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Beyond the Rhetoric: Moving from Exclusion, Reaching for Inclusion in Canadian Schools

This article is informed by the findings of a three-year research study in Ontario schools in order to understand the factors and forces that make for students' engagement and disengagement in schools. Although research has sought to understand the processes that contribute to some students feeling a sense of marginality and disconnectedness in their schools, we have also paid attention to exemplary practices of inclusive schooling in educational settings. Specifically, in this article we examine educational practices that engender exclusion or inclusion, particularly of racially marginalized students in Euro-American or Canadian contexts. We develop an analysis that uncovers the connection between "inclusionary and exclusionary" practices of schooling. "Inclusivity" moves beyond mere classroom presence of minorities or superficial attempts at multiculturalism: students may feel disempowered and therefore excluded as far as actual classroom practices are concerned (e.g., teaching, sharing knowledge). Moving from exclusion means identifying students' own narrative accounts of marginality and subordination that result in feeling left out. Reading for inclusion means interrogating strategies initiated by schools, students, educators, parents, and local communities to counteract the marginalization of disadvantaged and racial minority youths. Our aim in this article is to use available research information to encourage the wider application of effective inclusive practices to improve learning outcomes for all youth.

Cet article repose sur les résultats d'une étude qui s'est déroulée sur trois ans dans des écoles en Ontario et qui avait comme objectif de comprendre les facteurs et les enjeux qui font en sorte que les étudiants sont impliqués ou pas dans leur école. Alors que les chercheurs ont tenté de saisir les processus qui contribuent au sentiment qu'ont certains étudiants d'être marginalisés et désengagés dans leur école, ils ont également porté leur attention sur les pratiques exemplaires d'écoles intégratrices dans des milieux pédagogiques. Plus précisément, dans cet article, les auteurs se penchent sur les pratiques pédagogiques qui créent l'exclusion ou l'inclusion, notamment d'étudiants marginalisés en cause de leur race dans des contextes euroaméricain ou canadien. Ils poursuivent une analyse qui révèle le lien entre des pratiques d'enseignement "inclusifs" et ceux qui sont "exclusifs". L'inclusivité va au-delà de la simple présence en salle de classe de minorités ou des démarches superficielles tendant vers le multiculturalisme qui peuvent laisser les étudiants avec le sentiment d'être

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tenus à l'écart du pouvoir et donc exclus quant aux pratiques en salle de classe (par exemple, l'enseignement, le partage de connaissances). Pour mettre fin à l'exclusion, il faut tenir compte des récits descriptifs que font les étudiants de leur marginalité et de leur subordination, ainsi que des sentiments d'être exclus qui en résultent. Pour encourager l'inclusion, il faut analyser les stratégies mises de l'avant par les écoles, les étudiants, les enseignants, les parents et les communautés pour faire contrepoids à la marginalisation des jeunes qui sont défavorisés ou membres d'une minorité ethnique. Le but des auteurs est de profiter des résultats de recherches pour encourager une application plus répandue de démarches efficaces d'inclusion et améliorer l'apprentissage de tous les jeunes.

Introduction

In a Canadian public inner city school, an African-Canadian mother was looking for a new high school for her daughter. The mother paid a visit to a local school with a reputation for high academic excellence. As the school principal extolled the virtues of the school to his female visitor, he added: "Unfortunately, we seem to be having one problem of late ... The Black students are keeping to themselves!" Much to the principal's chagrin, the parent replied, "Oh really, this is neat."

The understandings and interpretations that may be taken from this particular incident are relevant in the search for an inclusive school environment. The principal and the mother differed in their sense of how a school viewed as *excellent* in the context of a diverse student population responded to the *self-separation* of Black students. From the mother's point of view, the Black students exhibited a sense of collectivity and positive identification that led them to support each other socially in the dominant, possibly hostile school system. From the principal's point of view, the Black students engaged in an act of self-segregation that in some way harmed the school's reputation. Each perspective reflects a different conception of exclusion and inclusion.

Concepts of inclusion and exclusion in societal institutions like schools, charged with promoting collective norms and personal growth, are inextricably linked to definitions of *equity* and *success*. Words like *inclusion* and *exclusion* invoke real policies, practices, and ideologies. Only one aspect of inclusion was addressed in the principal's assumption that equity is achieved if minority students are "not excluded" from the same schools, classes, and activities as students from dominant communities. The mother's concern that equity is achieved if students are free to associate in social support groups that might provide a stronger base from which to introduce knowledge of diverse skills, meanings, and concepts responds to a second aspect of inclusion. Exclusion inevitably occurs when schools respond to one definition of equity while ignoring the other.

Our focus in this discussion is on adolescents and schooling. We maintain that adolescents can as easily become disengaged and discouraged in "nonexclusionary" environments as in exclusionary environments. Environments that focus only on similarity and deny difference, explicitly or implicitly, undermine adolescents' ability to test their emerging identities against an external criteria (Dei, 1997; Dei, with Buenaventura et al., 1997). In addition to understanding the psychological reasons why adolescents need to be free to join and leave groups, there are strong sociological reasons for formulating a language and culture that promote greater integration of personal and societal expectations. In this article we examine issues of inclusion and exclusion in schools in

Canada, a nation of diverse peoples in an expansive geographic territory. In the introduction we provide a brief conceptual and theoretical framework for discussing issues of inclusion and exclusion in schools from a Canadian perspective. In the second part we examine, from within the context of a large-scale study on inclusion and exclusion, the aspect of the study that focused on community-initiated strategies to foster inclusive schooling through the support of grassroots organizations locally based in the Toronto area.

Reconceptualizing Inclusion and Exclusion

The idea of inclusion in schools, whether from dominant (mainstream) or resistant (alternative or counter) cultures, has little meaning without knowledge of the policies and practices of "inclusive education." At the institutional level, inclusion reflects a commitment to engaging in anti-racist and anti-sexist policies and practices (i.e., curriculum, hiring, and other). Inclusive schooling involves a transformation of the educational system into a system that respects individual differences, as well as collective and historical experiences. An inclusive system should equip adolescents to deal with the proliferation of social, political, economic, cultural, and spiritual interests, as well as the consequent tensions in a transnational community. A critical perspective on diversity and inclusive schooling (Anderson & Collins, 1995; Goldstein, 1994; Lee, 1995, 1994) understands schooling relations to be racially, culturally, and politically mediated experiences that must take into account questions of power and domination in the production and affirmation of knowledges in the past and in the present (Dei, 1996; Dei, James, James-Wilson, Karumanchery, & Zine, 2000).

Exclusion, on the other hand, is more than the omission, deliberate or otherwise, of marginalized peoples, cultures, and forms of knowledge. An exclusionary education can range in practice from radical segregation to banal "color-blind" approaches to schooling. If the education of some adolescents is "inferior" because school achievement, retention rates, and postsecondary success remain below those of the mainstream (Dei, Holmes, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Campbell, 1995; McLaren, 1993; Ogbu, 1987; Radwanski, 1987; Samuda & Crawford, 1980) adolescents are at a disadvantage materially, psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually. As has frequently been written (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Zine, 1997; LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991; and others), such practices often not only marginalize students, they actively push or phase students out of school. Although significant numbers of students from "minoritized" groups have become disengaged from their schooling experience, Black[1] and Aboriginal students appear to have been most directly affected by the "push-out" factor. Studies that show dropout rates in high school to be the highest among Aboriginal and African-Canadian students include the Assembly of First Nations Education (1988) study that looked at native education issues on a national basis, the Mackay and Myles Report (1989) that examined the issue of native student dropouts at the provincial level, and the Brown study (1993) that examined the dropout issue in a large city, Toronto. In researching some of the problems facing Black youth in North American contexts many—including Dei (1996), Brathwaite and James (1996), Canadian Alliance of Black Educators (1992), Toronto Board of Education (1988), and the Black Educators Working Group (1993)—note that schools have failed to make meaningful connections

with Black youths' lived social reality, culture, and historical experiences in a locality and in the world.

