forms of unjust suffering are a manifestation of the discursively constituted ideological systems that work to exclude and oppress so many of the world's marginalized peoples. This study addresses the need to critically rethink why and how we might teach differently, and work at all levels of educational support to foster the development of both mindfulness and yoga in schools and other learning spaces.

This study seeks to provide insight for readers into how an Inclusive Praxis might shape educational reform efforts and the necessary structures for engaging such counter-cultural work in schools and communities. The intended audience for this dissertation consists of teacher educators, educational researchers, teachers, educational leaders, policy makers and those interested in exploring how mindfulness curriculum in schools might offer an inclusive and empowering education for all. The focus of this work is not to only highlight the existence of pitfalls and problems in the materials, but rather to direct attention to possibilities that emerge when discourses are recognized and reworked pedagogically. Firstly, it is important to clearly reiterate that this study is not set up to evaluate the materials examined. This research is intended to contribute to understandings of the pedagogical potential, and challenges, for mindfulness and

yoga as part of an Inclusive Praxis and how teaching is situated within a broader movement of Feminist Pedagogy.

This chapter introduced the research and provides a brief overview of the study. It also introduces key definitions and presents summaries of the chapters. Chapter 2, “Conceptual Framework: Introducing an Inclusive Praxis” presents important theoretical contributions from Feminist Theory, Critical Disability Studies, and Feminist Pedagogy as they work to define what I refer to as an Inclusive Praxis. Chapter 2 provides an introduction to—and definitions for—Discourses of Exclusion, shares with readers how an Inclusive Praxis works as a Feminist Pedagogy, and describes how such a conceptual framework is important for the critical discourse analysis of mindfulness and yoga curriculum materials.

Given the interrelated nature of language and culture in connection with power and ideology, Chapter 3 “Methods” details the careful attention required to conducting a CDA study. After providing an overview of CDA, I revisit my positionality shared in the preface with attention to the importance of being self-reflexive in qualitative research and in this study. Following defining CDA and sharing my researcher positionality, the third chapter introduces in detail the research design, selection criteria, coding process, discourse analysis, and writing steps taken in the study to communicate the analysis and findings shared in Chapter 4 and concluding in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 4, “Discourses of Exclusion: Discourses of (Dis)Empowerment for an Inclusive Practice,” I provide an introduction to all three of the mindfulness curriculum in the study. Following these descriptive introductions, Chapter 4 examines the ways mindfulness and yoga curricula work to support, or undermine, principles of Feminist Pedagogy in schools. Additionally, the chapter includes a close consideration of the relationship between curricula

currently bring used in schools to teach mindfulness and yoga practices and the possibility for an Inclusive Praxis. Chapter 5, “Conclusions and Implications,” wraps up the study and provides final thoughts on the implications and recommendations for mindfulness curriculum in schools, classrooms, and for informal learning spaces. Additionally, this concluding chapter shares recommendations and directions for future research toward better understanding the multilayered relationality of learning that support an Inclusive Praxis in education.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: INTRODUCING AN INCLUSIVE PRAXIS

In this chapter I introduce the theories that inform the conceptual framework for this study. First, I provide an introduction to what I call an Inclusive Praxis and then an overview of how Feminist Theory and Critical Disability Studies work through Feminist Pedagogies to support a critical discourse analysis of mindfulness curricula with specific attention to what I explain in this chapter as discourses of exclusion. Recognizing the pervasiveness of current Western cultural assumptions about education, and more specifically the restrictive conceptions of personhood within patriarchal-ableist, racist, and capitalist culture—I turn to a conceptual framework I call an Inclusive Praxis, making the assertion that education supportive of inclusion and empowerment for all requires rethinking how we both constitute, and are constituted by, understandings of “inclusive” education and how those constituted conceptions impact our understanding and support of an empowering, embodied education.

One need not go too far into the literature to find strong evidence that education, more specifically schooling, is too often examined without critically considering the larger economic and exclusionary paradigms that may hinder and limit the possibilities for any curriculum to facilitate educators and their students moving beyond the confines of the dominant discursive boundaries that I introduce later in this chapter. Situated within the educational contexts of Feminist Theory, Feminist Pedagogies, Critical Disability Studies, and teaching and research interests in mindfulness and yoga, this chapter introduces what I am calling an Inclusive Praxis as a conceptual framework for research that illuminates possibilities, and challenges, for educators working with mindfulness curriculum to teach in ways that support empowering and

embodied inclusive learning. Such work requires addressing difficult theoretical contestations of *who* is included/excluded and empowered/oppressed in any educational culture and community.

All understandings of *community* are culturally mediated and thus directly linked to centuries old patterns of beliefs and behaviors that rely on dominant discourses. All meaning and knowledge is dependent on—and connected to—language; and language is inextricable from culture and vice versa. Language, never neutral, is the medium through which we transfer values, meanings, and the knowledge systems constituting not only how we understand and act in relationship to material objects and socio-cultural practices but also how we recognize—or fail to—the limitations of any language system. In other words, everything we know is political and thus so is how, where, and what we are learning. Thus, when considering the relational nature of what constitutes a classroom, school, or any kind of learning community one must consider the larger socio-political and economic cultural influences on any teaching and learning relationship. Furthermore, as part of such considerations one must also recognize the role of curriculum in the teaching and learning process. With attention on education—and curriculum—embedded within the cultural contexts of society, a large part of this work is to challenge dominant assumptions in Western education cultures about what it means to be included and *who is*—and all too often *who is not*—included in such efforts toward achieving *inclusion*. Furthermore, this work seeks to unsettle notions of inclusion through making it explicit that if the dominant discourses shaping society and community are not examined closely then efforts to include and empower too often end up exclusionary and oppressive.

Normalcy, Inclusion, and Schools

In the essay, “Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century” (2006) Lennard J. Davis explains in great detail

the historical emergence of the normal/abnormal binary as both a concept and a social process. Davis refers to the time period of 1840-1860 as that in which the use of various terms to indicate the “norm” (normal, abnormal, normality, normalcy) began to appear in the English language, thus signifying the historical period that brought this concept into consciousness. Davis cites the development of the “normal person” as connected to scientific discovery, statistics, and eugenics in the industrialization period. Measurement and categorization of human health, intelligence and behavior mark this period. Furthermore, the normal/abnormal binary is a product of social processes that serve to standardize health, intelligence, and behaviors with the constant goal of hierarchical organization—good/bad, regular/irregular, normal/abnormal. *Normalcy* in disability studies can be understood as a social construction that situates the “disabled” body as problematic or less than in comparison to a politically constructed notion of the able-bodied ideal or norm (Davis, 1995).

Cultural processes of ableist dominant culture solidify the hierarchical rank of dualisms such as normal/abnormal through the exclusion of members of a society who do not fit into the category of normal. Davis (1995) describes normalcy as being defined by disability as they are undeniably linked together in the same system. This may be referred to as an ideology of normalcy that is pervasive in cultural institutions. In fact, the ranking and sorting of normal versus abnormal is a unifying and all too commonly uninterrupted social process for humans attempting to navigate complex social spaces such as school. The accepted practice of ranking and sorting students based on their abilities to meet standardized expectations in school, relies on a process of othering by which people are granted belonging and inclusion based on performance of academic and behavioral norms and evaluated through normalized standards fraught with cultural and ableist bias. Ware (2004) refers to this as system of shared beliefs and practices as

an Ideology of In(ex)clusion, examining the many complex ways that inclusion and exclusion are entangled and working together in schools.

There is no normal without an understanding of and experience with the socially constructed notion of an abnormal. There is no need for inclusion without the initiating act of exclusion. The pervasive ideology of “inclusion” is produced by discourses that perpetuate the dominant model of normal/abnormal, but if left unexamined and unchallenged an accepted cycle of oppression for students who fall outside the norm is perpetuated. Ultimately, the notion of inclusion in school serves as a justification for exclusionary practices for students who fall outside of a discursively constructed norm. These students are relegated to separate physical spaces, often far removed from locations that encourage consistent contact and participation in the school community. They are talked about and planned for by adults who develop contracts and learning plans to span the entirety of their school career, most often without input from the students themselves. Their behaviors and perceived capacities are written about and discussed by those with “expertise”—teachers, psychologists, counselors, parents, etc.—often in terms that make overgeneralized assumptions about the needs of the student and detached from the lived experience and understanding of the individual.

The very notion that students whose learning and expression falls below or outside an arbitrarily fabricated norm must be invited into the larger school community through the process of *Inclusion*, implies a hierarchical structure of normal versus abnormal, enough and less than. The very foundation of schooling in the United States is built upon an ideology of normalcy and homogenization that has been historically enacted through the violent practices of colonization, industrialization, segregation, and modernization. Current exclusionary neoliberal practices of ranking and sorting students based on ideological assumptions of normalcy perpetuate the violent

oppression of marginalized students, as they are expected to control their moving bodies and regulate their expression of knowledge to increase productivity, compliance, and contribution (Erevelles, 2000; Lupinacci, Happel-Parkins, & Ward Lupinacci, 2018). This is a system of schooling that fits very few students and pushes the rest into places of submission, abuse, and neglect.

More recently in North American dominant education culture, inclusion is understood as an effort to maximize the participation of all students in the school community by meeting the needs of a diverse set of learners (Baglieri, 2017). While this definition may present as inclusive to learning needs, in practice the act of inclusion relies on an exclusive standard of normalcy that all students are expected to strive toward. From a critical perspective, *Inclusion* relies upon decisions of who is worth including and in what ways they should be included, based on social constructions of the standards to which each shall be held. The process of normalization that constitutes an ideology of normalcy as the basis for exclusion and inclusion, involves a complex process of power production. Discursively, these practices of exclusion and elimination are enacted at the level of the institution at all turns. Normalcy in schools is one mechanism for maintaining these power structures through ideological assumptions of worth and contribution while these institutions simultaneously engage in organizational practices of exclusion and inclusion to continually re-affirm the subject positions of normal/abnormal, able/disabled, and regular/special education in schools. This form of ideology is pervasive in American public schools, going unnoticed and unchallenged. Brantlinger (2004), describing the power of problematic ideology, stated:

The assumptions grounded in ideologies are taken for granted as children go to school, people live in communities, and professionals establish careers. Nevertheless, failure to

attend to ideology or denial of its existence and impact leaves scholars and educators with only partial knowledge of life in schools and communities, and an incomplete understanding of their work. (p. 14)

An alternative to these accepted practices that constitutes what Ware (2004) refers to as an Ideology of (In)Exclusion—the binding and justifying ideas that set up efforts to be “inclusive” as a means to disproportionately benefit those in power—must involve a model of teaching that seeks to disrupt the exclusionary discourses of normalcy, disconnection, disempowerment, and commodification while also providing practical applications of pedagogy that create conditions of inclusion that include a feminist pedagogical understanding of community, empowerment, and embodiment.

Thus, an Inclusive Praxis exists as an active pedagogical process for creating and sustaining inclusive learning spaces through the intentional practice of embodiment, empowerment, and community-building in conjunction with the active recognition and rejection of exclusion (Ward, 2015). In acknowledgment of the damage that can be done in an educational culture that reproduces a rigid categorization of identities, an emphasis on values-based standardization and the performance of normalcy through achievement, and consistently creates learning conditions that are focused on high-stakes testing with little connection to creativity or emotion, Inclusive Praxis (Ward, 2015) strives to engage students in embodied learning practices and participatory community in school. An Inclusive Praxis is a conceptual framework born of a need for critical pedagogies to be more responsive to directly addressing the ways patriarchy and ableism work together with other forms of oppression—like racism and classism—discursively in schools and classrooms too often claiming to be empowering and inclusive but experienced as disempowering and exclusionary.

Inclusive Praxis re-frames inclusion as an action that must be made with intention. It begins with shifting the ideology of normalcy. It is nurtured through relationships inside the learning community and beyond. It is achieved through compassionate teaching, intuitive curriculum development that includes opportunities for embodied learning activities such as mindfulness and yoga, nature experience, creative expression, community engagement, and practical implementation of Universal Design for Learning (Baglieri, 2017). The guiding assumption of such efforts are that these educational spaces should foster healing, growth, authenticity, creativity, and expression for all types of learners/communicators/movers. However, these goals require that educators, and educational leaders, in learning spaces address the deep assumptions of the education culture asking critical questions about *who* and *what* and for *whom* and *what* political agenda, since all teaching is political and so is an Inclusive praxis. If all teaching, and learning, is political then an Inclusive praxis seeks to interrupt and offer alternative to current dominant normalcy in schools, classrooms, and communities.

An Inclusive Praxis works to re-claim inclusion from the current system of evaluating, ranking, and sorting by emphasizing learning activities that incorporate mind/body/emotion, connect individuals to each other through recognizing the importance of relationships, and to re-establish a connection between every individual to his/her community. For the purpose of this study, an emphasis on the development of an Inclusive Praxis framework—including its conceptual grounding, theoretical roots, and practical application—is important for understanding how a critical discourse analysis of mindfulness and yoga curriculum might contribute to the re-imagining of inclusion in schools.

Feminist Theory, Poststructuralism & Feminist Pedagogy

In order to illustrate the epistemological roots of an Inclusive Praxis, in this section of the

chapter I briefly provide an overview of Feminist Theory and how poststructural feminism contributes to the central theory informing Inclusive praxis—a theory of Feminist Pedagogy. Feminism is not only a theory, but “a political movement concerned with women’s oppression and the ways and means to empower women” (Storey, 2012, p. 137). Foundationally, Feminist Theory holds the major tenet that there exists an unequal relationship between women and men in cultural historical terms. Historically, this relationship is rooted in patriarchy, a system by which men are valued to a greater extent than women, thus inherently understood as more suited for positions of power that include dominion over the bodies of women as objects. This male dominance is pervasive in all institutions, creating oppressive and inequitable social conditions for women (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). While decades of liberal feminism have fought for equal opportunity for women with a focus on legal and economic achievement, socialist—often identifying as Marxist—feminists critically examine the relationships between class and gender attributing the subjugation of women as fundamental to the reproduction of capitalism. Both liberal and socialist feminists focus on equality and sameness in comparison to the male privilege and power of masculinity in patriarchal culture and radical feminists assert that there are important differences between women and men and hold femininity and female superior to masculinity. While there are different feminisms that fall under the umbrella of Feminist Theory, diverse feminisms share the commonality of challenging that sex and gender are an organizing principal by which groups of people, and even other species in Posthumanist and Ecofeminist Theory, are subjugated in relation to one another in value-hierarchizing ways that hold superior to all patriarchy.

A critique and resistance to patriarchy is fundamental to all feminism. While the aforementioned different feminisms, in general, take the position that all women share a

fundamental commonality of being oppressed in patriarchal cultures, Black feminists argue that deep assumptions of this universalizing experience of women as subjugated in contrast to men have a long history of ignoring, and/or devaluing, the different ways Black, and Brown, women experience inequality and oppression. This emphasis on the differences of experiences among women is also shared by poststructural feminists that take the position that sex and gender are socially and culturally constructed and that subjectivities encompass a wide range of masculinities and femininities across diverse cultures and contexts. Gender is not a biological category, as is sex. Feminine and masculine genders are socialized onto individuals and are not biologically determined (de Beauvoir, 1946/2009). The social conditioning of compulsory masculinity is oppressive to women in that it creates power differences and inequities between men and women in society. According to de Beauvoir (1946/2009), a leading theorist in the history of Feminist Theory, through socialization only men are allowed to know the value of Self, while women are put in the position of objectified other. It is due to this process of socialization through patriarchal assumptions of male as superior to all otherized beings that women in patriarchal societies are never fully free nor authentically themselves. They exist always in relationship to the dominant male.

Feminist poststructuralism situates the essentialized views of “womenhood” within historical context to examine how discourse is enacted at differing times, in different societies, to produce these relationships of power. Weedon (1987), writes: “Poststructuralist feminism requires attention to historical specificity in the production, for women, of subject positions and modes of femininity and their place in the overall network of social power relations” (p. 135). Further, Judith Butler’s work on gender performativity illustrates *how* this unequal subjectivity constitutes and reconstitutes itself in society. Butler describes gender as inscribed upon the body

by discursive practices and therefore a fabrication not necessarily aligned with one's true gender. In this way, "genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (p. 378). In the current study, a critical analysis of the discourse provides an entry-point for examining the power productions and relationships within education culture.

Power is located and produced discursively and can thus be interrupted and untangled from hegemonic practices of oppression by challenging discursive norms of ideology within institutions. We move away from an essentialized view of personhood and toward a poststructural feminist framework that values woman as an experience and a position of personhood. Providing a feminist analysis of discourse in schools encourages a more critical view that values the lived experience of women of color through an intersectional feminist lens, and a poststructural view that examines the discursive production of position and power so that we may use the discursive production of such things as an entry point for re-thinking normalcy, disrupting discourses and practices of exclusion, and re-distributing power in ways that are meaningful, equitable, and just. Poststructuralism gives power to position through the recognition of discursively produced identities. This framework allows all who identify as non-dominant, and there are many who do within the education culture, to then participate in the telling of the story, the shifting of the discourse, and the distribution and re-distribution of power.

Feminist poststructuralist theory lays the foundation for re-considering the accepted discursive norms that are seemingly solidified in an ideology of normalcy in schools. Important in this discussion is the impact of Feminist Theory and pedagogy as a way to de-center hierarchical understandings of knowledge and expression. Judith Butler (1999) emphasizes that "normal" constructs such as femininity and masculinity are discursively constructed through

cultural performances and thus are experienced and accepted as natural and inevitable. It is through these discursive productions that ideologies are formed and accepted as the norm. This creates an ideology of normalcy that is enacted in schools through the over-valuing of specific types of learning and knowing, expressing and emoting, and the under-valuing of non-normative identity expressions. In order to examine the possibilities of an Inclusive Praxis, it is important not only to understand the cultural production of normalcy and all of its associated consequences for children, but to also offer an entry-point to the re-thinking of these normal practices. Theoretically, Feminist Pedagogy and critical disability studies provide that opening.

Feminist Pedagogy

In *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989) bell hooks details how feminism is a political movement to not only understand and respond to patriarchy in efforts that empower diverse women, but also that to empower can be described a “finding a voice” and “moving from silence into speech as a revolutionary gesture” (p. 12). According to hooks “coming to voice is an act of resistance” and she explained: “As objects, we remain voiceless—our beings defined and interpreted by other” (p. 12). Quoting Mariana Romo-Carmona, hooks (1989) shared: “Each time a woman begins to speak, and liberating process begins, one that is unavoidable and has powerful political implications” (Romo-Carmona in hooks, 1989, p. 12). Audrey Lorde in *Poetry is Not a Luxury* (2012) wrote “... I feel therefore, I can be free” (p. 38) and reminds us that Feminist Pedagogy is about feeling and empowerment through an embodied resistance through finding and feeling one’s voice. Feminist Pedagogy facilitates learning to find one’s voice, and a movement toward empowerment and community. Adriene Mishler (2019), a widely-known U.S.-based yoga instructor, is quoted saying: “To find your voice, it’s helpful to be in your body.”

