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TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD

APPROACHES TO CHARACTER EDUCATION

A Dissertation in
Curriculum and Instruction

by

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ABSTRACT

Character education has always had a role in public education. Currently, many states' Departments of Education hold standards that reflect principles that relate to character or values. Here, a review of the approaches was provided as insight into the ways teachers are being asked to instruct students about character in the classroom, with the rationale for this character education being fashioned by politicians, philosophers, and researchers. Classroom pedagogical approaches address curricula and activities that either focus on teaching character or integrate character into other academic subject approaches. The cultural/school approach implies an environmental approach to character education that utilizes teachable moments, classroom and school rules, and discipline.

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward approaches to character education, and establish components that teachers identified as necessary for effective character development and character education programs. A Grounded Theory tradition guided this research, using interviews with 30 teachers. Data analysis included: questioning, comparisons, meanings of words, looking at language (in vivo), time, and using metaphors and similes.

The participants' responses were developed into seven themes related to character and character education: terminology, as the law, roles, unification, simplification of implementation, authenticity and teachable moments, and subcultures. Terminology affected all other themes depending on participants' views about character and those responsible for teaching it. The themes as the law and roles investigated how character education is imposed at times on schools and how teachers view their roles, parents'

roles, and a collective role of those who interact with students. Unification, simplification, and authenticity explore how character education is infused into schools and curricula. Subcultures respond differently to the infusion of the various approaches to character education.

Teachers expressed a spectrum of beliefs and attitudes about character education. With regard to implementation, curricula should be relevant and practical. Most teachers found scripted and “canned programs” character education curricula to be useful when used as resources at the elementary school level and irrelevant at the high school level. More importantly, teachers need to authentically incorporate the development of character into the school day and give time to this issue.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Character education, often used interchangeably with the term moral education, has been of interest for thousands of years, as Thomas Lickona stated:

Moral education is not a new idea. It is, in fact, as old as education itself. Down through history, in countries all over the world, education has had two great goals: to help young people become smart and to help them become good (Lickona, cited in Ryan & Bohlin, 1999, p. 220).

In the United States, character/moral education was at one time a major mission of public education (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005). Schools and character education were used to indoctrinate students about Puritan morals in the early history of the United States (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005, p. 23). The McGuffey Readers found in the curriculum of the early grades served to guide children toward becoming good citizens (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005, p. 24). As one of the first textbooks in the United States, the McGuffey Readers were composed of moral stories and lessons with the, “dual purpose to teach English and morals” (Westerhoff, 1978, p. 23). Two examples of lessons in the McGuffey Readers were called, “Evening Prayer” and, “Don’t Take Strong Drink,” with vocabulary lists embedded at a writing level meant for younger children (Westerhoff, 1978, pp. 121–123).

The social efficiency movement led by scientific curriculum advocates Bobbit, Charters, and Snedden supported the notion of schools as venues for the socialization of students (Kliebard, 1992). Schools indoctrinated immigrants not only about the

importance of language learning and United States academics, but also instilled the morals desired in United States society (Cremin, 1955, p. 298). The Americanization of the newcomers included the expectation that immigrants take on the character and values already established in this country. Ross wrote a number of articles published in the *American Journal of Sociology* from 1896–1898 that were later collected into a single volume (Kliebard, 1992). The volume, called *Social Control*, advocated for the social control of individuals, especially immigrants, who were thought to exhibit undesirable behaviors. Social control was used to control behavior and hopefully instill character according to a framework selected by those in power (Ross, 1896). Joel (1976) argued that the idea of social control was so obvious that the people targeted could see that engaging in it meant a loss of freedom. Along with the loss of freedom and the questioning of control, the movement toward a democracy founded on modern industrialization pushed for a curriculum that taught skills and socialization in much more implicit ways, through both curricula and school culture as evidenced in the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, 1918).

In 1913, the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE) was formed to establish ways to make secondary education more effective. Over a five-year period the committee developed the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* to emphasize the idea that schools need to educate all students in line with what is thought of as the comprehensive high school (schools that educate all students), including college prep and vocational schooling (CRSE, 1918). One of the premises of the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* was to advocate civic education as a way to a greater

democracy whereby citizens receive community values based on learning from the diversity and interaction that are found in a large school.

Blackwell (1956) suggested that one of the criticisms of the concept of democratic ideologies as a way to indoctrinate students into society is that values vary too much for interaction to occur amongst diverse individuals leading to civic growth. Part of the problem, according to Blackwell (1956), is that:

A host of writers have sought to identify and interpret the basic values of American society. Only limited agreement is found among these writers as to which are the more nearly universal values. Rather than attempt our own exposition of what these values seem to be, we would emphasize that values do change, albeit slowly, and that they vary from region to region and from community to community (Blackwell, 1956, p. 396).