Although we see all forms of exclusion in schools as connected to the structures of schooling, it is helpful for us to contrast personal exclusion with institutional exclusion. For example, acts at the student level that deny access to spaces (e.g., study groups, special interest clubs) on the basis of some criteria devised by adolescents to serve their narrow parochial interests, we see as personal exclusion. On the other hand, institutional forms of exclusion can be read in the structures of schooling. Teacher-student relationships; school-community relationships; recognized processes of teaching and learning; and the administration of education in terms of the official curriculum, the language(s) that are validated, the texts used, and the methods of evaluation, testing, and promotion can all serve to exclude certain histories, experiences, and knowledges of groups of students when such structural practices are geared in the direction of a more dominant hegemonic view of school and society. Thus, for example, adolescents with African ancestry may not see their evolving histories and social realities reflected in the teaching of Canadian history, culture, laws, governance, and economy. These and other subject areas are dynamic and influenced on an ongoing basis by the multiple and interconnected realities and contributions of Canada's and the world's diverse populations. However, adolescents of African ancestry are often presented with a static and limited view of Canadian history and society that excludes their histories, social realities, and those of other groups who are not part of the dominant hegemonic view of Canada. When their histories and social realities are included, often they are peripherally presented as an add-on, a problem, or as an interesting and unique other.

Parallel to inequities evident among adolescents who see themselves as excluded from the mainstream educational communities, there exists the social reality of many underemployed, poor, and marginalized adults responsible for the care and guidance of young children and adolescents in the family and in the community, who survive a daily onslaught of social injustice. Even though marginalized groups are rarely able to live and work in high-status cultures, they continue to survive as individuals and as social groups. Similarly, most adolescents who are excluded from the dominant culture in their schools also find ways to survive. In the dominant gaze, excluded adolescents frequently become objects of interest, but are rarely seen as people seeking to understand the world and to be understood.

When excluded adolescents are seen as objects of interest, how they present themselves and express their understandings of the world is interpreted by some as forms of defiance and disrespect, by others as forms of political resistance. Similarly, students who are quiet are often interpreted as passive, studious, and obedient. If teachers and other adults charged with the responsibility of educating adolescents and guiding their gradual development into active, participating adults engage them in dialogues that seek to understand and to learn, it is possible that the "quiet, studious" students may be socially disconnecting and withdrawing from that social space, or consciously seeking to learn the ropes and acquire the credentials that may enable them to become active participating citizens. *Quiet* might, therefore, be a behavior with more

interpretations than simply reproducing the *studious* stereotype. It is also possible that the braided hair worn by Aboriginal and Black adolescents and pink triangles or rainbows worn by lesbian and gay adolescents might be acts of asserting group identity or simply be group acts of fashion (Caldwell, 1995). Whether these unexamined definitions reflect intentional forms of discrimination, racial, sexual, and ethnic minorities are often seen as alienated from what is considered normal. When defining "social outsiders" by who they are not rather than by who they are, members of dominant groups do not permit "outsiders" to name themselves in the dominant discourses. Instead, members of dominant groups invent names for subordinate groups that when left unquestioned migrate into justification for institutional policies and practices like color-blind hiring and merit-based promotion that undermine respect for diversity (van Dijk, 1993). At issue here is not the question of whether or not outsiders are passively subjugated into being named by the dominant. There is no doubt that in marginalized communities, alternative namings of self and other exist and flourish. However, in dialogues between the dominant and those with less power, the naming of the other by the dominant may carry with it the power to structure policies and practices that affect the daily lives of those whom they are naming. Therefore, in a society with a population that is racially, culturally, and regionally diverse and purports to be democratic, those in a position to develop and apply policies and practices have the responsibility not of naming those who are different, but of seeking to understand their everyday lived social and cultural reality. This is essential in order to work collectively to ensure that our structures and institutions can better reflect and serve the needs of Canada's diverse population.

Moving beyond the reluctant admission that schools tend to mirror the societies in which they function means questioning the socioeconomic conditions that produce unequal outcomes. Over time, rejecting an "outsider" becomes a common response with real material and social consequences. By defining racially or sexually different people as outsiders, the insiders retain socioeconomic and political power, as well as the power to control group discourse. Like anti-poverty activists who argue that speaking only of "child poverty" erases the social conditions that create poor mothers and poor families, we argue that to speak only of an "excluded adolescent" negates the families and communities that are seeking equity in education. Issues of exclusion, like issues of poverty, should be transformed into a broad social concern. Thus the impact of poverty on school performance and equity also enters into dialogues that seek to examine how it is that a society structures its schooling systems in order that we do achieve "academic excellence" in a broad sense for all students with differing abilities, interests, social conditions, histories, and in different localities. With a broader, more interconnected and diverse view of our social world (local, national, and global), what is valued and how we define excellence also enters the academic discourses of "excellence."

The Canadian Context

Differences associated with race, gender, class, sexuality, language, culture, religion, and region must be recognized as social realities. To promote and work toward a truly inclusive society, educators must understand and teach

about differences and how they are related to power. How Canadians respond to such themes in educational contexts is used to illustrate the value of an integrative, anti-racism discourse.

Although the myth of Canada as the "Great White North," a nation founded by the French and English following eventual negotiated treaties with a "minority of native peoples" and populated by predominantly multicultural Europeans still persists, demographic realities and struggles for national identity(ies) have always been different and are even more so as we begin this new century. Canada has always been, and is, a racially and ethnically diverse society. In 1991 the total estimated "visible minority" population of Canada was 2,488,100 (including nonpermanent residents). In a more recent 1996 Census study by Statistics Canada, a total of 3.2 million Canadians (two thirds of them Chinese and other Asian groups and Blacks) identified themselves as members of a visible minority group (Carey, 1998). Classified in the visible minority group are Blacks (people of Black African descent), Indo-Pakistanis, Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, Southeast Asians, Arabs and West Asians, Filipinos, and Latin Americans (Carey, 1998; Michalowski, 1991, cited in Kalbach, Verma, George, & Dai 1993). This, along with Canada's Aboriginal population, which has continued to increase, represents significant linguistic, racial, and cultural diversities that are growing larger with each decade. The 1991 figures for the classification "visible minority populations" reflected a 58% increase over the 1,577,710 total for 1986. This contrasts with a 9% increase for Canada's total population during the earlier 1986-1991 period.

The Province of Ontario has been home to some of the largest multiracial communities in Canada. This trend continues. In 1991 Ontario had 37% of the total Canadian population and 49.1% of visible minorities in Canada. Nearly half of all people in Canada who reported origins other than British or French resided in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 1991, 1993). From the 1996 Census data, the Toronto area is home to 1.3 million or 42% of the visible minority population in Canada, one third of Toronto's total population. In fact, seven out of every 10 visible minorities live in the three major metropolitan areas of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. Although it is important that we seek to understand issues of inclusion and exclusion in different population settlements (large cities, smaller towns, rural counties, farms, etc.), the large settlements of visible minorities in these major metropolitan cities position these areas as locations that can contribute significant insights into how we understand issues of inclusion, exclusion, and power across relationships of difference. If in 1991 Ontario (as noted) had 49.1% of visible minorities in Canada, and if seven of every 10 visible minorities live in the above metropolitan areas, in the Ontario and Canadian context the experiences of the Metropolitan Toronto area is critical to our understandings of issues of inclusion and exclusion. Its significance cannot be overestimated.