Feminist Pedagogy, rooted in Feminist Theory, values the critical engagement of students on both an emotional and intellectual level. Shrewsbury (1993), explains:

Feminist Pedagogy is a theory about the teaching/learning process that guides our choice of classroom practices by providing criteria to evaluate specific educational strategies and techniques in terms of the desired course goals or outcomes. (p. 166)

Through Feminist Pedagogy, the classroom becomes a collaborative and engaging space that values the embodiment of learning and identity and centers the lived experience of students, shifting away from practices that emphasize competition and individual performance, and toward community. Shrewsbury (1993), emphasizes that “Feminist Pedagogy begins with a vision of what education might be but frequently is not” (p. 166). This sort of envisioning of what could or ought to be in relationship to feminist goals situates “the classroom as a liberatory environment in which we, teacher-student and student-teacher, act as subjects, not objects” (p. 166).

Elaborating on Feminist Pedagogy as liberatory teaching, Shrewsbury describes:

Feminist Pedagogy is engaged teaching/learning—engages actively with the material being studied; engaged with others in a struggle to get beyond our sexism and racism and classism and homophobia and other destructive hatreds and to work together to enhance our knowledge; engaged with community, with traditional organizations, and with movements for social change. (p. 166)

The goals of Feminist Pedagogy offer a different way of being together and learning in the classroom that include community engagement and activism, shared power and equality, and the honoring of all types of knowledge. Ultimately, if inclusion is what we seek in schools, we should be disrupting the dominantly held belief that learning is most valuable when individually measured and assessed against a standardized norm that ignores the valuing of the diverse web of

interdependent relationships in our local, and global, communities. Feminist Theory and pedagogy provide one example of an opening for re-thinking and deconstructing these assumptions.

In a feminist classroom, the connection, care, and mutual relationships that are built when all students share a sense of responsibility in the learning and contribute to the decision-making process constitutes *community* (Shrewsbury, 1993). At a glance, these concepts may seem simple, but if we look closely at the dynamics of most American classrooms we will find something quite different at work. Teachers are often seen as the holders and keepers of power in the classroom. They set and enforce the rules, dictate what knowledge is most important, determine how it will be learned and how it should be communicated back in an offer of proof that such material has been mastered, and decide the appropriate ways of expression and communication in the classroom. When any of these expectations go unmet, students are considered non-normal, thus labeled low-achievers or learning disabled, behavior problems or defiant. Through Feminist Pedagogy, we shift this top-down relationship to include students in the development of their learning space. Giving students this voice allows us to better understand and meet their needs, which promotes engagement with the learning and investment in each other. Identifying as a vital and valued member of a community increases engagement and enthusiasm (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2007).

According to Feminist Pedagogy, power is a critical component of education that should be defined not as domination, but as energy and potential. Power holds community together and the goal of Feminist Pedagogy is to increase the power of all members of the learning community (Shrewsbury, 1993). Feminist scholar bell hooks, describes this as “finding a voice” (1989) and in Feminist Pedagogy this is considered *empowerment*. Students are taught to identify

their needs through *embodiment* in the classroom—the recognition of learning as a whole-body process that includes thinking, feeling, and emoting (hooks, 1994)—then participate in the learning community based on those needs. No student is more or less valuable in a feminist classroom and equal voice is given to each member. If a member of the learning community engages in harm, the group has the power to communicate their feelings and needs for safety. When a shared vision of community is the expectation and the contribution of all members is valued, conditions of care and connection are created, making the group less likely to project and accept harmful attitudes and actions. By engaging a Feminist Pedagogy, we can isolate and apply specific action steps that will contribute to inclusion. However, this alone does not create the conditions for inclusive praxis. As noted above, we must also work to disrupt the ideology of normalcy that holds students in subject positions of “less than” normal and reinforces the need for educational practices that exclude students based on these discursively produced identities. Critical Disability Studies, as outlined below, provides the theoretical basis for this type of re-thinking.

Critical Disability Studies/Ideology of Normalcy

Critical Disability Studies is an interdisciplinary field that challenges the medical model of disability and traditional practices of special education in schools by interrogating the notion of “ableism,” an unearned and assumed privilege of those without disability, which typically goes unacknowledged. Scholars in the field often use discursive analyses to examine how power and position are produced within the institutions such as schools. Linda Ware (2001), summarizing the work of disability studies, explains:

When using an emphasis on understanding disability as discursively and materially created, the medical model is problematized such that questions of civil rights and social

justice are privileged over those cast as personal problems. Among the critical issues in humanities-based disability studies are those related to identity, education, representation, sexuality, personal meanings of disability, access, employment, religion and spirituality, and strategies for empowerment and activism. (p. 110)

As Ware points out, a traditional, positivist model views “disability” as a personal issue rather than a societal one. This is problematized by disability studies, primarily by re-conceptualizing disability as a social construct, accompanied by privileges that are granted through participation in “normal” social categories enacted in institutions. For example, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) describe the process of individuals with disabilities being segregated into separate educational spaces because their participation in regular classes would be too slow and limited. This is a rationalization of segregation based on a social construction of what it means to be differently abled in schools.

Critical Disability Studies in Education (CDSE) has emerged as a specific subfield within Disability Studies as a challenge to positivist views of disability in schools and the special education system (Erevelles, 2000; Ware, 2001). Traditional practices of American education focus on remediation for those who are labeled as “disabled” or “deficient” and placed within the special education system. The goal of schooling for these students is to foster independence so that they may live and work more “normally.” CDSE challenges this notion by considering the social constraints that keep students from accessing academic experiences and challenging ableist assumptions about what it means to think, communicate, emote, move and learn “normally.” Thomas Hehir (2002) applying the concept of able-ism to schooling, stated:

From an ableist perspective, the devaluation of disability results in societal attitudes that uncritically assert that it is better for a child to walk than roll, speak than sign, read print

than read Braille, spell independently than use a spell-check, and hang out with nondisabled kids as opposed to other disabled kids. (p. 3)

With this considered, it is assumed in schooling that students with “deficiencies” should strive to do the same things that their “normal” peers do, measuring their successes through standards that are contrived by institutionalized notions of normalcy. The enactment of this ideology assumes that overcoming disability is the ultimate goal, stressed from a very early age, and reinforced by cultural practices, media, and schooling. Hehir (2002) argues that unquestioned ableist assumptions are causing educational inequality and becoming the barrier for children with disabilities.

This ableist form of ideology is pervasive in American public schools, going unnoticed and unchallenged. According to Brantlinger (2004): “The stories we tell about ourselves, others, and the way life should be are forms of ideology that have a great impact on daily life in schools and communities” (p. 14). These ideologies are developed and maintained by members of dominant culture and operate at the level of the unconscious. This form of ideology is pervasive and understood as “common knowledge” by the dominant population, going often unnoticed and unchallenged. Brantlinger (2004) expanding further, stated:

The assumptions grounded in ideologies are taken for granted as children go to school, people live in communities, and professionals establish careers. Nevertheless, failure to attend to ideology or denial of its existence and impact leaves scholars and educators with only partial knowledge of life in schools and communities, and an incomplete understanding of their work. (p. 14)

This ideology of inclusion is widely accepted within the institution of school and is produced by discourses that perpetuate dominant values. The dominant group, holding the most power within

the hierarchy, the ones of “sound mind” and “able body” decide who is worth including, in what ways they should be included, and construct the standards to which each shall be held. This is the lived experience of anyone who has been in school. It is taught in teacher preparation programs and enacted in pedagogical praxis in classrooms. In discussing ideology within the institution of special education, Brantlinger (2004) explained:

all societies are structured by differentiated roles and usually a stratified division of labor; that is, people sort and rank each other. Ranked relations are based on the assumption that the two groups are fundamentally different from each other with an irreversible symmetry between them. (p. 20)

A construct such as *normal*, which drives the creation of standards for academic achievement and expectations for appropriate behavior, requires there to be an *abnormal*. There is no abled without the disabled, and no well-behaved without those whose behavior can be categorized as inappropriate for the context of school. Ideology can be challenged on this basis within pedagogical praxis, educational planning and placement decisions, and policy-making, but most often, the notion of ideology is not examined and the cycle of oppression for students who fall outside the “norm” is perpetuated.

In the book, *Feminist Queer Crip* (2013), Alison Kafer described her project as “imagining more accessible futures...a yearning for an elsewhere—and perhaps, an ‘elsewhen’—in which disability is understood otherwise: as political, as valuable, as integral” (p. 3). This type of re-imagining is critical to the deconstruction of an ideology of normalcy and inclusion in schools. As detailed above, Feminist Theory is an important starting point for this work, however, given the complexities of identity, experience, and subjectivity related to the

understandings of normalcy and inclusion in schools, the theoretical framework would be incomplete without engaging the critical perspective of Disability Studies.

The process of normalization that constitutes an ideology of normalcy as the basis for exclusion and inclusion, involves a complex process of power production. Interrogation of this ideology must include a discussion of the hierarchical dualisms of normal/abnormal, ability/disability and regular/special education at work in schools. As described above, these assumptions of fixed identity are produced and maintained by discursive practices in schools and society writ large. The experience and understanding of disability is complex and diverse. It requires a trans-disciplinary theoretical approach in order to unpack the layers of oppression and assumption associated with living with a disability in a society designed to exclude and even eliminate disability from mainstream culture. Discursively, these practices of exclusion and elimination are enacted at the level of the institution at all turns. Normalcy in schools is one mechanism for maintaining these power structures through ideological assumptions of worth and contribution while these institutions simultaneously engage in organizational practices of exclusion and inclusion to continually re-affirm the subject positions of normal/abnormal, able/disabled, and regular/special education in schools.

In alignment with Feminist Pedagogy, scholars in critical disability studies who emphasize embodiment bring the physical body into conversation with critical educational theory through the centering of disability as a natural part of being human. A main tenet of critical disability studies is working toward de-stabilizing the discourses and assumptions that produce and maintain normalcy, while also exposing techniques of normalization that work to maintain the power of some and the oppression of others. Embodiment of lived experiences of disability, not as an abnormality or deviance, but as a common experience of human diversity.

Erevelles (2000) refers to embodiment and schooling through the use of critical pedagogy as a way to “recover the importance of the body as the site of political and cultural activity in educational contexts” (p. 25). Even the work of critical pedagogy, however, contributes to the process of normalization as it encourages students to challenge relationships of power, gender, class, race, and sexuality, but continually omitting the “disabled” body. It requires the production of meaning, emphasizing the need for students to analyze and question hegemonic practices and relationships of power in schooling, while implicating the ability to think critically and communicate effectively as dictated by dominant culture norms as the priority. Without attention to embodiment, even critical work is limited when applied to inclusion. As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (1997) eloquently described:

The physically disabled body becomes a repository for social anxieties about such troubling concerns as vulnerability, control, and identity...Disability, then, is the attribution of corporeal deviance—not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do. (p. 6)

The view that disability is socially constructed fits with this description when one considers how taken for granted are our social appropriations of “normalcy,” and our compulsion to label and diagnose individuals who present as not acting within those socially-defined borders of “normalcy.” Processes of normalization serve to fix the “problems” associated with non-normality by controlling ‘dis-abled’ bodies and minds through institutional policies and practices that regulate where, how, and when those individuals are allowed to participate in the larger, normalized community. As Eli Clare (1999) stated:

Gender reaches into disability; disability wraps around class; class strains against abuse; abuse snarls into sexuality; sexuality folds on top of race...everything finally piling into a

single human body. To write about any aspect of identity, any aspect of the body, means writing about this entire maze. (p. 123)

This is inclusion in schools and the ideology of normalcy.

Inclusive Praxis, Discourse, and Emerging Discourses of Exclusion

An Inclusive Praxis is a conceptual framework that is rooted in Feminist Theory and pedagogy and critical disability theory. Fundamentally, it is within these theoretical frames that we draw practical applications for its use so that inclusive pedagogy can be understood as working on two interrelated aspects of pedagogical work. An Inclusive Praxis:

1. Works to identify teaching practices and curriculum that emphasize embodiment, empowerment, and community for all members of the school and educational community.
2. Works to identify discourses, and the associated discursive practices, of dominant educational cultures, such as schools, communities, classrooms, curricula, etc. as an entry-point for understanding and rejecting the exclusion of those outside of the non-dominant group.

In this section, these two aspects will be explained through a review of the literature related to mindfulness and yoga and examples of how exclusionary discourses contribute to an Ideology of (In)Exclusion. As described in the introduction to this chapter, an Inclusive Praxis re-frames inclusion as an action that must be made with intention. It begins with shifting what constitutes an educational normalcy and critically examining the often-inequitable standards set in schools for what it means to be a successful and contributing member of most school communities. As a practice, an Inclusive Praxis occurs through an intentional nurturing of healthy relationships in a learning community and then achieved through compassionate teaching and curriculum

development that includes opportunities for embodied learning activities. Such learning can be achieved through mindfulness and yoga, nature experience, and creative expression.

Furthermore, facilitating these educational spaces should foster healing, growth, authenticity, creativity, and expression for all types of learners/communicators/movers toward empowerment, equity, health, and happiness.

Such goals are not easily achieved in schools, or many learning communities for that matter, because there are deep cultural assumptions framing how we relate to one another, ourselves, and the natural world. It is not enough for educators who strive for inclusion and equity to implement surface level changes in their teaching practices. They must also commit to an active and ongoing process of identifying and rejecting exclusion in all forms—in particular, with close attention to the ways dominant discourses of exclusion work to undermine inclusion and equity.

In order to do this work as educators, and educational researchers, it is important to begin with a deep understanding of how exclusion works to produce subject identity positions for students who fall outside of the standardized norm, how power is shaped and distributed through the production of dominant discourses, and how those discourses work to centralize the power of some and exclude others. An Inclusive Praxis is a framework that provides a structure and process for educators, and educational researchers, to identify important discourses and their associated discursive practices in their educational communities. In the following section, I will introduce and define how what I am referring to as discourses of exclusion contribute to an ideology of (In)Exclusion through normalization, disconnection, disempowerment, and commodified contribution and how these discourses work in connection with exclusionary practices in schools, classrooms, and curricula. For the purposes of this study, discourses of

exclusion and Feminist Pedagogy are defined as ways to analyze mindfulness curriculum materials as part of practicing and Inclusive Praxis.

Discourse and Discursive Practices

Discourse theory relies on the premise that language and discourse act within socio-political contexts to produce realities and subjectivities (Foucault, 1972/2013). This will be covered in more detail in Chapter 3 as the methods for this study are more thoroughly described, but discourse is an important concept to understand here as it relates to the formation—and repetition—of specific practices in schools that contribute to exclusion and have too often become so commonplace that they go uncritically examined. Discourse, in a Foucauldian sense, most simply put unifies language and practice. In this way, discourses give meaning bounded by language—and culture—to objects, experiences, social practices, and identities or subjectivities (Foucault, 1972/2013). In other words, discourses write the maps by which all things are experiences, interpreted, and learned in any culture. More specifically, it can be explained that discourse defines and produces knowledge by illuminating and valuing particular practices in a culture while simultaneously excluding and devaluing. Classrooms, schools, or any learning community can be understood as socially constructed and mediated spaces via the discourses of educational cultures. Conceptualizing learning spaces this way allows for educational cultures, or sets of culturally mediated relationships, to be understood as a discursive formation or a complex system of shared meanings that are based on the ways we communicate with each other through language and a repetition of connected patterns. These patterns create discursive practices that, when practiced over time and in repetition, often become an accepted norm of cultures and institutions. This situates patterns of language, the meanings attached to communication, and the history of those meanings as central to not only an Inclusive Praxis but also to any critical

educator interested in addressing the undergirding assumptions of dominant culture at work in learning relationships.

Discursive practices, like that which we see enacted in schools, are based on discourses about what it means to be a “student” in school. Allan (2003) describes, “the ways in which discourse *constructs and produces* not only reality, but also our sense of self (subjectivity) in relation to these realities” (p. 15). Educational discourses include such things as communication through curriculum and pedagogy, values about learning and behavior that are expressed through standardized achievement measures and behavioral expectations, school policy and procedure, classroom and school climate, etc. All of these practices determine what is and is not valued in the school community and, in turn, at what level the “normal” student should be performing and participating in the school culture. As described in the earlier section focused on definitions of normalcy, when particular discourses are taken up and accepted without question as the norm in schools, justifications are made about who is excluded from mainstream school culture. Inclusive Praxis works to identify these discourses, understand how and why they are produced, and then disrupt their reproduction through engagement of alternative learning practices such as mindfulness and yoga that may begin to shift discourse away from exclusion and toward discursive practices of embodiment, empowerment, and community. The following descriptions of what I am calling discourses of exclusion provide a set of conceptual tools for critically analyzing education cultures and more specifically curriculum and pedagogy, to bring into view the way that exclusion is enacted in schools through often normalized or commonplace and accepted practices. In the following section, I define discourses of exclusion as integral to a discourse analysis that seeks to bring into view the discursive challenges educators are likely to be faced with when attempting to practice mindfulness in schools and classrooms. Furthermore, I

refer to Feminist pedagogies as having alternative root discourses in embodiment, empowerment, and community as discursive examples of where we might begin to focus our disruptive alternative discursive practices is we want to practice mindfulness in schools.

Emerging Discourses of Exclusion

Discourses of exclusion emerge out of addressing how discourse and discursive practices contribute to what constitutes education for so many who are excluded, devalued, and disempowered through well-intentioned work that falls short of empowerment, embodiment, and community. What might be more troublesome about such shortcomings in educational efforts is understanding that such pedagogical attempts to teach all children are often masked as inclusive, but serve to rank and sort students into rigid categories that impact how and where they get access to learning and community in schools. These categories are discursively constituted and not only reflect the cultural values at work in dominant education cultures, but also actively produce them through discourses of inclusion that can be better understood as exclusionary and based on the “othering” of those whose emotion/behavior/ability does not meet standards of “normal” as defined by those in power (e.g.: teachers, administrators, policy makers, parents, community members). While there are certainly more discourses, and discursive practices, contributing to what constitutes these discourses of exclusion, four organizing discourses help to describe how an Inclusive Praxis focuses on critically interrupting “normalcy” in favor of diversity, individualism in favor of interdependency, disempowerment in favor of equity, and commodification over non-monetized mutual aid and community. Among these four organizing discourses of exclusion are the following:

- discourse of normalization: the idea that there is a norm, or center, which relies on the exclusionary act of identifying and classifying—or disciplining anyone or

anything, as abnormal or marginalized as less than. Something, or someone, is only understood so far as they relate, or assimilate, to the norm of the dominant culture. In this discourse, the interest and well-being of those cast to the margins is ignored and who is often suffering is rationalized by faulting those in the margins for their discursively constituted failures to fit in, measure up, or perform the script of dominant individualistic value-hierarchized culture. In the case of many classrooms and educational cultures in North America, this normalcy often is constituted via discourses of racism, ableism, sexism, and classism. Thus, in order to examine how one might teach in support of an Inclusive Praxis—with a focus on empowerment, embodiment, and community—it is imperative that they are able to recognize how a discourse of normalization contributes to constituting and disciplining normalcy.