Major changes are occurring in Canadian society(ies) and in the world. In Canada education falls primarily under provincial jurisdiction. In Ontario the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of Canadian society is reflected in the student population (Cheng, 2002; Toronto Board of Education, 1993). This growth in diversity represents a challenge to educational equity. The policies of those who defend existing structures that are overlaid with superficial forms of

multiculturalism will need to be altered by infusing education policies and practices with the reality of this increasing diversity. To minimize the negative effects of exclusion and promote integrative anti-racism, educational systems in Canada's different regions must undergo the kind of fundamental, structural change that is possible only with a commitment to principles of social equity that respond to the needs of adolescents from both visible minority and majority cultures. In the latter part of the 1990s, Ontario's provincial government undertook an overhaul of the provincial and local structures of education. However, the direction of the massive restructuring occurring in a province documented to be the most racially and culturally diverse of Canada's regions has been toward more centralization of powers over education and increased standardization of pedagogical policies and practices. The focus of these changes has been infused with the language and objectives of the market.

From the point of view of seeking to transform exclusion into a broad social concern, one finds that issues of academic equity and educational excellence are inextricably linked to issues of inclusion and exclusion. Discourses of "excellence" that push for greater equity should not be seen as an assault on academic excellence, but as an opportunity to expand and enrich our views on the enhancement of academic excellence and to improve the quality of students' life in schools. Furthermore, attempts to apply business terminology, which relegate education to the status of a narrow commodity in the market economy, foster the kind of social injustice that education has the potential to rectify. Talk of students as "consumers," test scores as "products," and the process of learning as involving "efficiency" and "investment in the future" obfuscates the fact that market economies are dependent on an unequal distribution of resources. In such a marketing discourse, there is hardly room for critical interrogation into the quality of institutional structures. Matters of inclusion and exclusion are accepted as natural features of a legitimate competition for wealth and status, while helping all students understand the world and/or make valuable contributions to society are of secondary importance.

We opt instead for replacing business terminology with a language that is respectful of various forms of cultural diversity and to highlight educational agendas that are respectful of individual differences (in terms of both special needs and strengths). In the context of the Americas, we have drawn on the powerful recognition factor of exclusion, historically associated with discrimination, segregation, and slavery on the basis of race, to develop the term *integrative anti-racism* (Dei, 1996). The integrative approach stresses that the socially constructed concepts of race, gender, class, sexuality, language, culture, and religion are fundamental to comprehending the nature and function of schooling. Specifically, an integrative anti-racism discursive framework views the multiple identities of adolescents as relevant to the process of learning. Practices that negate or omit adolescents' lived experiences are openly critiqued. Integrative anti-racism involves accepting school practices that acknowledge differences among adolescents because such practices promote inclusion. Practices that overlook individual differences and promote success in a manner that is reflective of a more dominant homogeneous way of being and acting in the world exclude and alienate many individuals and groups,

and impoverish Canadians as a collective of diverse peoples from different places living in the various regions of this geographically large northern nation.

The Transformative Possibilities of Integrative Anti-Racism

An integrative anti-racism discursive framework acknowledges the reality of racism in society and the potential for educational change (Dei, 1996, 2000). Recognizing race and social difference constitutes a struggle for power and the rejection of domination in schools and society. Because all forms of social oppression intersect, discussion of one such oppression, racism, necessarily entails discussion of inequalities associated with gender, class, sexuality, language, culture, and religion.

When imagining integrative anti-racism, educators rely on knowledge of adolescents' identities when interpreting their educational experiences. Yet the race, gender, class, sexuality, language, culture, and religion that comprise these identities are not discrete forms of difference. These personal characteristics are neither bound identities nor mutually exclusive. An integrative anti-racist agenda addresses the disparities of power associated with the whole of adolescents' identities, moving beyond the mere appreciation of particular differences. Integrative anti-racism reaches toward long-term systemic change in adolescents' educational experiences to welcome opportunities for exploring diverse identities rather than particular features of an identity.

In addition to acknowledging diverse identities, efforts are directed toward removing structural disadvantage across groups. Because adolescents construct and rank social groups in ways that often mirror groups in the larger society, educators should help them understand this pattern. Educators can identify and help adolescents rectify antagonistic and contradictory social relationships between members of dominant and subordinate groups. Groups of adolescents can also learn about how they compete for access to resources and esteem, and how such inequities compound the challenge of breaking cycles of domination and subordination.

Integrative anti-racism also questions overly simplistic explanations that divert attention from a critical analysis of the institutional structures of schooling—rejecting structures that treat adolescents inequitably and the lives of the students and their communities as pathological. Explanations of the "family" or "home environment" as the primary source of problems that adolescents face in school ignores, for example, the possibility that the material consequences of discrimination may foster an alternative form of adaptive behavior (Dei with Buenaventura et al., 1997). By minimizing how societal institutions (e.g., schools, home or family, courts, church, media) reproduce social inequalities, educational systems will reflect an inclusive ideology that responds to everyone's concerns and aspirations.

Put succinctly, integrative anti-racism deals with qualitative forms of justice and the need for a multiplicity of voices, physical bodies, and perspectives to be entrenched in the mainstream creation of social knowledge. By examining how educational institutions respond to diversity and difference, equitable representation can be promoted. Socially constructed notions of race, gender, class, sexuality, language, culture, and religion are permitted to flourish in an environment where everyone is held in high esteem (Dei, 1996, 1997). In such a

system, esteem is equally available to individuals regardless of their social, racial, and cultural backgrounds.

Finding Inclusive Education in Ontario

It could be argued that without evidence that schools can be transformed by an integrative anti-racism discourse, calls for greater equity in schools simply contribute to the sizable quantity of existing rhetoric on this topic. In the following section we focus on the major learning objectives and salient findings of a longitudinal project that sought to address the gap between the rhetoric of exclusion-inclusion and the actual practice of equity by looking at what schools, families, and local communities were doing to enhance learning outcomes for a diverse student population. A number of research teams have been documenting exemplary practices of inclusive schooling in selected Ontario schools. Although some schools have made efforts to ensure that all students feel welcome in their environments, few schools have actually been at the forefront of making required educational changes. Exploring this range of educational opportunities offers greater insight into the value of integrative anti-racism than would knowledge of exemplary programs alone.