- discourse of disconnection: the idea that any one person is an individual and the notion of a Cartesian “I” of self is understood as one’s existence as an autonomous and independent single being. Such an idea requires a separation of people from community and assimilation to the notion of self as more important than the well-being of the group rather than self as a strength to and with the group. This can be disconnection from family, community, resources, from decision-making, or from privileges afforded by those in what is constituted as the political-cultural norm.
- discourse of disempowerment: the idea that empowerment is related to and maintained through positionality—more specifically the value-hierarchizing of those positions through dualistic thought where the Subject/object positioning is

framed in both Either/or and Superior/inferior dualisms. These discourses are often the focus of social justice work as they refer to the interrelated ways that discourses of sexism, ableism, racism, classism, ageism, etc. work to subjugate and oppress individuals and groups.

- discourse of commodified contribution: the idea that all relationships and standards are commodified and measured by a cost-benefit analysis. For example, curricula that focus on job attainment or life skills often emphasize the productivity level of students when they leave schooling, placing higher value and levels of investment on those who will contribute most to the capitalist work force. Ableist assumptions of what labor looks like and who can participate in it are at work through these discursive practices as students who are without physical and mental limitations are given more opportunity for learning and participation in the school community. Furthermore, in patriarchal capitalist societies feminized contributions are often unrecognized in spaces where emotion is devalued in a Reason/emotion dualism because it is often, if not always, unpaid. In this sense, everything is valued based on its commodified worth in a particular kind of market.

These discourses illuminate important ways that position and power are socially constructed and maintained in exclusionary ways discursively. For example, in many elementary classrooms teachers have behavior charts, or systems of rewards based on positive behavior reinforcement. Often the goal of these behavior systems is to *normalize* a behavior that is assumed or desired to be typical and communicated through specific emotions and responses. Further, these desired behaviors are often based on white, middle and upper class cultural expectations rife with rigid

gender roles and assumptions about abilities that maintain social positions of race, gender, ability and class. More often than not, these behaviors are expected to ultimately be “self” monitored and connected with a student’s ability to complete tasks on their own. If a student is not able to behave or “function” in a normed environment they are often *disconnected from* and individualized from the group. Success in these situations for the student is all too often measured individually and not for how their diverse achievements and abilities contribute the success of the entire community, but rather to themselves. Even when there may be a need for behavioral change in class, it is often communicated that the behavior was a distraction to other student’s individual success. Additionally, these classroom systems are often competitive in that students individually behave a particular way to earn points, or “level up”, with the end result being an “earned” privilege like a viewing a film, more unstructured play time, or in some cases their behaviors are *commodified* and they earn currency that can be used for purchasing items from a classroom or school store. Clear in this one example, are the aforementioned discourses of exclusion (normalization, disconnection, disempowerment, and commodified contribution) all working together to illuminate the myriad of ways students’ subjectivities are discursively disciplined.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has introduced an Inclusive Praxis and how, as a conceptual framework, it draws from Feminist Theory, Feminist Pedagogy, and Critical Disability Studies. Not only does this framework inform the study through each step of the discourse analysis in the research, but it also offers the possibility for emerging discourses to inform the analysis and findings in ways that are loosely bounded by the framework’s discourses of exclusion. I defined what I currently identify as four overarching and organizing discourses of exclusion because it is

with attention to the discourses and discursive patterns that work within and among those four overarching, or macro, discourses of exclusion that this analysis will take shape. In the chapter that follows, I explain how I apply this theoretical framework through a critical discourse analysis research study. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology and methods of the study in detail and elaborate on how these four discourses of exclusion set the lenses for what we will learn in Chapters 4 and 5. What unfolds in the rest of the dissertation all emerges from closely, and critically, analyzing curriculum materials through not only a commitment to Feminist Pedagogy, but also with attention to what emerges when such curriculum materials are analyzed for the diverse ways they might be contributing to, interrupting, and/or illuminating discourses of normalization, disconnection, disempowerment, and commodification of contribution.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The previous chapter introduced an Inclusive Praxis as a conceptual framework that draws on Feminist Theory, Critical Disability Studies and works through Feminist Pedagogies to specifically identify discourses of exclusion. In this chapter, an Inclusive Praxis informs the research design and methods of this study in relationship to analyzing mindfulness and yoga curricula. I introduce the methodology of critical discourse analysis and provide a detailed explanation of the research process I followed in the study. Detailing the study in this chapter, I discuss the selection criteria and process for each of the curriculum analyzed and provide a descriptive introduction to the three curricula. After providing an overview of the research design, I explain the coding process, analysis, and the write up of the research. Additionally, I discuss my positionality in the study through addressing my subjectivity as an important aspect of addressing any ethical tensions that emerged throughout the research process.

Discourse Studies & Critical Discourse Analysis

Having been broadly exposed to a variety of methods in both qualitative and quantitative research through my Master's degree, career work, and doctoral coursework, most of my experience has led me toward a preference for qualitative methods in my research. Since my work is grounded in Feminist Theory, I will begin this chapter with addressing the question: "Why qualitative?" and then go on to introduce why within the qualitative landscape I am drawn toward critical discourse analysis (CDA). After providing an overview of and rationale for such research methods given my topic of interest, I will conclude with how and what de-construction and reconstruction of "normalcy" and "inclusion" offer the field of educational research in relationship to the conceptual framework in Chapter 2. However, before going further it is

critical to this methods chapter to communicate my positionality as it contributes to the particular subjectivities I bring throughout this study as the researcher.

My Master's degree in Counseling Psychology prepared me well for being a school counselor in Spokane and combined with my experience as a special educator in the urban schools of Boston, MA I found myself in constant reflection on what teachers and school communities could do to truly support all students. Faced with the despair of witnessing the day-to-day systemic violence of schooling for so many young people, I began coursework at Washington State University in the Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education (CSSTE) program, throughout which I developed an interest in critical ethnography, narrative inquiry, and CDA. These paradigms overlap considerably as they share the common practices found in qualitative research and combine in ways that give depth to my research inquiries and often complement each other. The research methodologies I focus on in this dissertation were selected because of how they support the development of a rigorous research agenda, while also allowing for deeply reflective and engaged design of a research study that I will be able to put into practice for a narrow slice of my broader research agenda. This future agenda will be expanded upon in Chapter 5.

To better understand this analysis, it's important to note that discourse can be viewed, not as an object, but as an exchange that is generative of a set of shared and valued cultural meanings. Discourses are sets of metaphors foundational to a culture that work together, often as taken-for-granted assumptions, to create related and assumed meanings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For example, individualism is a discourse based on a cultural metaphor of the autonomous individual in which the assumption is that an individual exists separate from and superior to most other beings. Specific discourses work together to create worldviews or ways of seeing and

understanding our day-to-day relationships. Discourses working together can be referred to as sets of discourses. In the previous chapter, I introduced how specific theoretical frameworks informed a conceptual framework, an Inclusive Praxis, and I introduced “discourses of exclusion” as central to the analysis of how they work through the common and dominant practices in schools “enforcing normalcy” (Davis, 1995, p. 29). Working toward what can be learned through conceptualizing and enacting an Inclusive Praxis in schools, this study builds on the work of critical disability research that examines the ways in which perceptions of abilities in students or members of communities affect the ways in which people are included into everyday life as well as have a huge impact on how every-day life is structured. For example, how transportation or public services like education are designed to meet the needs of the norm and those for whom these services do not accommodate, the message is clear—they are not valued in such a culture. Aligned with such scholarship and the goal of examining how specific curricula might work together with and through an Inclusive Praxis, this study examines how perceptions of abilities sort diverse people into dangerously violent exclusions of Center/margin binaries that place any perception that deviates from a socially constructed “normal” as less-than or abnormal to a dominant cultural assumption about normality in society. This particular study focusses on utilizing CDA to examine and analyze possibilities, and challenges, for the implementation of mindfulness and yoga curriculum in elementary classrooms. I expect that over the course of my academic career, researching an Inclusive Praxis will include: qualitative studies comprised of interviews of current and past members of schools—administrators, teachers, staff, students, and families; observations of the structure and function of school settings—classrooms, playgrounds, student events, etc.; and, analysis of key artifacts—curriculum, policies, student work, published reports, public records, teacher reflections, etc. My long-term hope as a scholar is to closely and

critically examine the day-to-day language and culture of schools with a specific focus on how efforts to include marginalized students often are framed in by more dominant assumptions about what constitutes an education and more so for whom such an education is provided. In moving toward this larger educational research project, I set out in this dissertation study to identify widely acclaimed and accessed mindfulness and yoga curriculum and to conduct a critical discourse analysis on those curricula in efforts to see what can be learned from those materials as they work to support, and/or undermine, a kind of inclusion grounded in empowerment, embodiment, and community. By analyzing such materials, the goal is that the research produces themes that reveal often overlooked, or invisible, discourses of exclusion and their associated discursive practices. In efforts to illuminate and explain those discourses through relevant contextualizing literature, each theme in relationship to the discourses of exclusion introduced in Chapter 2 are analyzed for their potential for how they might contribute to educators seeking to engage in a more equitable praxis—referred to in Chapter 2 as an Inclusive Praxis.

James Paul Gee (2014a) in *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* explains that CDA brings to the forefront what emerges from between the lines and isn't always illuminated in the direct text or the actual words themselves. In qualitative research, emic is a term derived from phonemic that refers to the core or essence of a situation or lived cultural experience. With a focus on the emerging emic meanings from material situations or the lived experiences as uncovered through CDA I have found myself compelled to conduct studies that consist of critically examining and analyzing the language patterns and root metaphors of a complicated combination of gathering and deconstructing texts. Furthermore, following cultural studies researcher Paula Saukko's (2003) proposition that researchers resist what she calls "the deconstructive impulse" (p. 135)—or a tunnel vision of continuing a criticism of dichotomies or

binaries that can often end up reinforcing those very same ways of thinking. I couple my methodological approach to deconstruct with a commitment to tending to how “the deconstructive impulse can be turned ‘constructive’” (Saukko, 2003, p. 135). Before getting into more specifics about conducting a study using CDA, I will address the role of the researcher in qualitative research and thus in CDA.

In any qualitative study, it is imperative to remain flexible and responsive throughout the entire research process. As both an educator and a parent, I have an intimate history and complex entanglement with schools, special education, and the disability communities focused on in this research. Such acknowledgement and self-reflexivity of my positionality is important at every step of this dissertation research as well as my career as a feminist educator and researcher. Given the importance of positionality in qualitative research, in the following section I will explain how, as an ethical and rigorous qualitative researcher, I methodologically give structured attention to the role of the researcher in this study.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Norman Fairclough (2013a) describing CDA, stated: “CDA has these three basic properties: it is relational, it is dialectical, and it is transdisciplinary” (p. 3). Defining CDA as relational means that the research isn’t on individuals or on single entities but rather that the focus is on the social relations which are complexly layered and situates discourse not as a fixed object but as generative meaning between people who talk, write, and communicate in a wide variety of ways. In other words, this approach focuses on the relationality of meaning in social contexts. According to Fairclough (2013b), this relational nature of discourse is dialectical, thus focusing the researcher’s attention on relations between objects which are different from one another. For example, both Teun A. van Dijk (2008) and Fairclough (2001, 2015) examine the

relationship between discourse and power, by making connections between how the power of people in control in current dominant nation states can be understood by examining the relational power between them and the rest of the people. This power is partly discursive. Fairclough, drawing from David Harvey's (1996) *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, describes that discourse and power flow into one another. For example, power can be enforced in material and often violent ways that are connected to discourses. Those actions, or discursive practices, reinforce the discourses that contribute to the relational defining of power as something to be obtained and maintained a particular violent way in society. Understanding that CDA is relational and dialectical with a primary focus on the complexities and emerging experiences linked to the dialectical relationality of language and power is said by Fairclough (2013a) and Saukko (2003) to require an interdisciplinary form of analysis. Such examinations cut across boundaries of disciplines and often require researchers facilitate dialogues between disciplines, theories, and frameworks all taking place while doing a research study. This requires a constant awareness of where one is at as a researcher in relationship to the analysis occurring while the researcher themselves are subjects disciplined by and disciplining the discourses at work in that particular socio-political, historical moment.

In qualitative research such as critical discourse analysis, the researcher has a responsibility to maintain a constant awareness and to regulate how their perceptions shape the outcomes of the study. Creswell (2007) expresses the importance of identifying the assumptions a researcher makes when they engage in qualitative research. He introduces that all researchers are faced with assumptions that frame the choices they make in qualitative research as “ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological assumptions” (p. 15). He explains that a researcher makes choices about the research as related to these five major

assumptions, and that depending on a researcher's decision in any or all of the five assumptions, the research will take on a corresponding shape and influence. Creswell addresses the understanding of self in regards to how research is designed, conducted, and then how the research gets communicated. He explains the complexities of choosing methodology for research and gives an overview of the major modes of research as they are situated in theoretical paradigms that the author or researcher bring to the study (Creswell, 2007). It should go without saying, that a researcher's theoretical perspective will influence a study. However, in qualitative research and especially in CDA this should be minimized through methodological structures used to ensure that the study facilitates dialogue between theories and frameworks—hence why in Chapter 2, I am dialoguing between Feminist Theory, Feminist Pedagogies, and Critical Disability studies as they come into relationship with what I propose as an Inclusive Praxis. Given that there exists subjectivity in all research, self-reflexivity—a researcher's openness to methods and their reflectiveness on the process—is important to keep in perspective. Structured methods, such as keeping a research journal, in a qualitative study help to foster self-reflexivity.

The Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research communicates meaning or perspective of a phenomenon that exists within or as a result of a condition. The voice and the impact of qualitative research come through the written word and the engagement of readers. This means that the role of the researcher requires a mastery of writing. The write-up stage of a qualitative study is not exactly the final stage. Although it is commonly positioned as such, it is an interactive process—a method within the study itself. The role of researcher as author is extremely important. Good qualitative research, and this includes CDA, no matter the methodological framework, depends on the effectiveness of the author to communicate the study. The role of the researcher must be

held into account throughout the entire research process for both the authenticity of the author's communication of the study and the emerged findings. Researcher self-reflexivity can help to focus the study on the voice of the participants and the themes of the situation and not on the sole perceptions of the author/researcher.

This requires that the researcher engage in several rounds of analysis in order for them to relate with and organize themes in the research. For example, while conducting CDA on a policy document the researcher may recognize a theme of isolation being communicated in several suggested ways in which students get grouped into classrooms. The researcher is then faced with the choice of pursuing this theme even though it may not necessarily be the theme they thought may emerge. Common to this process are practices of clustering or bracketing of themes in the data analysis phases of research. In other words, clustering groups of similar themes together organizes the dominant themes that emerge from the several rounds of analysis. Bracketing temporarily suspends those themes from the context in order to analyze them. Emerging from grounded theory, this kind of CDA begins with data collected from several readings of a text—be it interview transcripts, policy documents, or samples of student work that as it relates to the topic being studied. Each of the texts goes through rigorous cycles of data analysis and bracketing of themes that inform further rounds of analysis and configurations of dialogues between the texts, theories, and frameworks, resulting in a carefully crafted narrative that communicates findings through the final write up.

According to Creswell (2007) and Charmez (2006), at the heart of grounded theory is a strong commitment to conclusions that grow organically from the data collected in ways that “generate or discover as theory” (Creswell, 2007, p.63) and in Charmez's perspective the

theoretical orientation is grounded in the perspectives of the individual accounts brought into the analysis in the research.

A qualitative researcher is always engaging in self-reflexivity and tending to methodology. There is no stage of any qualitative study that does not require all the roles of the researcher as author, participant, and researcher to be in constant engagement with both the methodological process and the themes/voice of a qualitative study. Overall, good qualitative research comes down to a strong dedication to balancing methods of research while integrating and attending to a shared authorship between the researcher and the emerging themes which are relationally connected to those directly experiencing the materiality of those themes throughout the process. The essence of qualitative research resides in the researcher's commitment to ethically conducting the study and their commitment to a written presentation of findings in ways that both present and shape the research process and the conclusion as intertwined and responsive to what emerges from the process and not what is imposed or assumed to be linked to predetermined theoretical frameworks. CDA is relational and can be best understood as non-binary nor in search of one essential theme, but rather being open to what emerges from the transdisciplinary dialogue across multiple texts mediated by bringing attention to the patterns in relationships between language and power.

In examining the ideological conditions within schools and the production of institutional discourse that controls and marginalizes the subjectivities of students labeled as emotionally/behaviorally disordered, four major discursive fields can be identified—normalization, contribution, disconnection, and dehumanization—the discourses of exclusion. Each of these discursive practices is rooted in poststructural, primarily Foucauldian, theoretical notions of discourse/power/knowledge. The four discourses of exclusion—normalization,

disconnection, disempowerment, and commodified contribution—are examined through the critical analysis of various institutional practices and public experiences as related to their potential for influencing curriculum, pedagogy, and policies in schools. Furthermore, such analysis offers opportunities for reclaiming inclusion from exclusionary practices and moves toward more inclusive practices designed for educators and educational leaders, and even public representations of schools in media and policy-making, as learning spaces for a diversity of learners.

Positionality and Self-Reflexivity

As described above, several of my personal/professional/educational experiences influence the choices I make as a researcher. As a former special education teacher, school counselor, and behavior specialist in predominantly therapeutic educational settings working with urban youth throughout the U.S., I have a particular set of understandings about what it means to be a student in U.S. schools. I have witnessed, reflected upon, and even participated in educational cultures that value specific bodies and minds over others, distribute educational opportunity in inequitable ways to students based on race, gender, ability, and class, and push students out of classrooms for reasons based in bias and fear. For these reasons, it was important for the research process that I draft a positionality statement early on and then continue to come back to that positionality to reflect upon my own biases in the research process. In an effort to maintain integrity and accuracy during my data collection and analysis, I kept a research journal to track all data collection with dates and times, changes made throughout the process, and justifications for decisions. This process then was repeated with intention in relation to each step of the study as part of the methods to ensure researcher self-reflexivity and the research journal played an important role in documenting each step.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is not to communicate one grand solution from mindfulness and yoga, nor to suggest these practices are a one-size fits all curriculum; rather I consider it an invitation to an ongoing conversation that openly works through the importance of understanding the diverse, situational influences affecting how educators might work with children in schools in ways that promote the overall health and well-being of diverse learners. More specifically, the purpose of researching mindfulness and yoga curriculum is to better understand how such curriculum present opportunities and possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis.