Under the leadership of the principal investigator, George Dei, and with the support of a number of graduate researchers, we explored exclusion and inclusion in several phases of students' schooling experiences. The overall learning objective was to examine the processes that make for engagement and disengagement of students in the public school system in Ontario. The process began with an emphasis on issues of exclusion and disengagement among adolescents who drop out of school. The research conducted during the initial phase of study (1992-1995) is described in detail in Dei et al. (1995). This particular phase examined students' experiences of dropping out from school, identifying the intersections of school, family, or community and societal issues. Researchers asked students for their perceptions of the forces and factors contributing to some students becoming engaged in school whereas other students decide to opt out of school. Specifically, we asked students what they liked and disliked about schooling; who their favorite teachers were; and what changes they would like to see in the school system. Among our findings was how the social organizational life of schools, culture, and climate worked alongside societal pressures and other structural conditions to create school dropouts (Dei et al., 1997). The research found that a number of African-Canadian students were disengaged in their schools by being present in physical bodies but absent in mind and soul. Students spoke about the struggles to identify with schools, the problem of a lack of curricular sophistication, experiencing differential or negative treatment by race, the absence of adequate minority faculty representation, and home or family and peer pressures as among the specific factors that influence decisions to leave school prematurely. In subsequent research phases (1996-1999), using the findings of the previous study as a context for addressing the issue of student disengagement, we turned our attention to those exemplary curricular, instruction, and pedagogic practices of schools, homes or families, and communities that promoted the idea of inclusive schooling. During the initial phase of this subsequent study, we visited schools to uncover exemplary practices of inclusive education in mainstream schools. This has been described in Dei et al. (1996). We also visited

community and home-based initiatives that acted as supplements or alternatives to mainstream (public) schools. In this last phase we documented forms of community-initiated programs, home-based learning practices, and liaison work with minority students (Dei et al., 2000).

In the last phase of the 1996-1999 research project (which is the focus of this article), we focused specifically on what homes or families and local communities were doing to enhance learning outcomes for their youth. The objective was to dwell on community-initiated strategies for inclusive education and to use this body of knowledge to identify relevant pedagogic and instructional strategies for educators in the school system. Participants in this final phase of the study were involved in seven community-based, grassroots organizations, working to promote education for adolescents. We worked with approximately three adult community members from each organization. Thirty adolescents, who were completing their university preparatory Ontario Academic Credits (OACs, formerly the 5th year of high school, now being replaced and phased in by a 4-year program) and participating in community-based schools, reported on their experiences. Also, 23 families (parents or adolescents) involved in home-based learning assisted our research team in exploring the learning strategies they employed and the nature of parental assistance. To examine the role of community liaison officers, nine liaison officers from Ontario school boards reported on their strategies for facilitating community-school partnerships and how local concerns and forms of knowledge were incorporated into schools. When necessary for situating these findings, information from the previous phases of this three-layered project will be added as well.

In all phases of the 1996-1999 research study we conducted observations, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions with adolescents, parents, school or community liaison workers, and members of community-based, grassroots organizations. We visited the homes of parents, guardians, and caregivers from diverse social and economic backgrounds, work sites of community liaison officers, and meeting areas of community educational programs.

In the final research phase we relied heavily on findings from individual interviews with parents, adolescents, and community members. This was supplemented with observations of specific educational strategies (i.e., homework supervision, storytelling, study skills) and prior learning styles (i.e., allegories, mnemonics, repetition) in selected homes and community education sites.

The purpose of these interviews and observations was to identify the forms of knowledge that adolescents brought to school, and how these knowledges were being recognized. Participants were asked questions that ranged from general comments about education to specific questions about their respective experiences. They were asked such questions as, "What do you feel are the most important factors contributing to student success?" and "Would you favor a direct role for parents in the new school councils?" Then they responded to questions about their feelings about exclusion and inclusion in the schools such as: "Do you think it would make a difference if there were more minority teachers?" and "Are there cliques in school—the popular kids and the not-so-popular kids?"

More complete reports on the different phases of these projects are available in Dei et al. (1997) and Dei et al. (2000). In this article we highlight evidence that illustrates the value of an integrative anti-racism discourse. Only narratives that supported this agenda are extracted from more complete reports on the cause and strategies of dropping out and exemplary practices of inclusive schooling.

Accounts of Exclusion and Marginality

Encouraging adolescents to describe their experiences is more of a challenge than simply theorizing about the how adolescents feel excluded in mainstream educational communities. It is uncomfortable to relive exclusionary experiences and much easier to rely on metaphor and cliché to represent such events. For this reason, we asked that participating community educators, parents, and adolescents draw on their personal experiences in their reports.

Oskar, a Black male community educator, offered powerful indictments of exclusion from the dominant school system and equally innovative responses to such exclusion. Like many parents, community activists, and adolescents, Oskar had struggled to achieve success as well as resist adversity. In promoting integrative anti-racism, Oskar recognized that he had not had access to the classroom-mentoring opportunities that he was providing for a new generation of Black adolescents. Oskar knew that his presence in a community-run Saturday program offered adolescents from visible minority cultures an opportunity to be taught by someone of similar background. He was both a mentor and a role model to his students. Describing the stereotyping and bold racism that is rampant in commercial media, Oskar highlighted the harm that such implicit messages caused members of his visible minority community.

> The news portrays Blacks in a negative manner, but there are a lot of Black role models out there. For example, we always see White faces when it relates to computers. But there are a lot of young Black people involved in the computer industry that you never heard of and there are a lot of success stories among Blacks other than football stars and basketball stars. I think such portrayals of Black people in the mass media can have an impact on the attitudes of Black children toward themselves and toward others.

Bypassing traditional media through the Internet, Oskar introduced his students to one means of acquiring more balanced information about other possibilities, other realities, other lives. For example, he assisted the youth to explore other news coverage of similar events by nonmainstream media in minority communities. Interrogating and critiquing commercial media and members of the dominant society for such biases, Oskar taught his students how to overlook such stereotypes and helped them find an essential strategy for countering the impact of negative media portrayals.

In the Saturday program, Oscar tried to instill in the students a sense of pride in their culture. Lisa, a South-Asian adolescent, spoke of feeling connected to members of her group through the program. When Lisa described her school experiences, she noticed a difference between the socialization of students in elementary school (grades K-6) and junior high (grades 7-9). When asked if she was referring to traditional adolescent cliques, she responded:

> Well, kind of. Everyone has their own group. What I noticed is that when you get to high school, everyone hangs out with their own culture, their own race or whatever. In elementary, everyone's all together. But once they get to high school, they all split up.
> *Int*: Why's that?
> I don't know. Maybe they want a sense of belonging to know where they're from.

Referring to her high school peers as "they," Lisa seemed to dissociate herself from her schoolmates. She noticed the conflicting pressures to conform to agendas that seem to alienate and isolate some and to find a social network that is supportive and affirming, a safe space away from oppression.

Although Lisa was not able to articulate the full source of her confusion, her hesitance was consistent with that of students who experienced personal and institutional discrimination, but are unable to point it out to others. Other adolescents were able to identify and articulate systematic tendencies on the part of teachers from dominant cultures to encourage adolescents from dominant cultures to join academic and leadership-oriented activities, while overlooking adolescents from visible minority cultures. They noted that teachers from dominant cultures tended to steer students from visible minority cultures into sports and nonleadership activities. Spence (1999) provides examples in his work to show how through subtle messages educators or schoolteachers can motivate Black students to excel in sports as a way of enhancing their profile in schools. These patterns of dominance and subordination reflect personal prejudice as well as general stereotypes about the role of minority cultures in society (Darder, 1995; Rivera & Poplin, 1995). With such advice, the feelings of safety associated with inclusion become feelings of rejection associated with segregation, perpetuating cycles of exclusion in a nonexclusionary system. Numerous studies by the Toronto Board of Education have demonstrated the significantly higher percentage of students of Black, Native, Portuguese, and low-income, single-parent households who drop out. These studies have also highlighted that students involved in certain extracurricular activities had better grades and were less likely to drop out of school. They also indicated that students who worked fewer than 15 hours a week were less likely to drop out than those who worked more than 15 hours a week (Brown, 1993; Brown, Cheng, Yau, & Ziegler, 1992; Cheng, 2002; Cheng & Yau, 1999; Cheng, Yau, & Ziegler, 1993). These research findings are significant as they tie schooling in with the broader social issues of work, recreational activity, and educational performance. Students from which groups are more likely to need to work more than 15 hours a week either to help their families or to meet their social needs? Students from certain groups are more likely to have their recreational and social needs met through parents who have the income not only to provide for their adolescent children's basic needs, but also to recognize the social recreational needs of adolescents (i.e., current costs of movies, hockey, baseball, and basketball games, etc.). Which students are more likely to be adversely affected by the youth consumer culture being promoted and the increased cost of the sports culture (goods and games)?

Charlene, a mother of Jamaican background, complained of the lack of positive role models in her daughter's school. One strategy Charlene employed

to supplement her daughter's education was to enroll her in an Afro-Caribbean Saturday school:

> It's good for the kids to see ... When they come here, they see a lot of role models being of an ethnic background, like from an ethnic point of view. They see more of themselves. They see the helpers, the teachers, other kids are going off to university or are in university.
> *Int*: Is that not seen at a school setting?
> No, I don't think so, not as much. Like in the school setting, there's not a lot of schools that have minorities as teachers. Most of the school, they're White. The teachers, they're all White. Whereas here, when they come here, they can see minority people up there, too. It's like a role model. They're there, you can be up there, too.

Charlene did not ignore or dismiss the possibility that her daughter could learn from teachers in the dominant culture, but she highlighted the need for her daughter to learn from teachers from visible minority cultures as well. Charlene seemed to assume that ethnicity is multilayered and important to inclusion and that her daughter would benefit from contact with teachers from any and all visible minority cultures. Such contact would facilitate exposure to alternative viewpoints, encouragement to seek leadership opportunities, and recognition that diverse perspectives are valued in society. Charlene knew that her daughter's peers, teachers, and tutors from minority cultures were equally important for her daughter to envisage the possibility of academic success so critical to the development of a personal sense of being included and also to the appearance and development of a truly inclusive society.

Marjorie, another Caribbean mother of African descent, with a child in the Saturday school, also enrolled her daughter in a similar program. She echoed thoughts similar to those of Charlene, but added that the large classroom size in the regular school may also be a contributing factor in her daughter possibly moving to the margins.

> The school, in the classroom, it's large. She don't get that attention from the teacher in a classroom at school. But she do get the attention in this program because it's a smaller group. And they attend to her and they listen to her. So that way, it's kind of different.

For Marjorie the primary site of exclusion was the mainstream classroom. The size of the Saturday program allowed her daughter to be listened to and attended to, which helped to offset a classroom situation that had the potential of placing her daughter in a disadvantaged position. Classroom size, being listened to, being attended to, becoming familiar with the history and culture of your ancestral group, seeing persons of your background reflected in the school are basic aspects of pedagogy that should be taken for granted, but adolescents from visible minority cultures were finding these aspects primarily outside the regular school system.

Ron, also a Caribbean teacher of African descent, offered an educator's interpretation of Marjorie's experiences. When describing what were some of the needs to which his Saturday school responded, Ron spoke of his students' needs for success in a culture that was like their own:

> Many of our kids do not function very well in the large group. They need more directive type counselling. They need more structure. So what we try to do is to put more structure. My theory is that children need four main things in order to be successful: (a) they need love and caring; (b) they need the security; (c) they need stability; (d) they need positive role models. If we can provide these four things, no guarantees, but we have a good chance of success. When I look at a student's record, for example, and I see that this student has been to 10 schools, I know there is a problem. This is because security and stability is not there.

Like most Black/African and minority teachers, Ron recognized that adolescents from visible minority cultures need to be provided with classroom environments that reflect different learning styles at the level of both the individual (personal) and the group (cultural). It is important for teachers to be familiar with cultures where the patterns of communication and interaction between those who are in positions of adult authority and those who are not, have particular structures and protocols of respect. Ron's community program offered support for adolescents who were at risk of failure by providing structure, clear discipline, and active caring. Yet Ron knew that schools and school boards should work together to provide continuity for adolescents whose track records indicated concern and a need for extra attention. These adolescents need to work with role models and mentors who are familiar with diverse cultural styles. (For a discussion on the implications of diverse patterns of interaction, communication, and learning styles in the classroom setting, see Delpit, 1988.) Taking account of these differences does not mean that the teaching of students from visible minority cultures should be exclusively limited to teaching and learning processes that are disciplined and authoritatively structured. Students will need to understand and learn how to negotiate relationships in their home and community culture and also how relationships are negotiated in a variety of other mainstream environments. The role of teachers is to guide students to develop understandings of these different cultural processes of interaction. In this study community educators and activists tended to see the inclusion of visible minorities in positions of responsibility as one of the benefits of community education initiatives. It also offered students an opportunity to learn from members of their visible minority community.

Fatima, an educator in one of Toronto's linguistic minority communities (Portuguese), defined similar mentorship opportunities as meeting a need to develop a "sense of pride and self-esteem." Fatima has been busy organizing a mentor program through a partnership between members of the university community and the Portuguese community at large. This program was being set up to supplement the more established after-school language program. Fatima's students struggled to set realistic goals of possibility in this society, while preserving a sense of valuing the community in which they were born. Fatima saw the partnership as important because:

> I work with a group of students, high-school students who weren't doing very well in maths and language, and we had a program through the University of Toronto and the faculty ... Students would give ... They take them to campus, would do some tutoring, some mentoring, would talk about future jobs, future expectations, how good it is to go to university. But when I was speaking with

> those kids ... the stories they tell me, the difficulties ... I mean it's a real struggle. [The students] are ashamed to say they are Portuguese, they are ashamed [for others] to see where they live, ashamed to see what their parents do, you know, all these things. Unless they have that sense of pride and self-esteem that school has [the power] to foster ... and if the school doesn't [foster pride and self-esteem], if the society doesn't foster them, those kids get lost.

The community initiative in which Fatima participated acted as a "social safety net for students otherwise likely to fall through the cracks" (Dei with Buenaventura et al., 1997, p. 24). She recognized that the development of a strong identity is much more complex than the transmission of language and culture. Self-esteem and pride were being developed through a program that saw access to postsecondary education as a practical vision of an inclusive future. In envisaging various possibilities for their future, the adolescents learned to value their identities as Portuguese Canadians from community mentors. Once these adolescents located themselves on paths with a future and a past, they were better able to understand the culture(s) of their homes and community.

Although cultural exclusion in society and the dominant school system can be an overwhelmingly large issue, even small local structures can be intimidating for adolescents and their parents from visible minority cultures. Parents, adolescents, and community members who described feelings of exclusion generally experienced nonbelongingness. They described linguistic, cultural, and spiritual exclusion; exclusion from meaningful participation in school governance; low teacher expectations and accountability; and lack of minority representation in the faculty.

One student, Errol, explained this feeling. He saw the school's unresponsive administration as a major factor in his classmates' feelings of disengagement from the school.

> Our administration is all White if you look and that and you can see that the people in power are all White and you might start thinking that there's no place for a Black person there. You aren't seeing any role models. You might say, "Blacks can't do that. Blacks can't make it that far, so why am I bothering because with this school system I'm not gonna make it anywhere."

Adolescents from visible minority cultures also readily identified forms of differential treatment in their schools based on race, class, and gender. Regardless of whether their perceptions were accurate, they saw adolescents from majority cultures whose home lives and identities were reflected in the curriculum as fully engaged in the learning enterprise. Such privileged adolescents, it was believed, attained greater physiological, psychosocial, and material benefits through "unequally structured material and social conditions" (Dehli, 1998). This dichotomy was prevalent in the views of Melanie, a Black adolescent, who believed that a combination of class and race privilege led her teachers from majority cultures to encourage a certain group of students from similar majority cultures more than students from visible minority cultures.