Overview of Methods

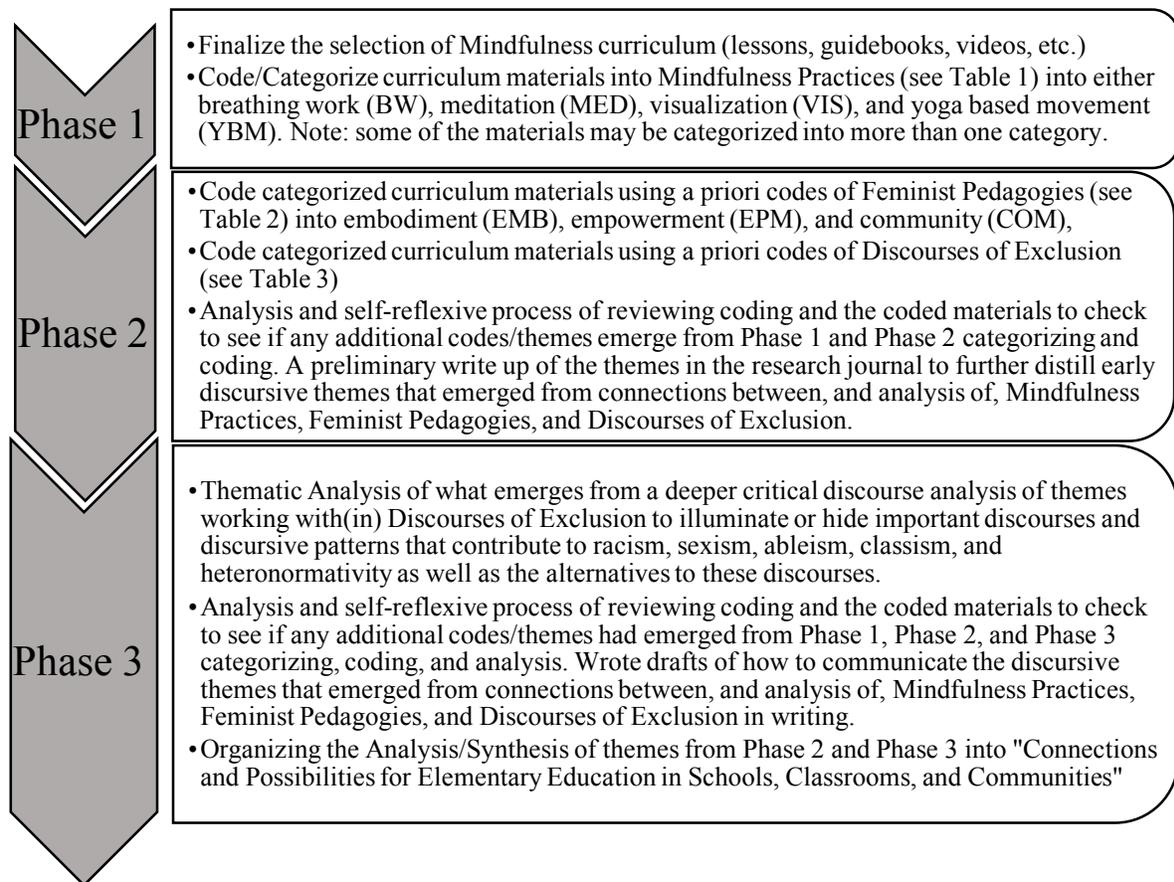


Figure 1: Research Design Overview. This figure illustrates is the research design of the dissertation research project.

Figure 1 outlines a general overview of the research. In the paragraphs that follow, I explain the multi-phased discourse analysis of a group of mindfulness curriculum materials that are chosen based on accessibility, cited frequently on mindfulness blogs and yoga communities, and being used by teachers and schools working to implement mindfulness practices into schools and classrooms.

Phase 1

Selection of Curriculum: From Curriculum Studies to CDA of Curricula

Curriculum studies as a field has a rich tradition in critically attending to some key concepts including, the ways that systems and practices of teaching and learning are both disciplined and disciplining experiences, relationality, and the meaning making process of any individual or group. A foundational concept in contemporary curriculum studies is *currere*—the notion that what is taught and learned is what is experienced. Pinar and Grumet (1976) foundationally described *currere* as a verb and not a noun and Pinar (2004) explained:

Stated simply, *currere* seeks to understand the contribution academic studies makes to one's understanding of his or her life (and vice versa), and how both are imbricated in society, politics, and culture. Influenced by literary and Feminist Theory, *currere* becomes a version of cultural criticism. (Pinar, 2004, p. 36).

While this study itself is not situated directly in what one might identify as curriculum studies, it is important to assert that I am drawing from curriculum studies and theory to inform the perspective that curriculum, the curricula examined in this study, is teaching—culturally mediated through language and discourse—the relationship of the learner to the world.

Curriculum theorizing has indicated subfields of curriculum studies that critically address the ways curriculum work to reproduce social norms disciplining teaching and learning relationships in classrooms increasingly around the world. Pinar (2007) introduced sub categories of more recent curriculum studies scholarship that includes Curriculum history, curriculum politics, cultural studies, race theory, women's and gender studies, queer theory, and disability studies as part of a longer list. Considering this list in relation to the conceptual framework I introduce in this study, I focus on how a selection of yoga and mindfulness curriculum materials commonly used in schools, and readily available to teachers, contributes to the *currere*—or the lived experiences of curriculum—as those materials might contribute to an Inclusive Praxis in schools.

After a systematic and thorough search of mindfulness curricula used in schools, three were chosen for analysis. Selection criteria included accessibility for teachers—how much would it cost for teachers and schools to purchase? How much time during the school day would teachers need to implement lessons and activities? Is the learning of materials and preparation reasonable for busy teachers? This set of selection criteria made it clear that books and online materials would be the best option, so that teachers could reference them continually and have access to the curriculum when needed. Curricula that were easily available for purchase online became the focus through this set of selection criteria, as well.

Additionally, it was important to know what teachers were already using in their classrooms and what curricula was familiar within mindfulness and yoga communities. These selection criteria reflect current practices in schools so that the analysis is relevant and meaningful for those who are already or are considering implementing mindfulness and yoga into their schools and classrooms. In consideration of this selection criteria, I reached out to my network of teachers and professionals in the Kids Yoga and Mindfulness community to ask what

they were using. I also gave them a list of curricula I had found through my search to gauge their familiarity. Through this search and using these selection criteria, I was able to identify three curricula that meet all the requirements—MindUP, Everyday SEL, and Empowering Education’s Empowering Minds.

Categorical Coding: Organizing Curriculum into Mindfulness Categories

Following Gee (2014a), a discourse analysis is used to explore the curriculum. From Gee’s (2014b) toolbox, I will primarily analyze the emerging discourses. Following Saldaña’s (2016) open coding, the curriculum materials were analyzed for what Gee calls both “Big D” and “little d” discourses which includes close attention to both what is and what is not included in the materials. These codes highlight features like language patterns, stylistic choices, metaphorical constructions, and content. For the initial phase, codes for mindfulness practices were set and analyzed—breathing work, meditation, visualization, and yoga-based movement (see Table 1). For this phase of categorical analysis, I focused on simple language representations and the words that signify each of these mindfulness practices as a foundation for our deeper analysis to come. Examples of signifiers coded throughout the three curricula are included in Table 1.

Table 1

Preliminary Categories for Mindfulness Practices

<u>Category</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Example of language, word, or phrase</u>
Breathing work	BW	“Deep Breaths” “Mindful Breathing”
Meditation	MED	“Mini Meditation”
Visualization	VIS	“Visualize” “Imagine” “See Yourself As”
Yoga-based Movement	YBM	“Yoga poses” “Mindful/ Yoga Movement”

In this phase of the coding I went through all of the curriculum materials with a close read and assigned colored highlighting to codes (green for BW; blue for MED; orange for VIS; and pink

for YBM). For each section of highlighted text, I utilized small 2-inch x 2-inch color coded paper sticky notes (green for BW; blue for MED; orange for VIS; and pink for YBM). On each sticky note, I wrote the code and any quick notes to consider for later coding and analysis and placed the note on the page. After entire sections of a book—or often at the end of long coding sessions—I would go through each day’s coding and make copies using a scanner copy machine. Then I would file each page, or pages, containing the highlighted and coded text. Each of three curricula have labeled file-folders for this round of coding. Thus, 12 folders were populated with copies of examples of breathing work, meditation, visualization, and yoga-based movement. These folders along with any notes taken during the process were stored in a filing box and I would return to the highlighted materials, riddled with sticky notes and begin the next round of coding.

Phase 2

Feminist Pedagogies: Coding for Embodiment, Empowerment, and Community

In concert with categorizing the materials, phase 2 includes a close critical examination for evidence of themes of Embodiment, Empowerment, and Community throughout the materials (see Table 2). Conducting the analysis of this phase requires not only an examination of the simple language representations in the curricula, but also an exploration of the deeper metaphors that highlight these discourses of embodiment, empowerment, and community. These deeper metaphors are more complexly related to the discourses through shared meaning and understanding of the principals of Feminist Pedagogy and their impact on the learning space. For instance, when coding for Empowerment in the curriculum, I recognize the simple language representations of power such as “student empowerment” but I also recognize that a phrase such as “decisions are made among the group” is an example of the feminist pedagogical practice of

equal power distribution that leads to true empowerment in classrooms and schools. Examples are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Feminist Pedagogies Preliminary/A Priori Codes

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Example of language, word, or deeper metaphor</u>
Embodiment	EMB	“whole child” “core practice” “in the zone”
Empowerment	EPW	“Student empowerment” “Decisions made amongst the group”
Community	COM	“Community-building” “Social Harmony” “Social Awareness”

Given that the materials were already coded categorically as mindfulness practices, in this round of coding I read closely for what emerged from the materials in relationship to either supporting, or undermining, Feminist Pedagogy—or Embodiment (EMB), Empowerment (EPW), and Community (COM). At this stage of coding, I would highlight in purple (a color not yet utilized in the coding) and use 4 inch x 6 inch lined and colored sticky notes to both identify location of a particular discourse, or discursive pattern and formation, and provide space to include notes to consider for analysis. This is both coding and preliminary analysis as themes among the relationships between mindfulness practices and feminist pedagogies emerged. I would also end each coding session with journal entries to help document the details of these emerging themes. The use of the larger, lined sticky notes aided in being able to quickly include notes from this preliminary analysis and later provided strong grounding for analysis of the discourses of exclusion. After each session of this round of coding, I would scan and make copies of the highlighted passages and file them into folders. It was important to also include copies of the notes with these, as it was not only vital to leave the notes directly where they were placed in the actual materials; but also, important to have record of the notes with the filed copies of the discourses of Feminist Pedagogy. These files were stored in a filing box so that each of the three

curricula had seven folders in each of their sections for a total of 28 folders populated with coded text. Given the importance of intersectionality in Feminist pedagogies and the goals of this research to analyze discourses that perpetuate and maintain exclusion in schools, as well as those with the potential to promote inclusion—and ultimately to my interest in better understanding the possibilities for mindfulness curriculum to contribute to an Inclusive Praxis—all the materials were also thematically coded for a priori codes of discourses of exclusion including Normalization, Disconnection, Disempowerment, and Commodified Contribution (See Table 3).

Phase 3

Discourses of Exclusion: Organizing and Coding for A Critical Discourse Analysis of Materials

With all the curriculum materials coded and organized into groupings of both mindfulness practices (Table 1) and feminist pedagogies (Table 2), I then set out to code through all the materials with attention to the discourses of exclusion introduced in Chapter 2 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Discourses of Exclusion Preliminary/ A Priori Codes

<u>Discourse of Exclusion</u>	<u>Code</u>
Normalization	NOR
Disconnection	DISCON
Commodified Contribution	CC
Disempowerment	DISEMP

Where the previous coding process drew more from what Gee refers to as “little d” discourse with some drifting into a more critical discourse analysis with respect to discourses of feminist pedagogies, this round of coding would be considered critical discourse analysis and was done so with attention to what was illuminated from the analysis of the materials through the conceptual framework of an Inclusive Praxis (see Chapter 2). As a reminder, an Inclusive Praxis consists of

essentially two components: 1.) to identify teaching practices and curriculum that emphasize embodiment, empowerment, and community; and 2.) to identify discourses, and the associated discursive practices, of dominant educational cultures, such as schools, communities, classrooms, curricula, etc. as an entry-point for understanding and rejecting the exclusion of those outside of the non-dominant group. With that in mind, I coded the materials for the Discourses of Exclusion in Table 3 and defined in Chapter 2. Using yellow highlighter, I would highlight sections of the text in the materials that were exemplary verbatim—the metaphors and patterns of language—that illuminate the discourses of exclusion in the three curricula. Furthermore, I would write notes in the margins that included the codes in Table 3. At the end of long coding sessions, I would always scan the pages and print copies that I would file in sets of folders (one folder for each discourse of exclusion which added 4 more folders to the already 7 in each of the three curriculum sections—totaling 40 folders in the filing box). In addition to reflecting on the coding and simultaneous analysis in my research journal, as a routine step in the coding and analysis I would take regular time to reflect on this round of coding for more specifically how discourses of are open up conversations of possibility for social justice, and thus an Inclusive Praxis. Emerging from those reflections and conversations with critical social justice educators, I found it important to add another round of coding that would help the analysis and emergence of discursive themes. In such efforts to further examine the discourses of exclusion, I analyzed the organized and coded materials for exemplary verbatim for more specific ways to show how these discourses of exclusion worked through social justice oriented discourses at work in dominant education cultures reinforcing and supporting normalcy. Thus, an additional round of coding ensued with efforts to better illuminate the ways that discourses of

racism, sexism, ableism, classism, and heteronormativity work together to limit or undermine possibilities for the curriculum to be empowering. (See Table 4)

Table 4

Discourses Supporting/Undermining Social Justice

<u>Discourse</u>	<u>Code</u>
Sexism (Patriarchy/Androcentrism)	PAT
Gender Equity/Equality	GEQ
Racism (Eurocentrism, Anti-Blackness, Whiteness)	RAC
Anti-racism (Racial equity, equality)	REQ
Ableism	ABL
Anti-Ableism (Neurodiversity, personhood)	AEQ

Following this analysis, the thematic findings of what emerges from the analysis of the curriculum materials began the writing process that became Chapter 4. In consultation with my research journal and anchored by my conceptual framework—an Inclusive Praxis, I analyzed across the coded materials for macro-themes with close attention to making choices for how the exemplary verbatim would provide a thick descriptions of the ways that the mindfulness practices (see Table 1) work to support, or undermine, aspects of Feminist Pedagogies (see Table 2) and furthermore how they do, or do not, work through and with discourses of exclusion to (re)produce social inequity or social justice reinforcing—or breaking up—normalcy. In efforts to illuminate the ways discourses of inclusion or exclusion (see Table 3) are undergirded by discourses of social injustice (see Table 4), I conducted a much longer and closer round of critical of the materials in efforts to examine the relationships between verbatim (data from the curriculum) and how it is that such aspects of the curriculum connect to the emergent macro-themes (see Table 5).

Table 5

Macro-Themes for Discourses of Exclusion

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Code</u>
Reinforcing Value Hierarchy	RVH
Hyper-separation of Mind/Body	M/B
Undermining Community	UCOM
Reinforcing Individualism	IND
Ownership	OWN
Management	MGMT
Control	CON
False Empowerment	F-EMP

As part of the analysis and coding of these themes (listed in Table 5) each group of verbatim was scanned, printed, and filed into a single folder for each of these themes adding a final combined section to the file box—macro-themes across all three curricula. With now 48 file folders filled with printed pages of coded and analyzed verbatim, I worked into the next phase of the research to begin to layout the contents of these last four folders and see how I would begin to assemble what would become the next chapter. The writing of Chapter 4 began, and will show how these coded discourses thematically illuminate the possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis that utilizes these three curricula with caution and critical attention to how they might work to undermine the very goals they set out to achieve. It was at this stage of the research—the writing up of the themes—that my research journal continued to play a crucial role. I would end each day of writing with asking the question: *What does this mean or do for teachers, school leaders and policy-makers, and families and communities?* My journaling while writing the themes, with attention to such a prompt, became much of synthesis and recommendations from the research made Chapter 5. However, before I jump to Chapters 4 and 5 there is still one more extremely important step in the methods of this study—the writing.

Writing as Method: “I write entirely to find out...”

Joan Didion (1976), in “Why I Write”, wrote: “I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, who I see and what it means” (para. 7). This quote encapsulates why I find it imperative to include in any qualitative study that writing be considered a method. The write up stage of any qualitative study, although often appearing to be a step taken at—or near—the final stages of research, occurs throughout the research process. Writing played a central role in each phase of research shared in this chapter. From tending to subjectivity and documenting each step of the research through journal writing to the drafting and redrafting of the context, analysis, findings, and conclusion, writing was the method through which meaning emerged from the often stacks of verbatim examples of discourses organized and coded into folders awaiting analysis through writing. In this study, I lived Didion’s words as I wrote “to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, who I see and what it means.” Writing is an interactive and relational process—a method within the study itself through which everything in the study is communicated through the language and choice of every word. When an author brings words to the page, they make choices and with each of those choices—especially in a discourse analysis study—the researcher has the responsibility to recognize, with transparency and self-reflexivity, that writing is a process. All research, no matter the methodological framework, depends on the author’s effectiveness in communicating the research in ways that bring to the forefront the focus and findings of the research. The quality of how this study is both presented and received resides heavily in the written form. Discourse analysis, especially critical discourse analysis, places heavy weight on the research to engage in writing in ways that both present and shape the research process and any findings or conclusions are inextricably linked to how they are written. In this study, I would write daily and then methodically code each theme,

reading, writing, re-reading, and re-writing, in a reflexive process. I'd then move from the laptop to the notebook where I would write about the writing in my journal and attend to what emerged from the process. I would return often a day or so later to the laptop writing, not what was imposed or forcibly linked to predetermined theoretical frameworks but what emerged from asking and then asking again: What do these words communicate as a Feminist Pedagogy? How do they bring particular attention toward engaging in an Inclusive Praxis? It is from the writing process that analysis comes to life and themes work their ways through the levels of analysis as distilled but not distorted, offered to the readers not imposed.

Conclusion

In efforts to better understand how three mindfulness and yoga curriculum support an Inclusive Praxis in schools and diverse learning communities, I immersed in the study and analysis of the ways dominant discourses worked through the curriculum. In the following chapter, I introduce mindfulness and yoga in schools to provide a deeper context for readers and then closely describe each of the three curriculum programs accompanied by presenting how dominant discourses of materials as supporting or undermining teaching for mindfulness and inclusion in school.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCOURSES OF EXCLUSION: DISCOURSES OF (DIS)EMPOWERMENT FOR AN INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

The use of mindfulness and yoga practices in schools is a growing trend, internationally (Magra, 2019). Many schools are engaged in varying levels of professional development focused on mindfulness practices for the classroom to increase student attention and performance, improve behavior, and address social-emotional learning expectations. As this trend continues and the demand for more training and education in mindfulness and yoga for teachers and school leaders increases, it is important to consider all the impacts this might have on teachers, students, and practitioners in the fields of mindfulness and yoga. The purpose of this chapter is to identify some of the ways mindfulness and yoga in schools are implemented through curriculum, paying close attention to how these curricula influence what is being learned, taught, and communicated to students. Through critical discourse analysis, this chapter examines the ways mindfulness and yoga curricula work to support, or undermine, principles of Feminist Pedagogy in schools. Simultaneously, this chapter considers the relationship between curricula currently bring used in schools to teach mindfulness and yoga practices and an Inclusive Praxis.

Mindfulness in Schools

While there are varying definitions of mindfulness, the components commonly agreed upon by those who practice, research, and teach mindfulness include paying attention, acting with intention, and being open to experience. On a larger scale, mindfulness is a way of being in the world—living in peace, stillness, and with deep commitment to doing no harm through the practice of clearing the mind and opening the heart. These notions are rooted in traditional Buddhist practices of mindfulness and are critical to understanding mindfulness as a way of

being (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Starting with a clear beginning point for this chapter—and the analysis in the following sections, I will define mindfulness to include conscious efforts toward awareness and attention that comes from paying close attention to events—acknowledging and accepting them for what they are—and then monitoring our reactions to them. For example, taking intentionally deep breathes and with close acknowledgment of what is going on, bearing witness to one’s own experiences (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005). One of the most common uses of mindfulness in schools involves short, guided meditations for students. Research shows these meditative exercises improve focus and attention to task in the classroom (Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2015; Bakosh, Snow, Tobias, Houlihan, & Barbosa-Leiker, 2016).

The use of mindful learning strategies in schools is becoming increasingly popular as mindfulness gains mainstream momentum in U.S. education. One reason for this push toward incorporating mindfulness into schools could be as a response to years of rigid standardized testing procedures in schools (Kohn, 2000; Au, 2008, 2016; Labaree, 2010) and an apparent increase in interest from schools for including social-emotional learning (Committee for Children, 2019; Yettick, 2018). Many students report significant feelings of stress and exhaustion due to the high-stakes performance demands they face at school and even possible links between student stress and teacher burn out (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Research on mindfulness in schools has shown a link between the practice of mindfulness in the classroom and significant stress-reduction for students (Fisher, 2006). Mindfulness is inherently a practice to de-escalate feelings of stress through the use of deep breathing, visualization, and yoga-based movement.

As a growing trend, U.S. schools have seen a reduction in unstructured learning opportunities at all levels, as well as less opportunity for relationship-building and social learning (Labaree, 2010). Many schools who have adopted mindfulness strategies have done so in response to increasing rates of behavior-related discipline episodes, negative school climate, and increased need for mental health support on school campuses (Bloom, 2016; Carsley, Khoury, & Heath, 2018). There is evidence to suggest mindfulness as a tool for improving behavior and attitudes through a focus on empathy and kindness and community participation.

Much of the research conducted on mindfulness in schools has focused on mental health interventions. Research from Shapiro, et al. (2006) indicates that children who practice mindfulness are more equipped to handle stress and anxiety and show improved cognitive abilities after participating in mindfulness practice. Other research shows a significant link between improvement of depressive symptoms and mindfulness practice, which may improve behavior and overall school climate. Other behavioral impacts of a mindfulness practice in school include the development of self-management skills, self-awareness, and impulse control (Semple, 2005; Thompson & Gauntlerr-Gilbert, 2008).

Additionally, research on mindful learning supports its use in classrooms as a way to teach children sustained focus and attention (Langer, 2000). Mindful learning involves teaching students how to critically engage with material by embracing varying viewpoints and honoring a diversity of experiences and possibilities. As Sempel (2005) states: “If we teach children mindfully and they learn mindfully, they are able to hold multiple perspectives and embrace ambiguity” (p. 213). As schools increasingly make decisions about the health and wellness of their students, we will likely see an increase in the use of mindfulness in schools.

Given the increased attention to mindfulness as a possible shift in curriculum and pedagogy, I take the position that it is important for educators, and educational leaders, to pay close attention to not only *who* gets to participate in mindfulness at school; but also, *where* and *how* mindfulness in schools happens. Furthermore asking: What are the representations of mindfulness that we see? Thus, mindfulness in schools—specifically through curriculum—becomes an opportunity for researchers, and practitioners, to focus on the possibilities and potentials for efforts of mindfulness education to shift the dominant ideology of normalcy in schools and classrooms and to present openings and pedagogical opportunities for a more inclusive learning environment. This growing acceptance of a practice rooted in Eastern thought as a mainstream strategy and intervention in U.S. schools is creating an entry point for many educators, and educational leaders, interested in re-considering the ways we—teachers socialized in Western culture—understand learning and teaching in the industrial West. Mindfulness, as an Eastern tradition, promotes community and empathic action. In such a framework, competition is viewed as a great source of unhealthiness. In traditional mindfulness practice, meditation and yoga through mindfulness are meant to distance individuals from habits of competition emphasizing interconnectedness through practices that draw oneself toward more intentional, intrinsic reflection and direction rooted in interdependency and community.

Mindfulness practice includes breathwork, meditation, visualization, and yoga-based movement. These practices together are inherently inclusive if understood as rooted in valuing differences and with an intrinsic worth to all forms and ways that those practicing are participating. Given mindfulness is not anything goes, it becomes important for critical educational researchers, and practitioners to shine light on how these practices can be enacted in ways that truly include all student participants. Mindfulness is a practice always rooted in non-

competition and non-violence. It is not a dualistic, hierarchical mind/body relationship of power, but one of integration and wholeness—one of interdependency and diversity. Individuals are not in competition with themselves or one another but rather in community with each other. The goal is a holistic health of the group and not the individual advancement of any single student or isolated group. Mindfulness is entirely premised upon the notion of acceptance for all and the fulfillment of the most balanced state of mind, body, emotion. No two mindfulness practices are identical and there is no standard for what a *normal* or *ideal* practice should look like, other than that the practice should bring each person toward a balance and harmony of mind, body, and spirit among one another and the environment of the community. This understanding of mindfulness and yoga creates conditions that invite truly diverse participants to find the ways that they practice mindfulness. This is the mindfulness that offers possibility and a place for inclusion; yet, too often inclusion in schools looks nothing like mindfulness. The mainstream acceptance of mindfulness as educational strategy, combined with the specific educational theory and action outlined in Chapter 2, moves us toward an opportunity to develop inclusive practices in schools that both challenge dominant ideologies of normalcy and create genuine inclusive learning spaces through an Inclusive Praxis.

The Mindfulness Curricula Analyzed: (Im)Possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis

In any curriculum, there are distinct ways that discourses work to both support or undermine inclusion. In the curricula analyzed in this dissertation, there are both important ways that mindfulness curriculum offer both strong entry points for the development of mindfulness in schools and classrooms as well as ways that specific discourses are at work to undermine efforts of mindfulness as a pathway to peace and justice in our bodies, classrooms, and communities. In the sections that follow in this chapter, I provide—for context—a descriptive introduction for

each of the three curricula, and then share critical analysis of the discourses of exclusion as they are constituted through discourses that illuminate the ways that exclusion works to prevent inclusion.

The MindUP Curriculum: Educating Hearts and Minds

The first of the three curricula is called “The MindUP Curriculum” and it consists of guides for teachers to structure K-8 learning experiences around what they call “brain-centered management” that seeks to provide “brain-focused strategies for learning—and living” (<https://mindup.org/>). The curriculum is set up in 15 lessons that set out to be a supplement to core content learning through instructional “strategies for helping students focus their attention, improve their self-regulation skills, build resilience to stress, and develop a positive mind-set on both school and life” (<http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/mindup/>). Actress Goldie Hawn, of the Hawn Foundation, collaborated with Scholastic Inc. to develop this curriculum that she describes as being focused on working with children to “educate their hearts and their minds” (CNN, 2010, 4:09). Hawn explained that working with children through MindUP in schools, is:

Giving them the empowerment to know how to manage, to regulate their own emotions, to recognize their own emotions, to know when their emotions are stopping them from doing things that’ll actually bring success to them. (CNN, 2010, 4:20)

MindUP (2011) is described in the curriculum guides as a “comprehensive, classroom-tested, evidence-based curriculum” (p. 6) for:

an optimistic classroom that promotes and develops mindful attention to oneself and others, tolerance of differences, and the capacity of each member of community to grow as a human being and a learner. (p.6)

MindUP is designed as a set of routine practices that center on students learning about the human brain and how it functions as part of learning about their own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors as well as those with whom they share spaces.

The 15 lessons are available in 3 accessible books organized by grade level—Pre-K-2, 3-5, and 6-8—and can be purchased through Scholastic Inc. and the Hawn Foundation online, or through any major book seller, at a moderate price of \$24.99. Each book begins by framing the curriculum in research from developmental cognitive neuroscience, mindfulness training, social and emotional learning (SEL), and positive psychology. Following an overview of the research, the books move into sections explaining how to use the curriculum throughout the typical school day as core practices at the beginning, transitions, and ends of the school day. The 15 lessons are arranged into four units—Unit I: Getting Focused (Lessons 1-3), Unit II: Sharpening Your Senses (Lessons 4-9), Unit III: It’s All About Attitude (Lessons 10-12), and Unit IV: Taking Action Mindfully (Lessons 13-15)—that connect the MindUP lessons with language arts, math, social studies, science, health, physical education, the arts, and social-emotional learning. Some of the special feature highlighted by the authors of this curriculum are the positive framing, connections to “Real World,” daily repetition, journal writing, and connections to literature.

According to the curriculum guides, MindUP curriculum is not intended to be taught in isolation; rather it should be taught as part of the classroom content curriculum and together with inquiry prompts from the subjects being taught. Furthermore, MindUP authors emphasize that the lessons are designed to be processed through small-group and large-group discussions that draw on life experiences. With its easily accessible lesson plans and sequencing, affordable curriculum guides, and wide-range of availability to teachers, this curriculum met all of the selection criteria for this study.

Everyday SEL

The second curriculum in the study, *Everyday SEL in Elementary School: Integrating Social-Emotional Learning and Mindfulness into Your Classroom* (2016), is written by the educational consultant Carla Tantillo Philibert and published by Routledge. The curriculum—also available in books for middle school and high school for \$34.95—is designed to help teachers through practical strategies for teaching Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), mindfulness, and movement. Tantillo Philibert describes more specifically in the front matter of the book that this includes learning that helps students to “maintain positive relationships, assume responsibility, become bodily aware, and grow into productive, contributing citizens.” (Tantillo Philibert, 2018, para 1). The Everyday SEL curriculum starts with defining SEL and explaining for readers how SEL, mindfulness, yoga, and physical movement are fused together in the book as Mindful Practices. Tantillo Philibert (2016) explains that the Mindful Practices model can be understood as a two-part process comprised of the self (my world) + social (world around me). Explaining this approach, Tantillo Philibert describes the intent is to move the “teacher from viewing these practices as something that ‘underperforming children’ need as a ‘special treatment’ to understanding them as a collective learning process needed by all” (p. 9). Tantillo Philibert (2016) further explains:

...because everyone regularly experiences stress, anxiety, and negativity. When the situation is reframed from the adult and child being in opposition to the collective working towards a common, interpersonal goal, not only are life-long skills developed, but the class-room climate and culture improve as well. (p. 9)

With a focus on cultivating self-awareness, self-regulation, and social awareness through intentional practice that consists of movement, stillness, and connection, the goal is finding balance between self-efficacy and social harmony.

Everyday SEL builds on this strong conceptual model of Mindful Practices providing a thorough description of how to set this curriculum up in the classroom and how to use the activities. Following getting teachers/readers started, the book then breaks up the activities following the self + social model into four sections (2 that focus on the Self—Warm Up and Energize; Cool Down and Focus—and 2 that focus on the Social—Warm Up and Energize; Cool Down and Focus). This curriculum also suggests ways for groups of teachers to grow as learners through professional development and extended learning activities. The Everyday SEL curriculum ends with a professional development facilitator guide and a list of further readings. As will be explored in this study, the Everyday SEL curriculum meets all selection criteria and emphasizes the development of educators who are skilled in the practice of mindfulness and yoga in classrooms.

Empowering Minds: Empowering Education

The third curriculum in this study is Empowering Minds which is a social-emotional learning curriculum provided by Empowering Education: Mindfulness-Based Social & Emotional Learning, and is available through online subscription for \$9.99-\$19.99/month depending on the grade-levels desired by teachers. The curriculum can also be purchased by schools and/or districts. This curriculum consists of 30 lessons for each of the grade level groups of K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. Each of the 30 lessons includes with it: a video tutorial, academic extension (aligned to Common Core and other content standards), at-home resources (connections to

everyday ways the lessons can connect to home and community life), and a list of connected resources in the literature and research to support each lesson.

The Empowering Minds curriculum draws from social-emotional learning research by aligning with the five core competencies that are outlined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). These include--self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (<https://casel.org/core-competencies/#>). Corresponding with the CASEL competencies, the Empowering Education's FAQ web page describes that the curriculum "blends mindfulness, cognitive behavioral theory, brain-based learning, and restorative practices" (<https://empoweringeducation.org/frequently-asked-questions/>). The Empowering Education group is committed to providing affordable, and accessible curriculum and training for all educators and supports collaboration between schools, families and community partners. In addition to video examples and training that accompany the lessons, Empowering Education provides a scope and sequence chart, concept glossaries (one traditional glossary defining all the main concepts organized alphabetically and one organized by unit to coordinate with each lesson).

While each of the three curricula outlined above have distinct differences, they all share commonalities in that they are accessible (both affordable and readily available), connected with recommendations accompanied by research and evaluation, aligned to content standards, and all three are getting attention in mindfulness education communities as curriculums being used in schools, classrooms, and other educational settings. Given that these three curricula provide a rich data set for analysis, the following sections will present an analysis of how discourses with(in) the materials work to both support—and at times undermine—mindfulness, yoga, and Feminist Pedagogy toward an Inclusive Praxis.

Dominant Discourses in the Curricula

According to research, reviews of the curricula, and my own experience in the field of education, mindfulness and yoga practices in schools overwhelmingly consist of short exercises and interventions that apply some traditional techniques to school settings. This study focuses on sets of curricula that are anchored in mindfulness as a practice for Social-Emotional Learning skills or for improving academic performance. It could be argued that with the emphasis in U.S. education being on test scores and academic performance measurements, implementing curricula that do not in some way directly show effectiveness or present as aiding in the pursuit of higher test scores—and/or academic achievement—would be ineffective or worse take away from academics. If we understand mindfulness and yoga as practices that seek to create harmonious balance through acceptance of the here and now, then we are bound to run into some contradictions, even within the most thoughtful curricula. With that in mind, I ask: (a) How might we incorporate mindfulness and yoga within such rigid structures of tests and the measurement of academic standards?; (b) How might we hold onto the integrity of what it means to be searching for balance and acceptance, non-judgement, non-harm, and enlightenment in a system that works so hard to push students into performance improvements, grade-level expectations, higher test scores, and so-called better behaviors?; (c) In a system that pushes students to strive for more at every turn, are there even any spaces in the structures of the school day to learn to understand the aims of mindfulness and yoga as life skills? Or, are we just using the tools of these highly-revered practices to reach another set of performance goals?; and (d) Does the *why* of the practice matter, so long as children are learning tools to help them meet their goals in school and beyond? With each of these questions central to the study, the purpose of this critical discourse analysis is to illuminate all of these possibilities and pitfalls, to ultimately

create space for understanding if mindfulness and yoga in schools have the potential to create entry points for more inclusive teaching and learning.

It is important to examine how these practices impact schools and students through their discursive implications because institutions like school are built upon organizing discourses that influence ideology, policy-making, decisions about rules and procedures, and selection and implementation of curriculum. Discourse is everywhere—in the texts students read, in their classroom expectations and norms, in the lessons they learn, in the latent and hidden curriculum, in the images they see, and in the ways that they speak and are spoken to. Within these multiple layers of discourse, there is potential for shifting the way students experience learning, the way they build community, and the ways schools organize toward inclusion. While the trend toward incorporating mindfulness and yoga into schools grows, it becomes increasingly important to attend to the possibilities and pitfalls of using these methods how they are intended—as practices that unite mind/body/emotion for all types of learners and movers with the ultimate goal of peace within ourselves and in our worlds. Not only do the teachings and practices of mindfulness and yoga have the potential to expand the ways students learn and understand, but by examining their discursive impact we can begin to understand how the ideology associated with mindfulness and yoga—one of acceptance for all without judgement, non-violence, community, self-awareness, balance of mind/body/emotion, non-competition, and peace—can have lasting impacts on the schools that adopt these curricula. If an educator or school is compelled to use strategies of mindfulness and yoga in schools, then there is an opening to not just use the practices as a reaction to behavior or as a tool for learning but also as a movement toward an Inclusive Praxis and change. Through a close examination of the discourse used in these three mindfulness and yoga-based practices, we may get a better understanding of these potentials.

The Discourse of Mindfulness and Yoga in Support—or Undermining—of Feminist Pedagogy and an Inclusive Praxis

Foundationally, four codes were applied to analyze the basic teachings of mindfulness and yoga that are currently implemented in school curricula. These codes, as described in depth along with the coding process in Chapter 3, included—Breath Work, Meditation, Visualization, and Yoga-based Movement. This is an important layer of discourses to analyze because it illustrates what students are learning about mindfulness and yoga and how these common teachings may or may not align with traditional practices of mindfulness and yoga.

Meditation. The first example of how these discourses might work to support or undermine Feminist Pedagogy and an Inclusive Praxis is what I coded as MED—Meditation. Meditation is widely accepted as a foundational piece of mindfulness practice. In fact, Mindfulness Meditation is arguably the most popular application of mindfulness in the United States, made popular by the research and writing of Jon Kabat-Zinn and adopted in many therapeutic fields as a best practice for the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder and other stress-related health issues (Wells, 2007; Gallegos, Crean, Pigeon, & Heffner, 2017; Cramer, Anheyer, Saha, & Dobos, 2018). However, in coding for the word or phrase “meditation” with attention to frequency in these three curricula, the word appears less than 10 times across all three curricula. In over 500 pages of the curricula I analyzed in this study, meditation was only referred to explicitly as an activity for kids within the Everyday SEL book where it was described as a mini-meditation and connected with a 1-minute breathing and visualization exercise. This is likely related to the spiritual connections that are sometimes made between meditation and Buddhism. Religion is a highly-charged topic in U.S. schools and adhering to

separation of church and state is likely the motivation for meditation being clearly excluded from these curricula.