> The teachers are always so nice with them, and always, "Oh, you did so well on your tests; and stuff." But to other students, they just hand them their test, don't tell them nothing, just kind of give them a dirty look or something, you know.

Melanie saw little ambiguity in her teachers' behavior. From her standpoint, teachers from majority cultures had biased expectations and preferences for students from majority cultures, which created an educational environment of inferior quality for her and her peers from visible minority cultures. During the interview, she inferred that the Black interviewer must have experienced similar forms of discriminatory treatment. Melanie did not consider the possibility that the experiences and views of all Black students and adults may not be the same. Some may have attended schools where individual teachers and school administrators might have been working to create transformative environments with a school culture that sought greater inclusion for Black students. As well, the experiences of discrimination might be mitigated once Black adolescents became successful adults. Instead of recognizing these possibilities, Melanie held dangerously low expectations of society.

On the other hand, adolescents from the majority culture in Melanie's school saw their teachers as understanding and validating their approach to schooling. In general, adolescents from the majority culture saw individual differences in teachers' treatment as indicative of high expectations. Most assumed that students who were treated poorly deserved to be treated poorly because they were not living up to their teachers' expectations. Adolescents from majority cultures, by comparison, gave brief responses to questions about teachers' differential treatment because most of them did not see it as a pervasive problem. Two students who attended the same school as Melanie, for example, said that they felt included in school and saw no obstacles to achievement among their peers from minority cultures. One of the students noted:

> I think that education has no color so those people who want to learn will, and those who don't won't.

Other students also remarked:

> I think the teachers here are fair to all students. They treat everybody [with] the same respect.

Regardless of whether teachers actually favor the interests and needs of adolescents from majority cultures or were only perceived to favor those needs, the net effect is still harmful. Similarly, if students believe that only parents from the majority culture understand how schools operate and are able to provide an economically secure socialization, the competition for equitable treatment will legitimately be judged unfair. The needs of adolescents from visible minority cultures and their parents can be addressed through community-based education programs that supplement participation in mainstream educational settings (Goodall, 1996). However, if the needs of adolescents from majority cultures are being met while the needs of adolescents from visible minority cultures are overlooked in any aspect of home, school, and community life, the resulting inequality is potentially explosive (Darder, 1995; Dei with Buenaventura et al., 1997; McLaren, 1993).

That persons from minority groups often find institutional structures and practices intimidating is also apparent at the level of parent council participation. When this study was being conducted, many schools had begun the process of trying to work through the implementation of new directives from the Ontario Ministry of Education, which was moving toward mandating the

establishment of parent or school councils at every school. The purpose of these councils was to increase significantly the involvement of parents and other community members in the running of local schools. Principals were the traditional source of power in the old parent-teacher associations, but were expected to become advisors rather than leaders in the new parent or school councils. Hyacinth, a mother, community liaison worker, and educator in the African-Caribbean community, reported on this transition and the new forms of exclusion that emerged as a result.

> In my school the principal is so dominant that the other poor parents are afraid to speak up. When they do, he speaks in jargon so we can't understand, or ignores us. Because I speak up a lot, they [the principal, vice-principal, and one teacher] gang up on me, or "forget" to tell me when the next meeting is to occur. I find that I have to look on the bulletin boards and call other parents to find out where the meeting is—and I was elected to be part of the council; the other parents don't have much of a voice at all.

In the new school councils, the principals were supposed to "facilitate the operation of the council, offer resource and administrative support to the council and open communication and participation" (Dei with Buenaventura et al., 1997, p. 77). Although some administrators were fulfilling their role according to the new guidelines, others seemed unclear about the nature and potential of the councils. Some were having difficulty broadening the notions of leadership and responsibility. In fact most parents reported that the principal, vice-principal, and established teachers dominated their councils. They reported that their own role was too superficial to effect the change originally envisaged by the Ministry of Education and Training (1996) guidelines.

It is important that the discussions on parent-council guidelines of which the participants spoke be located in time and place. The new directives referred to in these narratives were recommended by Ontario's former NDP government in a context of balancing both provincially centralized and locally decentralized powers of education. These guidelines, which had been viewed as offering some hope for greater dialogues in local communities between parents, teachers, and schools, were part of a public discourse on education prior to the current provincial Conservative government's centralizing powers over education through the enactment of Bill 160. Bill 160 has in effect removed the independent financial powers of local boards and turned teachers into "employees," instead of professionals and intellectuals. The current context uses parent councils as a pretext to give parents the appearance that they have power and that the current government is on the side of parents against the teachers and local boards (Dei & Karumanchery, 1999). What was to be a vehicle to further the checks and balances of powers at the level of the local school has been appropriated to buffer critiques against the centralization of powers at the provincial level. It is critical that recommendations made for increasing the role of parent councils need to be placed in the context of past and present structures of educational governance. Support for strengthening parent councils in what had been the diversity of the Toronto's communities of communities (local boards and local cities) had a stronger chance of achieving the goals of diversity (race, class, and gender) in the balances of power before

concentrating the centralization of power for education in the Ministry of Education.

Accounts of Transformative Inclusion

In North American education systems, it is no longer sufficient to wonder what would work and endlessly debate the *if only(s)* of student engagement and achievement. To paraphrase Giroux (1988), it is time to develop a language and practice of inclusion based on the needs of diverse adolescents. Apart from the many sites and expressions of exclusion, there are also spaces of inclusion. In fact we found many parents and adolescents demanding a more inclusive school system in partnership with community-based educators, teachers, tutors, and community liaison officers. In recognition of cultural diversity, liaison officers were hired by school boards to advocate for racial, religious, linguistic, and ethnic minority students. When successful, liaison officers balanced the needs of adolescents from visible minority cultures with the conflicting needs of school boards, administrators, teachers, and parents. Some of the most successful programs we found involved three or more groups of parents, teachers, librarians, and students collaborating to meet the needs of community members who might otherwise have been excluded.

Isabel, for example, was a Portuguese parent and educator who worked with a grassroots community group that came together to meet the needs of adolescents from Portuguese-speaking homes. She felt that many teachers expected a dangerously low quality of scholarship from students from this linguistic minority community. Isabel's intuitive experiences reflected similar findings from United States schools in which White teachers mirror the larger culture by expecting children of White suburban professionals to have higher achievement levels than students from visible minority cultures (Fine, 1991; Grant & Sleeter, 1995). The adoption of a literacy program connected to the language and culture of a significant proportion of the student body turned this exclusionary tide. Having parents come into the school to participate in the activities of the school and to attend workshops recognized parents as both producers of knowledge and learners. The program increased the literacy levels of both the parents and the students. It enhanced the quality of experiences for members of cultures perceived to be the minoritized other. And once the administrative, library, and teaching staff became committed to the goal of inclusive schooling, Isabel noticed a marked change in the school's appearance that translated into changed attitudes and feelings of empowerment and school ownership:

> The school climate changed. There were books everywhere, there was literature, they were drawing, there were the kids' cultures represented ... the lighting, the color of the office was changed, the whole thing changed.

Before the program, a culture of silence excluded the knowledge of racial or ethnic minorities in the pretext of creating a "harmonize[d] world" (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, pp. 6-7). The literacy program, combined with teacher training and community interaction, helped teachers to see that their students could succeed and also raised their expectations of the students' abilities. Alongside the nurturing of more valid teacher expectations and parental empowerment, the self-esteem of students was an important indicator of progress.

Some adolescents and their families focus their energies on overcoming one source of exclusion (i.e., race, language, class, gender, sexuality). Most often adolescents and their families encounter multiple exclusions (physical, cultural, spiritual) intersecting at the location of their bodies. Muslim adolescents in North America often encounter strong racial and religious prejudices. Remaining within the realm of the public school, one comprehensive after-school program fostered the inclusion of religious and other cultural values. Zareena worked in a mainstream school as a liaison for a community education program and as a volunteer in class and school activities during the day. She described her status as a role model in mainstream schools:

> and I think that's one of the reasons why I got into teaching is to show that Muslims can be anything that they want to be and you know ... I've noticed with my volunteer work in public schools is that when they see me, especially the girls, they're very happy.
> *Int*: Like a role model?
> Yeah, that's really important that they see that there are role models for them that you know they can identify with. I also encourage it through parent volunteers ... I think just seeing someone there that you can identify with really makes a big difference ... The response I get when I go to the school is really good. I find the kids are very positive and they come to me quietly and ask me, "Oh, you are Muslim too?" And then I'll say, "Yes," and then they're really excited. And I've always found the teachers that I've worked with very appreciative of the fact that I was there and providing them with some information to help them deal with issues or deal with some students or dealing even with parents.

Zareena found herself acting not only as a role model for Muslim girls, but as a resource person for non-Muslim teachers. For non-Muslim adolescents, she contradicted stereotypes that Muslim women could not be active in the public sphere. Like Isabel, once Zareena was willing to become more active in her local school, the school climate changed. Both women found ways to overcome barriers of exclusion and to participate in helping their schools become more inclusive institutions.

Transformative inclusion occurred in multiracial, multiethnic mainstream schools as well as in smaller schools that consisted primarily of one visible minority culture. Schools that are isolated from mainstream communities can potentially foster harmful levels of exclusion from the dominant Canadian society. Beverly worked to promote inclusion in a small Afrocentric school that shared a White male principal with several other "alternative" schools. She and her Black colleagues governed their daily routines, but were supported by a collective of business, community, and education experts of various ethnic backgrounds. Together these adults constructed an Afrocentric mandate in a Canadian context, thereby seeking to address concerns about the development of a collective Canadian identity. This identity was reflective and inclusive of diversity. Beverly described how she and the adolescents she taught discussed this mandate.

> [we] looked at issues of, you know, identity—so what did it mean to be Black in Canada, and to be who they were, some of them as immigrants, some as children of immigrants, some connected to somewhere else along with the Canadian, and [we] looked at issues of sexuality, gender, race, class, education, all that stuff.

The adolescents in Beverly's program were encouraged to interrogate their own assumptions and stereotypes while exploring how issues of oppression have affected their sense of self. According to the school's philosophy, for example, the religious category of *Muslim*, and the racial category of *Black* encompassed multiethnic, multiracial, and multinational identities. Some adolescents added sexuality, racial identity, class, and region to the range of concerns. These were discussed under the broader umbrella of Canadian nationality. Adult members of this collective (administration, teachers, and other supporters) served as role models and mentors, supporting the students' concerns. Other speakers and mentors were also brought in to support and advise the students.

To promote transformative inclusion, traditional notions of academic success that focus on achievement test scores and retention rates needed to be revised. Nasir, another tutor from the Muslim Community Education Program, offered one possible refinement:

> Student success ... that would have to be a child that is not having problems in the school in the sense that they feel that they are a part of the school. They feel like they're a part of their class. And then, because of that, they have an open mind and they learn, and they're more enthusiastic, and they want to contribute more to help out, and they feel they're being encouraged to do so.

A second refinement was apparent when Nasir talked about the value of parent involvement in an inclusive definition of success.

> The youth whose parents are involved in the program ... They are generally doing well in the school system. They have a sense of their identity.... They have seen various changes and seen various problems crop up. They feel that it should be time for them and time for us as a community to get involved.

When adolescents, parents, and educators work together, a sense of community emerges in the school and expectation levels reflect the interests, views, and realities of the community, not just the expectations articulated by dominant views (misviews) of the community. Dissonance between lives lived in school, at home, and in the neighborhood can be reconciled and accommodated rather than avoided and ignored.

Schools that adhered to the goals of seeking to find ways to foster greater inclusion, as articulated in the *School Council Handbook* (Ministry of Education and Training, 1996), increased the role of parents in school governance. Patricia was one parent who was fortunate enough to be part of a school council that lived up to and surpassed the goals outlined in the handbook. A member of the Afro-Caribbean community who is adept at negotiating in the larger Canadian society, Patricia found ways to help other parents learn the skills she had acquired. Patricia and her colleagues were committed to leaving a legacy for other parents and children by setting a precedent for creating school policies that included parents and community members.

> Most of the people are "real people," real people in the sense that they believe in inclusion, and that people should have a voice, and don't believe it should be an elite club ... So we have enough people that we set up five or six committees on literacy, curriculum, extracurricular activities, grade one transition year, computers, and others. We want the emphasis on result-oriented solutions. We are

> working on doing a workshop on teaching parents how to advocate ... your mouth just drops because you can't believe that parents could be so ignorant of their rights. They talk to the teacher and can't get satisfaction. What do you think the principal is there for? We are going to teach them how powerful they are!

Despite the optimism that was apparent in these interviews, it is still rare for adolescents, parents, and educators to find successful ways to collaborate. As in all relationships, to achieve transformative inclusion requires dedication, attention to detail, and vigilance in the face of failure. Such stamina is difficult to sustain over time. It is also important to problematize the focus on the power of parents as a check to the power of teachers in relationship to the child, the parent, and the community. By taking a narrow focus premised on oppositional relations at the school site, it is possible to create a school culture based on an adversarial power struggle limited to the front line of those caring for children, namely, parents and teachers. This presents various problems. The term *parent* (parent councils) does not render visible the differences among parents in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and language. It excludes other adults committed to the education of children in a community. Also, in addition to the difficulties of finding time and sustaining the stamina required to develop, monitor, and maintain integrative anti-racist agendas, families may move from the local school and the children grow up and go on to other levels of schooling. The actively involved parents in these instances are no longer considered parents of children of the school. How does a governing structure of a local school, defined as a parent council, develop a sense of continuity and process of evolving into a greater inclusion in a community on the basis of a population (parents) that has a high turnover? For community schools to sustain and develop further integrative anti-racist agendas, these agendas must be embedded in the governing structures, policies, and practices of the institutions. In Ontario the current public discourse (rhetoric) and policies that have sought to concentrate the power over education at the center, have focused the direction of the teaching practices and curriculum on standardized tests and curriculum and have created the appearance of greater local power through parent councils. All this poses great risks to the abilities of a local community of schools to provide an education that responds over time to the evolving and changing needs of students whose population as a whole is made up of an increasing multiplicity of diverse minority cultures.