Terms like Breathing and Movement have become common placeholders for those of us who teach mindfulness and yoga in schools when we are looking to avoid the backlash that might come from parents or stakeholders who feel the use of terms like yoga or meditation are too closely linked to Buddhist religious practices (Wong, 2018). One thing made apparent in this critical discourse analysis of mindfulness and yoga curricula used in schools is that often when teaching about a meditation practice, the authors opt to teach the skill without acknowledging the meditative practice. For instance, in the Empowering Education curriculum there is an entire lesson dedicated to practicing kindness and compassion through the use of a “Loving-Kindness” activity (Empowering Education, 2016b). Traditionally, Loving-Kindness is a meditation, referred to as *Metta bhavana*, and comes from the Buddhist tradition. Anyone can practice the meditation and its goal is to cultivate love through the use of meditative mantra (Gunaratana, 2017). The Empowering Education lesson on kindness and compassion follows the traditional Loving-Kindness Meditation exactly, yet makes no mention of it being a meditation practice and offers no acknowledgment of its Buddhist roots. This is a missed opportunity to celebrate and honor a cultural practice that is used throughout the world. Furthermore, this kind of erasure of the connection of this meditative practice to Buddhist traditions works similarly to the process of cultural appropriation of richly diverse tradition that too often becomes part of Western schooling with little or no reverence and respect for the often thousands of years of cultural history (Uwujaren, 2013; Papallo & DeWald, 2016; Dishpande, 2017).

The absence of the word meditation is significant because it is clearly intentional. To write an entire curriculum that is anchored in mindfulness and yoga, but to omit any practice of

meditation in over 500 pages, is purposeful given the intimate relationship between meditation practice and mindfulness and yoga. This is an example of an omission of a foundational practice that has potential to support an Inclusive Praxis because it is closely aligned with principles of Feminist Pedagogy. Meditation teaches children to pay attention to their thoughts, to intentionally slow down a turning mind, and find stillness for a moving body so that one may connect more completely with themselves and in turn, grow their connections with the world around them. This is a practice that encompasses embodiment through a mind/body balance and connection, empowerment through the awareness of one's needs, and community through the recognition that we all are connected in community as interrelated and interdependent.

These are Feminist Pedagogical practices that are inclusive to all learners and movers. Meditation can be accessed by anyone when taught in inclusive ways. One example of such an activity can be found in the Empowering Education curriculum, Lesson 15, Mind in a Jar that addressed meditation as it related to the title of a book, *The Moody Cow Meditates* (2009); yet, the lesson did not include any attention to expanding on the meditation concept explicitly. This activity supports the concept of embodiment by including a children's book about meditation while having students create their own Mind Jars because "mindfulness lessons can often be abstract or thought-based, this lesson appeals to tactile and visual learners alike" (Empowering Education, 2016a, p. 1). This does acknowledge multiple types of learners while also providing an embodied learning experience for students.

In addition to supporting Feminist Pedagogy, a meditation practice in schools has the potential to shift some exclusionary discourses at work in U.S. schools today. By normalizing a practice that is rooted in diverse Eastern traditions, schools could open children up to diverse and embodied learning experiences without centering a dominant Western point of view. We do see

an example of someone practicing tai chi in the MindUP K-2 (2011a) curriculum, as a featured “Career Connection.” A photo of a group men practicing tai chi is accompanied by a description that reads:

A tai chi instructor teaches the ancient art of ‘meditation in motion,’ which connects mind and body and promotes serenity through gentle movements. Originally developed in ancient China for self-defense, tai chi has evolved into a noncompetitive, self-paced system of postures or movements performed in a slow, mindful manner. (p. 89)

This “Career Connection” section serves to highlight a non-Western culture and explains some of the concepts taught through yoga and mindfulness in a very reflective way. However, through a critical discourse analysis, it is also important to note where—the location—this information appears and for what purpose. Rather than incorporating the teachings of yoga (non-competition and self-pace through movement) throughout the mindfulness practices or mindful movements in the curriculum and allowing those concepts to be normalized through exposure and integration, the text frames these concepts as separate from what the students learn to do. The activity that follows the Career Connection relates the men doing tai chi back to these principles by having students reflect on their own activities—dance, sports, gym—and consider the question: “How has practice helped you become a better player and dancer?” (MindUP, 2011a, p. 89). I argue that through the positioning of tai chi as a career, the comparison to competitive sports and extracurricular activities, and the omission of yoga as the foundation for mindful movements, this curriculum works to push an exclusionary discourse of competition and performance while anchoring in a discourse of commodified contribution by focusing on these skills as part of a career.

Yoga. Similarly, as I coded the materials for the word yoga or any phrases related to yoga, I found a glaring absence of the term. While there is an obvious use of movement as a technique of mindfulness in all three curricula, only the Everyday SEL materials use the word yoga repeatedly. The MindUP curriculum dedicates two lessons out of nine in each of the curriculum sets, K-2 and 3-5, to Mindful Movements. They connect these movements to the concept of “physical performance” (MindUP, 2011a p. 50).

All of these run counter to a mindfulness and yoga framework, yet draw directly from the practices in order to advance the principles and teach the concepts to children. For the curricula to work toward supporting an Inclusive Pedagogy, terms like yoga and meditation would be welcomed in K-12 schools, to honor the roots of this learning in an authentic and consistent manner. This is an example of acceptance in practice and inclusion in action. As it stands, the omission or replacement of terms like Meditation and Yoga only serves to ignore and use and exploit the roots of traditional practices that could be honored as part of culturally relevant teaching framework that does not continually center the dominant Western experience, but creates space in our everyday teaching and learning for multiple perspectives.

As a counter example, Everyday SEL is clear about the yoga foundations used in the curriculum. The word “yoga” runs throughout the entire curriculum with yoga poses described as a fundamental piece of this Social-Emotional Learning curriculum with an emphasis on embodiment, empowerment, and community. Everyday SEL (2016) teaches Mindful Practices using traditional mindfulness and yoga techniques (with the exception of meditation) in statements such as: “...the Mindful Practices approach utilizes mindfulness, yoga, team building, breath work, and movement strategies to teach the following four SEL competencies...” (p. 11) and then goes on to list and describe the concepts of Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Social

Awareness, and Balance between Self-Efficacy and Social Harmony. Within each description, there are clear and direct links to all three principles of Feminist Pedagogy illuminating how this incorporation of mindfulness and yoga can support an Inclusive Praxis. For example, in the description of Self-Awareness things like “self-esteem, body awareness, personal responsibility, emotional awareness, and understanding choice” are connected to the idea of moving “the learner from powerlessness to empowered” (Tantillo Philibert, 2016, p. 11). Social Awareness and Social Harmony are both focused on community-building in ways that are consistent with Feminist Pedagogy by making intentional statements about not just being in a school community, but practicing what Tantillo Phillbert (2016) describes as a “communal view of the world around them” and by practicing “balance between Self-Efficacy and Social Harmony” so “learners feel centered, present, and like a valued and contributing member of the world around them” (p, 11). Tantillo Philibert goes on to state: “This competency also reflects the individual’s ability to find her voice and balance the needs of the SELF with the needs of the SOCIAL, without projection, assumption, or excessive self-sacrifice” (p. 11). These are principles that clearly reflect the values and aims of traditional mindfulness and yoga practices and are woven throughout the curriculum through practical applications of yoga and mindfulness.

Visualization. Variations in exercises of visualization are commonly used in mindfulness and yoga practices. In meditation, we often use visualization of our thoughts as something less abstract and more tangible so that we can practice acknowledging them and then letting them go away from us. In yoga, we use visualization to imagine that we are trees planting firm roots into the ground or that our stresses are melting like honey in the warm sun as we relax in Savasana pose. Visualization is especially effective when working with children because many kids have access to visual imagination that can be used to process difficult concepts like those that often

are addressed through mindfulness and yoga. Surprisingly, there was very little mention of visualization as a practice or technique in any of these three curricula. Much like the framing of yoga as movement throughout the curricula, visualization activities were embedded within the lessons, yet not acknowledged or named as such. The MindUP (2011a) curriculum includes “visual images” (p. 51) as an important part of using sensory details to practice mindfulness. The act of noticing is an important part of any mindfulness practice because it is the first step to awareness of the here and now. MindUP refers to this as “Mindful Seeing” and dedicates an entire lesson in both the K-2 and 3-5 curricula to these activities. This seems like a natural place to discuss the use of visualization as an active tool once we have noticed, accepted, and want to practice letting go. Again, this begs the questions: What do we lose if we ignore or replace traditional terms for our mindfulness practices when we work with kids? And, what do we gain? I argue that visualization is an accessible tool for children to gain insights into how to practice mindfulness and meditation and that by leaving these explanations out, children may not be making connections between mindfulness practices they are learning now, how others are learning and communicating about them, and how they will use them in the future. One of the few places that referred directly to visualization within the MindUP (2011a) curriculum describes a way of thinking about visualization “when done well” for the purpose of “making physical changes to the brain” and to “improve task performance” (p. 12). This explanation may be commonly understood as the purpose of visualization, although it is in contradiction to traditional goals of mindfulness and yoga where we seek to accept and calm the fluctuations of our minds and without expectation of performance and value judgement. Perhaps it is because of this incongruent view of visualization that it is not more explicitly used in the curriculum.

Breathwork. Coding for breathwork was much more an explicit task than it was for the other three mindfulness practices. Within each curriculum, breathing activities are the most frequently explained and practiced, across age groups and lesson themes. In fact, MindUP includes breathing in its Core Practice that is repeated throughout the curriculum activities and incorporated consistently in the classroom. When explaining the Core Practices within MindUP the following selection of text, from the lesson Breathing First: The Core Practice, leads the reader to understand breathing as an essential component to a mindfulness practice at school by stating: “From the earliest grades on up, the recommended approach to MindUP (2011a, 2011b) is to first establish the habit of deep belly breathing and focused attention” (p. 13).

Similarly, the Everyday SEL (2016) curriculum embeds breath work in its explanations of mindfulness, leading each day with a Breathwork activity before school work begins. Tantillo Philibert explains: “The goal is for students to unplug, find their breath, and be present” (p. 38). Everyday SEL provides a model for incorporating breathwork in a way that is interdisciplinary and can be used in multiple ways throughout the school day. This attention to balance in the use of the breathwork techniques demonstrates a commitment to Feminist Pedagogy and potential to link this practice to an Inclusive Praxis through its attention to embodiment, empowerment, and community. For instance, Tantillo Philibert (2016) provides a roadmap for using a mindfulness technique like breathwork in these ways when describing the interconnected disciplines where we locate breathing and breathwork. She writes:

Ultimately the goal is to use a mix of Mindful Practices to build Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, and Social Awareness so that one can find the balance between Self-Efficacy and Social Harmony: the ability to maintain the needs of the self while in a social situation or, conversely, to balance the needs of the group with the needs of the self. (p.

56)

It is fair to say that within all three curricula, the use of breathwork is so prevalent that it both supports and, at times, undermines Feminist Pedagogy and an Inclusive Praxis. It is used throughout the curricula to engage learners in practices of embodied learning and to create conditions of empowerment through calming of the mind and emotions, and practices of self-regulation. Often, the breathing practices are connected to building community through healthy communication and problem-solving, as well. These act in support of a feminist pedagogical frame. Conversely, often throughout each curriculum breathing practices are described as exercises for training the mind and increasing academic performance for the primary purpose of self-gain. In the sections that follow I further explain how these connections might contribute to and work within discourses of exclusion by way of discourses that position mind over body, individual over community, and competition and ownership over empowerment, all of which acts in opposition to and undermines an Inclusive Praxis.

Mindfulness and Yoga Discourses in Relationship to Discourses of Exclusion

Through this critical examination of discourse, some discursive themes emerged as common contributions to discourses of exclusion. Those themes described in Chapter 3 and coded as Macro-themes for Discourses of Exclusion (see Table 5) were further thought through and combined into three overarching dominant themes: (a) Reinforcing Value Hierarchies and the Separation of the Mind/Body Binary; (b) Undermining Community and Reinforcing Individualism; (c) Ownership, Management, and Control. In the following sections I will introduce these themes and explain how discourses of exclusion work through the curriculum potentially to reinforce and constitute exclusionary practices in mindfulness curriculum.

Reinforcing Value Hierarchy and Separation of Mind/Body Binary over the Mind/Body/Emotion Balance.

In their book, *Living the Sutras: A Guide to Yoga Wisdom Beyond the Mat* (2018), DiNardo and Pearce-Harden explore the traditional yoga teachings of the Yoga Sutra text through a modern application of the practices. They provide accessible interpretations of the yoga sutra ancient texts that are commonly accepted practices for yoga practitioners and teachers today. Given the popularity and use of this book in yoga and mindfulness communities currently, it seems appropriate to draw from these interpretations as we navigate the complexities of incorporating mindfulness and yoga into such historically hierarchical spaces as schools. According to traditional and modern interpretations of yoga texts and mindfulness practices, the purpose of mindfulness and yoga is to create balance in our lives through the alignment of mind/body/emotion (or spirit). We find this balance in order to calm the mind, minimize distractions, and bring awareness to our everyday experiences and relationships. The goal is a calm and clear mind for the purpose of knowing ourselves beyond our minds and bodies and emotions. To integrate this traditional practice of mindfulness and yoga into the U.S. schooling system may not be entirely possible and perhaps it is not the goal. However, those of us who commit to doing this work must acknowledge how we are changing the practices of mindfulness and yoga to adapt to school systems and what impact that might have on children, teachers, schools, and even ourselves. If we are using mindfulness and yoga with the specific intent to sharpen young minds for better focus and achievement, we must acknowledge why that is our goal, who we are doing it for, and how it might contribute to conditions of exclusion.

As understood through mindfulness and yoga, an overemphasis on one part of the mind/body/emotion connection creates imbalance that can contribute to disease, anxiety,

discomfort, and chaos. This idea often runs counter to a Western model of Mind/body as separate and distinct with more value placed on one's ability to reason. In U.S. schools, children practice from a very early age to equate learning with thinking, processing, reasoning, and understanding within a Mind/body dualistic framework (Pica, 2015, 2017; Martusewicz, Edmundson, & Lupinacci, 2015; Lupinacci, Happel-Parkins, & Ward Lupinacci, 2017). Physical and emotional learning is separated into Physical Education, recess, Social-Emotional Learning activities, classroom meetings, and even during time spent in interaction with the school counselor. These opportunities to learn and express through physical and emotional means are minimal and compartmentalized, contributing to the assumption that the mind holds position at the top of the mind/body/emotion hierarchy. Incorporating mindfulness and yoga in classrooms and schools should create potential openings for integration of the mind/body/emotion balance and connection in the learning process, which supports a feminist pedagogical practice of commitment and attention to embodiment, empowerment, and community. Ultimately, if as educators we are valuing the mind/body/emotion balance and connection, we should see the use of mindfulness and yoga as a way to disrupt discourses of exclusion by centering not just mind over body over emotion, but as an active strategy for integrating and aligning all three as equitable and important pieces of the learning space. This would, in turn, lead to an Inclusive Praxis. However, as this critical discourse analysis highlights, within the three mindfulness curricula studied there are consistent themes of mindfulness and yoga used as tools *for* the mind rather than *with* body and emotional systems thus leading to the reinforcement of value hierarchy and separation of Mind/body binary.

It is important to note, before we move deeper into this analysis, that by illuminating these places where mindfulness curricula may fall short or may contribute to exclusionary

practices in schools, we are not implying they are not useful or not helpful tools for classrooms, teachers, and students. The purpose here is to examine how these curricula support an Inclusive Praxis and how they may create possibilities for a shift toward more equitable and inclusive learning opportunities. Education is a continually reflexive process and all teaching and curricula have room to improve, change, grow, and better meet the needs of all students. By noticing incongruent messages in the curriculum and questioning how these messages might contribute to the production and reproduction of exclusionary norms in schools, we create possibilities for intentional change, rooted in respect for the traditions of mindfulness and yoga and care for the learning communities in which they are practiced.

Within each of these three curricula there are strong discursive examples of how this Mind/body dualism might be disrupted to create learning opportunities that are inclusive of all learners through feminist pedagogical practices of embodiment, empowerment, and community. For example, one of the 8 Principles of the Everyday SEL curriculum is to “Educate the Whole Child: Healthy Body = Healthy Mind” (Tantillo Philibert, 2016, p. 21). Tantillo Philibert (2016), even goes on to emphasize the need for balance of all three and writes: “Mindful Practices looks at the needs of the whole child: emotional, physical, and mental; when these three are in balance, a student is able to be present and Ready to Learn” (p. 8). The practice of this embodied learning is illustrated through a guided activity that encourages students to use their bodies in connection with cues for learning in community with emotion and physical body centered. Tantillo Philibert (2016) writes in an “Explanation of Social-Emotional Learning to students” that:

Social is to be in our community, stretch arms out wide; Emotional showing compassion to ourselves and others, two hands over hearts; Learning is when our interactions with

others are positive and can help us Be the Solution and be Ready to Learn, hands on top of head. (p. 45)

Tantillo Philibert's *Everyday SEL* touches on the concept of self-awareness as an important goal through mindfulness and yoga. Describing this concept, she writes that self-awareness is knowing:

how emotions and feelings affect our bodies and minds—and influence how we make decisions. Social-Emotional Learning helps us look at how the consequences of our actions affect our classmates, our school, and ourselves. (p. 50)

Another example from Tantillo Philibert included: “The activities are experiential in nature and empower students to read and respond proactively to their bodies’ cues” (p. 56). She goes on to describe this as:

Something to practice instead of doing once and moving on. By practicing these strategies again and again, the students are able to cultivate that duality between the mental and physical or the body and the mind. The union between mental and physical is cultivated through interconnected disciplines. (p. 56)

Furthermore, addressing how students might learn to respond proactively to their bodies’ cues via movement, Tantillo Philibert explains:

Yoga and balancing poses that help us focus on the present moment, clearing our minds of any stress or tension. These activities also help us stay healthy by getting us up and out of our seats to take a movement break. (p. 66)

Emphasizing the importance of a connection and balance between mind and body, Tantillo Philibert offers the pedagogical prompt: “Try your best and listen to your body” (p. 66).

Through this critical discourse analysis, however, it also became clear that these goals of integration and balance are always operating with a specific purpose—to “Be Ready to Learn” (p. 61). Tantillo Philibert in the Everyday SEL curriculum writing about the “why” of a particular yoga activity explained: “We are practicing yoga so that we can focus, concentrate, and Be Ready to Learn” (p. 63). In another place, a similar statement reads: “Release negative feelings so that we are Ready to Learn” (p. 70). Another example is this description of a well-known breathing exercise that is common in yoga and mindfulness practices—Lion’s Breath. In a similar example an excerpt reads: “Lion’s Breath to help us release any anger or sadness that we may be experiencing so that we can Be the Solution and be Ready to Learn” (p. 75). Which then develops into what she writes as:

Ready to Learn Breath when we are feeling overwhelmed or upset, or any time our class needs to Be in the Zone and focus. This activity is a positive way to check in, focus, and get our minds Ready to Learn. (p. 78)

Here we see how these important mindfulness practices are put to use for our readiness to learn and in repetition end up teaching children that the movement and breathwork they are doing is to optimize learning and ultimately academic performance. While on one hand this is not a bad thing, if not balanced with other benefits to the whole child—such as emotional and physical health and well-being and the health and wellness of the group—then children are learning that the body works *for* the mind and the value hierarchization follows a problematic Superior/inferior dualism prevalent in Western culture—the Mind/body value-hierarchized dualism. Furthermore, if we analyze this dualism with another common dualism Reason/emotion we can see that together the message is that the commonly inferiorized sides of the Either/or and Superior/inferior dualisms here read that the body and our emotions are engaged so far as they

serve superiority in reason and mind (Plumwood, 2002; Martusewicz et al., 2015; Lupinacci & Ward Lupinacci, 2017).