The Promise of Inclusion

As noted above, this article adopts an integrative anti-racism framework for looking at issues of inclusion-exclusion in schooling. Anti-racism calls for the centering of power relations in schooling and for understanding that schooling is a politically mediated experience for all bodies. The framework highlights the centrality of race and its intersections with other forms of difference. Integrative anti-racism strategically acknowledges the salience of race in youth schooling experiences and how other forms of difference (class, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, and language) intersect with race to create marginalized-excluded and privileged-included subjects. Although acknowledging the severity of issues for certain bodies in our school systems, the integrative anti-racism framework also alludes to the situational and contextual variations

in intensities of oppression. The formation of personal and social identities is central to experiences of schooling for a number of reasons. Students, like educators, engage school with their bodies. Such bodies are racialized, classed, sexualized, and gendered. Such identities are also powerfully linked to schooling and to knowledge production. Who we are, and the personal, historical, and educational journeys we have all made are key to how we make sense of, and interpret, our world. It is important for educators and students to acknowledge and respond to the fact that all identities are racialized, but in different ways, and in ways that assume forms of power, domination, inclusion, and exclusion. White identity is racialized for power and privilege. But such identity also allows for the possibility of engaging in political action for social change. The position of the racially minoritized cannot simply read as subordinate and oppressed. We must also see the possibilities of using such racial identities for resisting the exclusions of schooling.

The narratives demonstrated that adolescents, parents, and educators from visible minority cultures and those who work with them were frustrated with years of systemic and individual exclusion. They were working to complement, supplement, and challenge public schools and educators toward seeking to achieve a genuinely inclusive education system. It is obvious that "those who control the curriculum also control most of the society's institutions and utilize the curriculum to reflect their social and cultural reality" (Collins, 1993, p. 201). Parents, community educators, and community liaison workers had devised alternative, inclusive educational practices that challenged existing realities and modeled the kinds of inclusion they would like to experience.

Many parents and community educators believe that their children are being harmed when well-intentioned teachers reduce "all non-western societies to the exotic, the primitive or the quaint" (Klein, 1985). They see this harm as perpetuating cycles of inequitable educational and job opportunities. They know that adolescents from majority cultures, as well as adolescents from visible minority cultures, miss valuable opportunities to understand a world that is not homogeneous, but multiple and diverse; that instead of ignoring recurring cycles of victimization, society would benefit from the infusion of a curriculum in schools that would examine questions of power and oppression. Everyone benefits from learning to respect, understand, and value a society whose sense of social justice enables all of us to continue to advocate for the oppressed, whether or not we are members of such groups.

In times past, schools were a focal point of collective life, but now in many communities schools have become the educational institution to house adolescents until they are old enough to join adult society (Alladin & Ramsankar, 1996). Schools will become increasingly less able to serve the public good without greater concern for how the process of schooling prepares adolescents for membership in society beyond the market role of consumer and employee. One way to counter this erosion is by encouraging the development of cultural pride, of global local awareness, of self-discipline, of a sense of belonging among all adolescents, and by assisting them to make connections with features of society that are outside their everyday experience. If such agendas are developed systematically and with care, adolescents could make meaningful connections with the broader society (locally, nationally, and globally) in ways

that are likely to remain a permanent part of their understanding of what it means to be a Canadian citizen.

Public education will be valuable to adolescents only if schools begin to imagine how to educate adolescents who for one reason or another may not be succeeding in schools as well as adolescents who are already successful in the system. An *excellent school* could be defined as one that can meet the needs of adolescents who are not taking full advantage of available educational opportunities as well as those who are lucky enough to find opportunities that meet their needs. When such a definition is embodied in educational policies and procedures, significant numbers of students, parents, and other members of visible minority cultures will no longer need to dissociate themselves from mainstream schooling.

In conclusion, we take the position that if schools actively use the idea of an integrative anti-racism discourse in their educational practices to celebrate, affirm, and respond to difference and diversity as strengths, adolescents will at least see that there is an identified problem that adults are working to solve. The affirmation of identities allows students to work with embodied knowledge to resist marginality and exclusion in schools. By acknowledging and responding to difference, educators might not only challenge power and privilege, but they might also enable students to use their individual and collective agencies to work for change that furthers equality, thereby enriching and strengthening our social fabric. There are critical questions of pedagogic and teacher practice that must be addressed if students are to feel included in their schools. Multiple knowledges need to be affirmed. The histories and collective identities of minoritized subjects in the school system also need affirmation. Classroom instructional and pedagogic practices must cultivate the different knowledges, power, and agency of all students in order to address feelings of marginality and exclusion on the part of some students. Educators can assist their students to define their entry and starting points to resisting marginality and exclusion.

Adolescents can begin from where they are. For example, adolescents can initiate a critical dialogue on race and other forms of social difference in their schools. Learners must start by becoming critically aware of their racial, gender, class, and sexual identities and the interconnections between these identities. This is where an integrative anti-racism education comes in. Adolescents can help raise a collective consciousness by sharing awareness with others. This can be accomplished through collective readings of race and difference, the pursuit of anti-racist projects of resistance, and transformation. As Lawrence and Tatum (1997) observe, an effective strategy to address educational and social inequities is to make visible the cultural, personal, and institutional manifestation of racism and other forms of oppression in schools and in society. Students, educators, parents, and communities must all be at the forefront of breaking the silence on race, racism, and other forms of oppression. Among the school-related anti-racist practices that would create a truly inclusive learning environment, Lawrence and Tatum list: the introduction of topics of race into curriculum; the pursuit of critical teaching with an examination of cultural stereotypes; the search for a genuinely inclusive curriculum; the development of high teacher expectations for racially minoritized adolescents;

the creation of a collaborative classroom environment; encouragement of the formation of cultural-identity groups; the provision of institutional support for minority programs; and the creation of equity in school hiring practices.

As pointed out in another context (Dei, 2001), anti-racist educators can assist adolescents to form study groups to critically engage issues of race and social oppression and to monitor the extent to which some of these suggestions are followed in their schools. Adolescents can work with their teachers to make solid linkages between local communities and schools. School and local community support for minority-group issues in schools can be paramount in helping to build the strength of adolescents in their fight against varied forms of discrimination. Furthermore, political advocacy on the part of all learners and educators should focus on seeking support from the progressive sectors of institutions (e.g., critical [not conservative] media). Adolescents could adopt a public education campaign to raise public awareness and demand action on racism and anti-racism issues at the level of the local school community and beyond. Some of the activities might take the form of a letter campaign to the media and other institutions. This could include research projects on issues of racism and cultural diversity. Adolescents could publish the findings of their projects in the school and community papers. They could put together a compilation of short stories. They could also write historical novellas located in different times and places in Canada that deal not only with issues of racism, but also with the stories of individuals and groups, drawing on the strengths of their culture and their group to overcome adversity. Students could connect with local political groups to find out where they stand on issues, to inform them of their individual and group reality, and also to get involved in local grassroots political activities and organizations. Grounding students' education on the history of Canada as a nation of diverse peoples and regions is critical. There should be an examination of the struggles for the development of Canadian democracy and citizen participation by different peoples in different places over time, with recognition of who was or is included and excluded. Developing critical understandings of positions of privilege and disadvantage would inform such an examination. History(ies) and the processes of knowledge creation need to be understood as multiple and ongoing, not singular and static. In this climate of global and market restructuring, students need to develop a deep understanding of the historical structures and practices that have furthered democratic participation and inclusion, and those that presented and continue to present obstacles to inclusion and greater democracy from a deep and broad perspective. Naming the issues, making the connections to the structures of our social and political institutions, and being developmentally supported in their choices to become involved in various ways at various levels is critical to educating students to become active, participating citizens of a country that recognizes its diversity and supports inclusivity by seeking to put into place whatever is necessary to address the special needs of its regions and its people.

Notes

1. In this article we use the term *Black* to evoke an anti-racist political project and not to blur or erase differences among peoples of African ancestry.

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