An analysis of the MindUP (2011a) curriculum illustrates similar themes. In the introduction, a quote from a first-grade student is highlighted in the text and reads: “MindUP makes my brain happy, so I can learn better” (p. 6). The MindUP curriculum makes a very clear connection between the brain and mindfulness practices, almost conflating the two. In the MindUP Curriculum, each unit has a lesson dedicated to brain research that focuses on anatomy and physiology of the brain. This is the entire purpose of the curriculum—Mind over Body; body and emotion are *for* the mind. This is made clear as the intent of the curriculum. MindUP (2016a, 2016b) explains:

Sharing scientific information about how the brain processes information and is wired to react under stress is a great way to introduce a challenge to our children: how can we learn to react differently, helping our brains make wise choices about our words and actions? As children become more familiar with three parts of the brain involved in thinking and learning, they’ll begin to understand how their feelings arise—and that they gave the ability to change what they do in response. This understanding lays the groundwork for them to monitor and regulate their behavior by calming themselves in the face of anxiety, focusing their attention, and taking control of their learning. (p. 26)

The MindUP Curriculum centers the Mind/body dualism throughout all grade levels and in all lessons as it introduces the Core Practice as the cornerstone for the practice in the classroom.

Students are instructed to:

Pause. Listen. Breathe. It can take less than a minute to cue our minds to relax and focus. A short listening and breathing exercise introduced in this lesson—Core Practice—helps

children quiet their minds and get ready to learn.” (MindUP 2011a, p 42; MindUP, 2011b, p. 18).

These exercises are to be done three times each day for a few minutes at a time. Core Practices are a combination of mindfulness techniques—breathing and mindful focus, most notably—that act as a preparation for students to get ready to learn. Children in these classes are taught that “Learning to be Mindful focuses on the amygdala” (MindUP, 2011a, p. 38) and that “by participating in MindUP lessons, students are going to learn ways to exercise their brain—the more they exercise it, the stronger, smarter, and more confident in becomes!” (MindUP, 2011b, p. 29).

Throughout the texts, there are small moments of a more balanced explanation of the mindfulness techniques in the MindUP materials, such as this excerpt from the K-2 curriculum. The MindUP Curriculum (2011a) brings attention to Mindful Awareness and defines it as:

Attending to the here and now—other people, the environment, a concern or challenge—in a considerate, nonjudgmental way. By reflecting on our thoughts and actions, we can decide how to make better choices when appropriate. (p. 34)

Ultimately, what emerges from this focus on mind over body, is a disconnection from the actual goals of mindfulness and yoga and an undermining incongruence in the way values are communicated to children. If we use mindfulness and yoga to perpetuate the notion that having a focused, attentive, productive mind for the major purpose of performing academic functions we risk excluding many of the diverse students in classrooms who may benefit from a mindfulness practice most of all. Mindfulness and yoga practices are inherently inclusive with the intention of creating access to balance and integration. If we emphasize the value of a focused mind over a

harmonious body and emotion and mind, then we fall short of the goals of mindfulness and yoga for all.

The Empowering Education curriculum uses the metaphor of a tree to emphasize the importance of embodied and balanced learning practices. Empowering Education (2016c), in Lesson 21 Growing Your Roots, describes:

Your bodies can be thought of as the whole tree blowing in the wind. The wind represents your emotions and experiences—sometimes calm, sometimes wavy, and sometimes flat-out stormy. The tree trunk itself represents your wizard-brain—the part of your brain that is solid and still. The branches of the tree, also known as your lizard-brain, the part of your brain that is reactive and easily tossed around on the currents and waves of your emotions. The roots represent mindfulness—the simple act of grounding oneself in the present moment even in the face of stormy weather. Each of these three prongs of the root system represent three anchors of mindfulness—breath, body, and sound. (p. 1)

This activity goes on to include a guided practice with breathing exercises and movements. This is a powerful example of how to de-center the thinking and reasoning piece of learning and to open space for the integration of mind/body/emotion.

Another example that supports an Inclusive Praxis and Feminist Pedagogy without positioning mind over body can be found in the Everyday SEL curriculum where Tantillo Philibert (2016) writes:

The activities are experiential in nature and empower students to read and respond proactively to their bodies cues....By practicing the strategies again and again, the students are able to cultivate that duality between the mental and physical or the body and

the mind. As present in both the SELF and SOCIAL activities, the union between the mental and the physical is cultivated through four interconnected disciplines:

vocalization, movement, stillness, and team-building. (p. 56)

What can be seen here is an acknowledgement of the Mind/body connection as a duality but as one that we can move toward union and not as one in which the inferior works for the empowerment of the superior. In this case, the Mind/body dualism is better denoted as the mind↔body connection—or as I will describe in Chapter 5 as the “mind↔body↔emotion connection” where the feminist pedagogical principles of empowerment and embodiment (experiential) are represented and community is the focus.

As we examine the way students are being taught to be “mindful” in schools and the ways traditional practices of yoga and meditation are being communicated within systems of schooling, it is important to understand how westernized views of education that are dependent upon things like task-completion, concept mastery, testing and evaluation, and competition might work against the skills that are important to teaching mindfulness and yoga. If all learning in schools is valued from a dualistic, hierarchical Mind/body position then are we even teaching mindfulness to students or does it become something else? Integrating mindfulness and yoga as teaching practices in American schools could lead to openings for change and some shifts in the way we understand and value learner for the *whole* child.

Undermining Community, Reinforcing Individualism

Another important concept that comes from mindfulness and yoga practices includes an emphasis on community-building. By teaching children to recognize their connections to the world around them and encouraging them to practice kindness and compassion, mindfulness and yoga curriculum in schools can be effective tools for cultivating community in classrooms. It is

evident in all three curricula, that community-building is one of the major purposes of adopting mindfulness and yoga practices in schools. Within Everyday SEL, MindUP, and Empowering Education this goal is communicated consistently and often with intention and thoughtfulness. However, a close examination of the discourse reveals some of the ways discourse, if not analyzed critically, can work in subversive ways to contribute to exclusion by undermining Feminist Pedagogical notions of community and reinforcing acts of individualism by prioritizing particular types of competition-based “teamwork” and ignoring hierarchies of power that might already exist within schools and classrooms.

Let’s take a closer look at how some of these discursive practices, as enacted through the curriculum, might be working to undermine community and reinforce individualism, beginning with one of the collaborative games featured in the Everyday SEL (2016) curriculum. This curriculum conveys a feminist pedagogical message of equal power distribution throughout the activities by grounding all the learning in the establishment of consensus through having students participate in the development of “Agreements” in the classroom. This creates an opportunity for students to feel valued as contributing members of community as they participate in rule-making and procedure development. Tantillo-Phillibert (2016) carries this idea of consensus-building throughout the curriculum and continues to highlight collaborative participation in Social-Emotional Learning activities through teamwork and problem-solving. We see, however, that in certain instances the theme of equal power distribution in community is replaced by practices that emphasize individual gain through competition. For example, in the Everyday SEL (2016) curriculum a game is introduced called, “Life: The Game of Social-Emotional Learning” (p. 48). This is an SEL-themed board game that is assumed to build communication skills through student interaction and has the intention of guiding students through an experiential learning

opportunity through a fun and engaging game scenario. Upon sight, the game seems to be aligned with the feminist pedagogical ideals of embodiment and community. However, if we consider the way the game is set-up, as students play *against* each other in partners with the goal of winning, we see an incongruence with practices of mindfulness and yoga. Participating in a competitive game where there is one distinct winner and one loser, promotes the idea of individual gain over cultivating community. This disconnection between what the Everyday SEL intends to communicate—mindfulness and yoga as ways to foster Social-Emotional Learning in community—serves to reproduce discourses of competition and value of individual over community. The game even has students stop and take a yoga break when they land in certain places on the game board in their race toward the finish line, when non-competition is a cornerstone principle of yoga. Something as small as this example may seem trivial in the larger context of the work that Everyday SEL does to build community in ways that are equitable, however it is these small discursive acts that lend to the production and reproduction of exclusionary ideologies (Couldry, 2005; Lupinacci et al. 2018).

Another example of discourse within the curricula that presents as community-building while acting through the reinforcement of individualism is found in the Empowering Education (2016d) curriculum, Lesson 23: Cooperation. This is a lesson entirely focused on building community through practicing cooperation skills. In it, students are asked to participate in a guided practice called “We’re All in the Together” (p. 1). The game is played in partners and then in larger groups with the goal of tapping a balloon the air as many times as the students can without breaking physical connection to each other’s bodies. This activity is framed as one that encourages cooperation and team-building, both concepts inherent in the process of building community in schools. However, in the description of purpose for teachers who will be

implementing the game, it states: “The take home point of this lesson is that just as it only takes one person to mess up an activity; it only takes one person to distract an entire classroom of learners” (p. 1). This is a sentiment that clearly reinforces the notion of individual contribution to community by emphasizing that the successes and failures of the class are connected to personal responsibility of individual students. All of this reinforces a false notion of the individual as disconnected in a problematic illusion of self as separate from, and often superior or inferior to others (Plumwood, 2002; Lupinacci et al. 2018). This emphasis obscures interrelation and interdependence in favor of individual success often at the expense, exploitation, and oppression of others.

Following a closer examination of this theme in relation to the discourse of disconnection introduced in Chapter 3, it can be particularly useful as part of an Inclusive Praxis to understand how this notion of an individual as separate from and in competition with all others works in opposition to and undermines the interdependency of a healthy community. An Inclusive Praxis pushes educators to recognize how Superior/inferior dualisms work toward establishing and maintaining social inequality; and, furthermore, those dualisms that undergird discourses of disempowerment (sexism, ableism, racism, classism, ageism, etc.) work together with a powerful discourse of disconnection to reinforce an understanding of self as an individual in competition with others. Essential to addressing the value hierarchies of the ways discourse of exclusion work through a logic of domination is learning to recognize and teach how important it is to resist individualism, or what Plumwood (2002) calls the “illusion of disembeddedness”—a failure to recognize, or a denial, of one’s existence as dependent on our relationships, and the health of those relationships, to all other species embedded in a community.

Recognizing and understanding how a discourse of disconnection works at the root of a culture that interprets relationships in ways that reproduce the logic of disempowerment, there exists a fundamental problem in relational understandings. Instead of understanding ourselves as being interrelated and interdependent with other one another, we as subjects in discourses of exclusion are too often learning to understand ourselves, and to act as though, we are not connected to a diverse community of relationships that support and sustain our existence—these being the relationships upon which our lives, health, and happiness depend. A discourse of disconnection is integral for teaching how a logic structure for discourses of exclusion can be understood by exposing individualism, and how individualism connects with discourses of disempowerment and commodified contribution via patriarchy, racism, commodification, ableism, heteronormativity, and other dominant habits of mind informed by these exclusionary hierarchized dualisms. Further, these discourses work together through routine structures of schooling and society to normalize exclusion and injustice. In this section I shared how the notion of self as separate from and superior (or inferior) to others sets up a limited and dangerous perspective.

Ownership, Management, & Control

Continuing from the importance of recognizing and understanding how a discourse of disconnection is present in the mindfulness curriculum, in this section of the chapter I will share how notions of ownership, management, and control work through the curricula to reinforce and reproduce a discourse of disempowerment and commodified contribution. Earlier in this chapter I referred to the prevalence of dualisms in Western cultures and thus in U.S. schools and curricula by focusing on how the Mind/body and Reason/emotion hierarchized dualisms work to uphold a Mind over body, Superior/inferior separation. Extending that logic, this patterned

thinking not only justifies and perpetuates the hierarchized dualisms of Self/community, but it also upholds forms of discourses of disempowerment like racism (white/not white), classism (wealthy/not wealthy), sexism (male/not male), ableism (able bodied/not able bodied), and so on. All of these forms of oppression rely on value-hierarchized dualisms that reflect a center/margin, Superior/inferior structure and often inform how we understand and interact with one another.

In the Everyday SEL curriculum, Tantillo Philibert (2016) makes frequent reference to “Managing emotion” (p. 60) through mindfulness and yoga practices and encourages students to “OWN your emotions” (p. 47). Describing how to explain the “why” of an activity in the Everyday SEL (2016) curriculum, Tantillo Philibert writes: “to help build student ownership of the material and to empower them with the SEL knowledge to find their words, name emotions, and be in control of their behavior” (p. 57). At work through a discourse of normalcy—or the norm being enforced by relying on the exclusionary act of identifying and classifying, two important metaphors—ownership and control—communicate a discourse of disempowerment and commodified contribution. These metaphors reinforce superiority in terms of owning something rather than sharing it freely and with consent rather than control.

In support of community-building as it is viewed through Feminist Pedagogy, the Everyday SEL (2016) curriculum describes the process of “consensus-building and creating agreements” (p. 43). In Feminist Pedagogy, this would be an excellent model for distributing power equally to all members of the classroom community as everyone has their input heard and valued. This is the goal of community. However, without any discussion of implicit bias and power dynamics that might already be at work in the classroom because of things like gender, race, sexuality, ability, class, etc. there is too much potential to reproduce these hierarchical power structures particularly given the manner in which the Everyday SEL (2016) curriculum

proposes to “enforce consequences if a student violates the Agreements” (p. 43). This “teacher tip” is provided (starred and in its own grey text box for emphasis) so that teachers have a way to keep classroom trust and safety; however, there is no discussion of how and why certain agreements might benefit some students over others. These selected textual examples illuminate the patterns of discourses of exclusion in the curriculum as setting out to teach community but then slip into language rooted in habits of mind that undermine equality, equity, and diversity in classrooms and communities. The notion of “enforcing consequences” without any attention to what those consequences might be and how consequences in any group ought to be situated in a framework of rights and responsibilities to inclusive, equitable, and safe communities. Building on the ways that “ownership” and “control” communicate very different meanings than “partnership” and “cooperation” would it be too much to instead say: help build student *partnerships* with the material and to empower them with the SEL knowledge to *recognize* and *value* their words, emotions, and *to be mindful* of their behaviors.” Furthermore, analyzing “...find their words, name emotions, and be in control of their behavior” (Tantillo Philibert, 2016 p. 57) we see illuminated a strong example of a major discourse of disempowerment which is the reinforcement deep colonial mindsets that Indigenous scholar Steven Newcomb (2008) calls a “conqueror model” prevalent in Western culture. The close relationship between discovery (or finding,) and naming (or using language to assign meaning), in efforts to control is bound up tightly with the logic structures of domination in Western culture. This becomes incredibly dangerous to goals of mindfulness and an Inclusive Praxis because it is also an example of a discourse of normalization. It is so seemingly trivial, but speaks volumes to how acceptance of language is normed into everyday communication in the lessons.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the analysis of how the discourses of exclusion work through mindfulness curricula. Through critical discourse analysis, this chapter examined the ways mindfulness and yoga curricula work to support, or undermine, principles of Feminist Pedagogy in schools while considering closely the relationship between themes and discourses in the curricula that both support, and undermine, an Inclusive Praxis. This chapter brings to conclusion the critical discourse analysis of the three curricula. The next chapter summarizes the implications of this study and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

An Inclusive Praxis strives to move classrooms and schools toward learning experiences that are intuitive and enriching. It is a practice grounded in Feminist Theory and Critical Disability Studies as it actively works to deconstruct discursive practices that are exclusionary and ableist as well as illuminate possibilities for inclusive teaching. Considering closely the possibilities for mindfulness and yoga in schools to move toward an Inclusive Praxis, this study—a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of three K-5 mindfulness curricula—had a central aim of providing insight into how particular dominant discourses of exclusion work through, both for and against, aspects of empowerment, embodiment, and community in the mindfulness curricula. Mindfulness and yoga in schools is a growing trend in U.S. schools and this study set out to help navigate the tensions between implementing practices of mindfulness and yoga into structures and routines of dominant education cultures and how those dominant discourses of exclusion might be—and as shared in Chapter 4 were—at work to undermine the very goals of mindfulness. In other words, mindfulness and yoga are rooted in Eastern traditions and have very different epistemological orientations than assumptions undergirding and constituting success for students and teachers in most schools in Western cultures. As brought to light in this study throughout the dissertation, mindfulness practices—including breathing work, meditation, visualization, and yoga-based movement—together with Feminist Pedagogy—empowerment, embodiment, and community—offer opportunities for educational efforts to challenge normalcy and exclusion in schools and classrooms. While mindfulness has much to offer inclusion, the practices are not easily integrated into schools, so this study set out to better understand how and why that might be the case.

In this study, through a CDA with a conceptual framework of an Inclusive Praxis, I share insight into the strengths and challenges of working to unify theory and practice in curriculum and pedagogy, as well as how to do so in a way that is intentionally aimed at shifting how educators, and educational leaders, critically conceptualize how and why children are included in educational spaces. Within the qualitative approach to education research, this study utilized discourse studies and methods of CDA to offer a critical understanding of mindfulness curriculum and how such curriculum might offer great opportunity—even with the pitfalls and problems identified in each of the analyzed curriculum—for working toward, and with, an Inclusive Praxis. This conclusion provides a summary of the findings, a brief discussion of the study’s implications, and offers recommendations for future research.

The Research Questions

This study was framed by the overarching question: “How can mindfulness and yoga curriculum support an Inclusive Praxis in schools and diverse learning communities?” With this question framing the study, each curriculum was coded and analyzed considering more specific questions that consisted of asking: (a) How might we incorporate mindfulness and yoga within such rigid structures of schooling?; (b) How might we hold onto the integrity of what it means to be searching for balance and acceptance, non-judgement, non-harm, and enlightenment in a system that works so hard to push students into performance improvements, grade-level expectations, higher test scores, and so-called better behaviors?; (c) In a system that pushes students to strive for more at every turn, where might there be spaces in the rigid structures of the common school day to learn to understand the aims of mindfulness and yoga as life skills?; (d) Does the *why* of the practice matter, so long as children are learning tools and strategies that help them meet their goals in school and beyond?; and (e) *How* might mindfulness curriculum work

through an Inclusive Praxis toward a paradigm shift in *how* and *what* is learned in schools? With each of these questions central to the study, the purpose of this CDA was to illuminate all of these possibilities and pitfalls, and to ultimately create space for understanding if mindfulness and yoga in schools have the potential to create entry points for more inclusive teaching and learning. The following section provides a brief summary of how the major overarching findings from the study—Supporting “Mind ↔ Body ↔ Emotion,” Cautioning of Oppressive Forms of Empowerment, and Possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis—address these questions.

Supporting “Mind ↔ Body ↔ Emotion”

As discussed in the analysis of this study in Chapter 4, there is an understanding that traditional mindfulness and yoga practices aim to create a harmonious balance between mind/body/emotion through connection, acceptance, and alignment of all three, often when these practices are adapted for implementation in U.S. schools this balance is shifted to prioritize Mind *over* body and emotion. When mindfulness and yoga practices are *used* to create conditions of optimal focus and attention so that students are able to meet and exceed academic performance standards, it becomes impossible to uphold the very ideals that make mindfulness and yoga accessible to all students. Incorporating mindfulness and yoga into schools without emphasizing the balance of mind/body/emotion as an interactive and balanced system moves us away from educating the whole child and reproduces the very discourses we seek to disrupt through mindfulness and yoga.

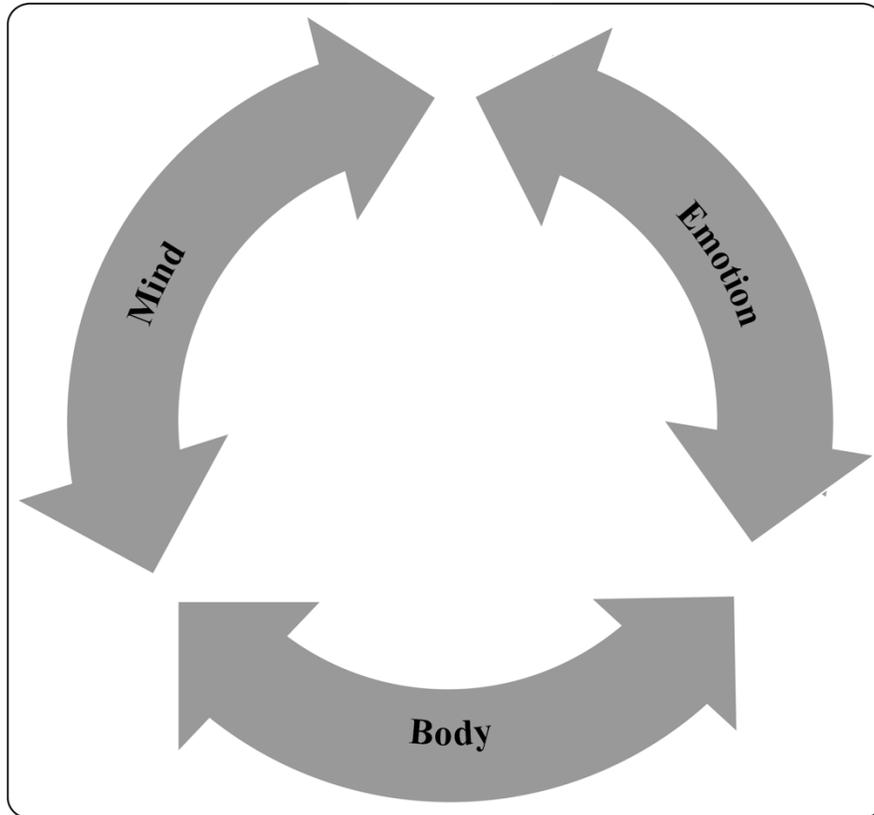


Figure 2: The Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion Connection. This figure illustrates the interrelated and non-linear and hierarchical nature of the Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion connection.

In Figure 2, The Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion Connection can be better understood as a consideration that reminds educators to think differently about academic achievement as part of the learning experience and the only aspect of development necessary for healthy balance. Furthermore, this overarching theme is important to note because if “mind” is prioritized as superior, and the “body” as serving the mind rather than educators considering how learning works diversely through, and with, attention to all three aspects of the Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion Connection (see Figure 2) then any goals of empowerment, embodiment, and community are undermined at the roots.

Cautioning of Oppressive Forms of Empowerment

Empowerment is a consistent theme throughout the mindfulness curricula analyzed in this study and frequently throughout the curriculum analyzed, empowerment is presented primarily as a skill that can be learned and practiced. While it is certainly important to teach for empowerment, what is also very important and highlighted in this study is that it is possible to present empowerment as obtained, or earned, through mastery of individual competition, only academic achievement, and through practicing and understanding relationships to one another and emotions through metaphors of ownership, management, and control. Presented this way, it should be clear that empowerment is complex with multiple understandings of what it means and how it looks. From an inclusive and Feminist perspective, empowerment must not be dependent on devaluing or exploitation of some, otherwise the relationships of community are not understood as such that support goals of equity, equality, and justice. It is important to pay attention to the ways we talk about and teach empowerment. In Chapter 3 of this study, empowerment was defined from a Feminist Pedagogy perspective as the equal distribution of power among all members of the learning community. This is a practice that promotes consensus-building and equity for all learners, but can easily be misrepresented as empowerment for the individual or a specific group of people, at the expense of others. When students are led to believe that they have a choice to either be a part of the solution or a part of the problem without a discussion of the deeper roots and causes of the community problems, an oppressive form of empowerment is potentially created. By integrating mindfulness and yoga practices and Feminist Pedagogy in order to implement an Inclusive Praxis, we create space for empowerment that is experienced in Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion by allowing students to practice recognizing and communicating their physical and emotional needs as well as being attentive and responsive to

the need to balance and value those three things with intention and action in community with those around us. When students are equipped to understand and they are practiced in addressing these needs within themselves they also have the skills to recognize the needs of others and to empathize with those around them. Inclusive empowerment then follows as students participate in decision-making and taking informed and balanced actions that are rooted in knowledge grounded in empathy and equity. In other words, I am not making an argument against academic achievement but rather an argument that if it is not partnered in cooperative mutual ways with embodiment through the Mind ↔ Body ↔ Emotion connection and in recognition of the importance of interdependency in our communities then the academic achievement becomes a means to reinforcing a kind of empowerment that in practice models and upholds an empowerment dependent on the devaluing and oppression of others. Instead, the point I am emphasizing in this theme is that empowerment does not need to include devaluing, exploiting, and oppressing others. Empowerment should be learned through community, cooperation, and well-being of the entire group which includes each of our Mind ↔ Body ↔ Emotion connections.

Possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis

Another overarching finding emerging from the study is further clarification and understanding of an Inclusive Praxis. In Chapter 2, an Inclusive Praxis was introduced in relationship to Feminist Theory, Feminist Pedagogy, and Critical Disability Studies as a conceptual framework—both an emerging theory and pedagogy. Fundamentally, it is in resonance and harmony with Feminist Pedagogies—empowerment, embodiment, and community—that I am drawing practical applications for mindfulness and yoga curriculum in

schools so that inclusive pedagogy can be understood as working on two interrelated aspects of pedagogical work. An Inclusive Praxis:

1. Works to identify teaching practices and curriculum that emphasize embodiment, empowerment, and community for all members of the school and educational community.
2. Works to identify discourses, and the associated discursive practices, of dominant educational cultures, such as schools, communities, classrooms, curricula, etc. as an entry-point for understanding and rejecting the exclusion of those outside of the non-dominant group.

Emerging from the findings of this study it became clear that these two fronts offer a way for educators, and educational leaders, to visualize and think through with intention and attention how to support a healthy balance and representation for feminist pedagogies and the Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion. While the discourse analysis of the curricula brought light to specific ways that the discourses of exclusion are at work or potentially interrupted in the lessons and materials, an overarching finding is that the process of critically examining curriculum with attention to empowerment, embodiment, and community while simultaneously considering the importance of thinking about interrupting value-hierarchized binaries that work to undermine the goals of feminist pedagogies and in relationship an Inclusive Praxis.

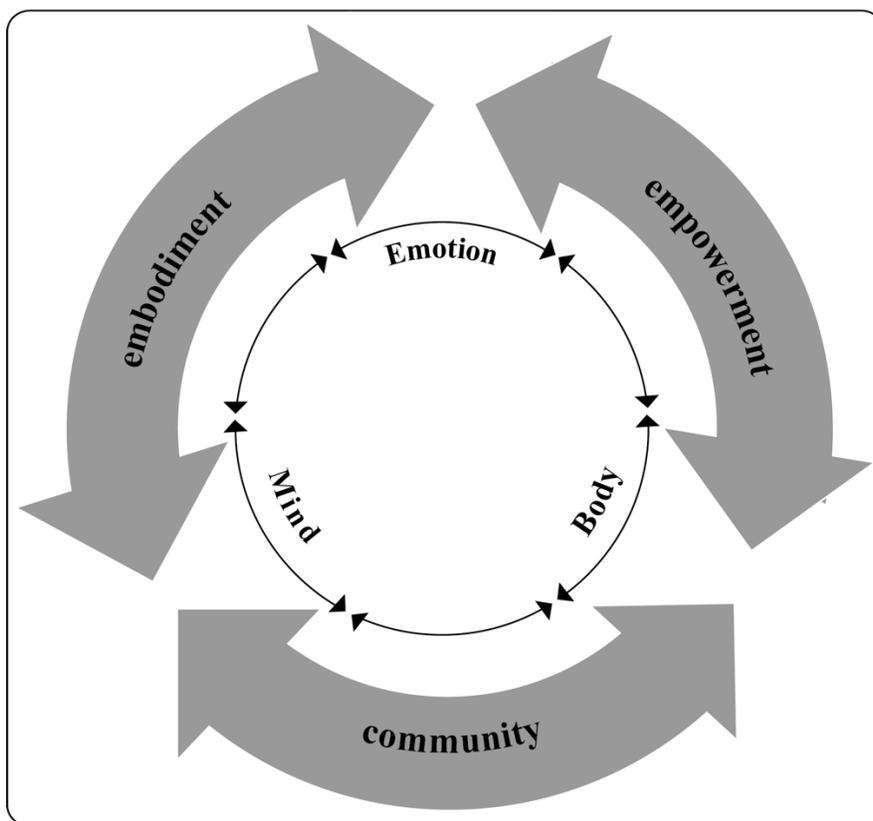


Figure 3: Resonance and Harmony of Feminist Pedagogies with The Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion Connection. This figure illustrates the relationship between Feminist Pedagogies (embodiment, empowerment, and community) and the Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion Connection.

In Figure 3, *Resonance and Harmony of Feminist Pedagogies with The Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion Connection*, a visual representation helps to illustrate this relationship in a way that reminds us of the non-static nature of the relationships in an Inclusive Praxis. Drawing from the use of singing bowls in meditative practices the concepts of resonance—a quality of deep full reverberation of sound often reinforced or prolonged by synchronous vibrations of other nearby object—and harmony—the combination of simultaneous sounds combined in accord and often pleasing—can be a heuristic for metaphorically understanding the important aspect of an Inclusive Praxis. Singing bowls play a role in Buddhist meditation in setting a tone for frequency

following response that is said to facilitate a left/right balance in the brain and then aiding in a relaxing state for the body. Considering this practice and the illustration in Figure 3, it can be understood that as educators, and educational leaders, consider mindfulness curriculum and pedagogy for schools and classrooms that it ought to be with attention to a how schools and teachers will commit to the regular attention to finding balance and harmony between Feminist Pedagogies (embodiment, empowerment, and community) and the Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion Connection. In accordance with an Inclusive Praxis, there is also the importance of also taking space in the work to actively identify the ways exclusion works through discourses of exclusion—normalization, disconnection, disempowerment, and commodified contribution in our classrooms and curriculum. In this sense, it was found that a process emerged from the discourse analysis of identifying how mindfulness curriculum and pedagogy offer support to aspects of Feminist Pedagogy while considering the importance of supporting also the Mind ⇔ Body ⇔ Emotion Connection provided a great foundation for further working to critically recognize the ways that dominant discourses of exclusion work in our learning spaces.

Implications and Recommendations

While an important, and well worthwhile project to engage in analysis to identify the ways that dominant discourses of exclusion, it is not an Inclusive Praxis until action is taken to resist exclusionary discourses actively with the intention of working inclusively and for the empowerment of all diverse members of the community. In the next section, I move into what some of the recommendations for taking such actions could look like for teachers, school leaders, policy makers, and then for future research.

Teachers, School Leaders, and Policy Makers

Through an Inclusive Praxis, what emerges is an identification and understanding of individualism as reinforced in the curriculum and thus the associated false notion of an independent individual. Recognizing how a discourse of disconnection works through curriculum can help teachers to reconfigure curriculum and pedagogy to emphasize the importance of all our dependencies over this illusion of independence. Through this process, teachers might work through and with the following questions: What does it mean to be mindful and successful? What sort of relationships are necessary for humans to exist in healthy and sustainable ways? How do we make decisions together that are ethically responsible? Whose voice is valued and/or centered in what is determined as ethically responsible?

Practical strategies for educators who wish to draw from mindfulness and yoga and incorporate the practices into their classrooms and schools in ways that align with an Inclusive Praxis include the following:

- Attention to the use of language that is both inclusive and authentic. Using the traditional terms from mindfulness and yoga practices, rather than erasing and replacing them with words that are less culturally-bound and more “neutral” to Western experience, provides an opportunity to honor cultural practices and traditions while decentering the Western positionality that U.S. schools are organized around. This creates the kind of opening that an Inclusive Praxis strives for—an embodied learning experience that connects students to communities while empowering them to understand multiple perspectives as valuable.

- Mindfulness and yoga as tools for community-building provide opportunities for practicing consent, as well as consensus-building. Consent becomes the foundation for making democratic decisions and re-distributing power in equitable ways, as students begin to understand how they feel, what they need, and how to communicate those needs through connecting with their minds/bodies/emotions. This leads to a cycle of empathy in which students not only recognize their own needs, but begin to routinely recognize and understand the needs of the people around them. Consent is more than just an act of saying “yes” or “no” but is the practice of knowing ourselves and advocating for our needs and desires. Through this process, students learn how to be in communities that focus on equal power relationships and decision-making.
- Using an Inclusive Praxis framework gives educators an anchor point for making decisions in their schools and classrooms that are student-centered and rooted in equity and justice. It is only when we have a deep understanding of how discourse works to organize and influence ideology that we can begin to find the entry-points for change. Educators who are committed to creating and maintaining inclusive schools should recognize the value of educating every part of every child by creating spaces where students of all abilities and backgrounds have a valued voice and contribution. This begins by shifting the ways we value student participation, contribution, and success. Through an Inclusive Praxis we expand narrow views of what is “worthwhile” at school as things that can be performed, evaluated, measured, and standardized to include experiences that balance body/mind/emotion and incorporate embodiment, empowerment, and community.

Recommendations for Future Research

The initial CDA study of the mindfulness curriculum in this study offers a foundational step in the ongoing research to work to better understand not only how discourses of exclusion work through schools and communities but also to as how this study serves as a foundation for further examining the possibilities for an Inclusive Praxis in higher education, teacher education, K-12 schools, and informal learning spaces. When I began this research interest nearly a decade ago, I wanted to research the impact of dominant discourses on the ways students and teachers lives and bodies were disciplined as subjects in social structures like classrooms and schools in increasingly high stress and violent spaces. It had always been painfully apparent to me that for many students, and teachers for that matter, schools were spaces in which people were regularly being denied their human rights. Further, it was my hope to conduct research with the potential both to bring more understanding to those conditions while also offering some meaningful hope through professional development and tools for how teachers, schools, and communities could play a role in transitioning schools toward more inclusive places for all learners. As I set out to explore this work and identify the necessary methods and resources, I determined that this study would best begin with some conceptual research to further develop my conceptual framework and that in doing so a productive entry point for empirical research would be to focus on curriculum. In mapping out what it would take to conduct a CDA of mindfulness curriculum, one of the indicators that I had chosen the right starting point was that I kept hearing from teachers, principals, school counselors, and parents that they needed more examples of how to teach mindfulness and yoga in schools and specifically for all children. While I realized this was something I had been doing for latter part of the past decade through Be Still Kids—a Kids Yoga and Mindfulness Program that was born out of the Center for Inclusive Praxis—it was upon this

realization that I decided it would be critical to study how the development of an Inclusive Praxis could be advanced while addressing a growing need for utilizing critical education research methods to illuminate the possibilities, as well as the pitfalls and problems, of working uncritically with mindfulness and yoga curriculum materials in spaces like schools and classrooms. After much research and consultation with other critical scholars and yoga and mindfulness educators, it seemed logical to start with the curricula being most commonly used and accessed, and so it began that this dissertation would be a CDA that would provide both a context for applying an Inclusive Praxis as well as a foundation for the planning of future research to support and explore the possibilities and potentials of such a framework. While immersed in this study, I learned rather quickly that this study would provide a base from which much future research and exciting collaborations would be possible. Following that excitement, I offer the following suggestions for future research in connection with the aforementioned implications and recommendations.

The next steps in the research include continuing with CDA and further analysis of some of the emerging themes that did not make it fully into this study while adding more curriculum resources to the analysis. Accompanying the CDA of the curriculum materials, it would be great to interview students, teachers, school leaders, and members of the community who are teaching and learning in classrooms and learning spaces utilizing the curricula. That additional layer would further bring insight to how experiences illuminate aspects of the way discourses of exclusion work and would quite possibly generate new, or different, ways of understanding the discourses. I also would like to see this research grow and contribute to curriculum development and implementation in classrooms, whole-schools, and even districts. Additionally, given my current academic role as Faculty in Children's Studies, I would like to expand this research to

include the use of an Inclusive Praxis as a framework for teaching in higher education. I would also like to begin making explicit connections, through research, to the application of an Inclusive Praxis as a tool for use in the field of Children's Studies that centers the voices, experiences, and rights of the child in research, writing, teaching, advocating, and policy-making.

Conclusion

Given the focus of this research study, it seems appropriate to conclude with a mindfulness practice that I use to teach children and adults how to begin a practice of mindfulness. Using the simple cues—*Attention and Intention*—we can practice mindfulness by noticing, without judgement, and attending to what we feel, what we need, who is around us, and what they need and feel. We can then move into acting with Intention toward meeting the needs of ourselves and those around us. *Paying Attention* and *Acting with Intention* provide the foundation for making choices that are based in harmony and empathy, rather than individualism and competition. The current state of education in the United States, and beyond, calls for a shift in attention and intention. We must pay attention to the ways so many students are experiencing schools as places of stress, disharmony, and exclusion. Educators, school leaders, educational researchers, policy-makers, parents, and communities must commit to providing spaces where children can learn in ways that integrate the needs of their minds/bodies/emotions through practices that are based in equity and justice for all learners. We must act with intention by critically examining how and why we use practices like mindfulness and yoga in schools that are meant to promote unity in ourselves and our communities. We must act with intention to reject practices that reproduce discourses of exclusion in schools and expand those discourses to include strategies that shift education cultures toward embodiment, empowerment, and

community. It is my fervent hope and commitment, as an educator and researcher, to shift the trends in mindfulness and yoga in schools toward an Inclusive Praxis.

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