Although Blackwell (1956) argued that large numbers and fairly differentiated values make the concept of a comprehensive high school less feasible in building civic mindedness in students, Conant (1959) continued to promote the comprehensive high school as a way to develop community values in students in the 1960s. Today, most high schools continue to be structured in this way.

During the same time that the comprehensive high school idea was coming into being, several studies by Hartshorne and May (1924–1929) discredited the impact of direct instruction of character education in public schools (Hunter, 2000, p. 255). Hartshorne and May's study titled, "Character Education Inquiry" (1924–1929), found that character education had little effect on children who had, "lower incidence of deceit" or, "higher incidence of service behavior" (Hartshorne, May, & Shuttleworth, 1930, pp.

373–379). Their research focused on deceit, service, self-control, and the nature of character itself while concentrating on religious education. They studied more than 10,000 children from the ages of 8–16 and from 23 different communities across the nation (Hartshorne & May, 1928). Over 170,000 observations were conducted. Participants were given a battery of tests and surveys that gave the researchers an, “intercorrelation of conduct tendencies” for, “honesty, service, and inhibitions” in contrast with “service, inhibition, and persistence” (Hartshorne, 1930). Policy-wise, Lickona (1991, p. 8) argued that the Hartshorne and May studies led to a decline in the belief that character education should be taught in the traditional form of lessons from teachers.

Kliebard (1992) argued that the negative connotations of school lessons as a method of social control caused character education to become much more integrated into curriculum and school culture in the mid-1900s. There were fewer explicit signs of values being taught in school; character had begun to be embedded into the academic functioning of schools (Kliebard, 1992). The Common Learnings Program in Minneapolis attempted to interweave the two ideas. Franklin described “resistance” (Franklin, as quoted in Apple, 1979). Some reasons for its lack of success included the Parents Council and the teachers. Kantor (1988) noted that policies espoused by politicians from 1900–1950, “did little to keep young people in school longer; nor did they make industry more efficient” (p. 168).

Character education was once again on the main stage of politics starting in the early 1980s. Along with outcomes-based learning, the idea of refocusing education to intentionally include character education was expressed at a national level. The character

of students and schools became a subject of major importance after *A Nation At Risk* was published during the Reagan administration (National, 1983). According to President Bill Clinton (1996), “I challenge all our schools to teach character education, to teach good values and good citizenship.” Character education is a necessary goal of schools, as implied by the legislation and standards for it at both the national and local education and government levels (Glazner, 2006). President George Bush, Jr. followed this push by including character education in *No Child Left Behind* (United States Department of Education, 2001). Politics and school tragedies have had a major role in the revival of explicit instruction of character (“Tragedies spur,” 2000).

Most states’ Departments of Education have standards that reflect principles related to character or values (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). The United States Government has, in the past and present, given grants to states to disperse to schools, encouraging character education programs (Character Education Partnerships, 2005). These State Education Agencies include: [California](#), [Florida](#), [Georgia](#), [Hawaii](#), [Idaho](#), [Iowa](#), [Maryland](#), [Missouri](#), [New Jersey](#), [North Carolina](#), [Ohio](#), [Texas](#), and [Utah](#) (Character Education Partnerships, 2005). In addition, from programmatic perspectives, many character education programs, such as “Character Counts!,” “Quest International,” and many local programs, profess explicit instruction and activities designed to develop specific character traits. Educating in this context means that teachers are responsible for providing instruction on character regardless of background, training, or personal values.

In summary, character education has been long-standing as a purpose of schooling. Over time character has been taught through various means. There have been

various approaches to teaching character with schools and teachers being the instruments of teaching character with curriculum in programs and school culture.

Statement of the Problem

Character education is taught in many ways, but at no other time in history have there been so many “canned programs” and locally developed specific curricula used to develop/teach character in students. Rarely are character education programs under the same scrutiny as other academic curricula because standardized tests and accountability are not applied to them, especially in regard to evaluation requirements (United States Department of Education, 2001). The lack of emphasis on accountability in character education allows entrepreneurs to capitalize on one of the hot “buzz” words in education. School districts try numerous approaches to character education in the hope that something will make a difference, but there is no clear answer about which components to include in character education programs. In 1994, the United States Congress enacted the, “Partnerships in Character Education Act” (Partnerships in Character Education Pilot Project Program, 2001). Part of this Act reads as follows:

The projects will help states work with school districts to develop curriculum materials, provide teacher training, involve parents in character education and integrate character education into the curriculum. Each project will design activities to incorporate six elements of character—caring, civic virtue and citizenship, justice and fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness (Partnerships in Character Education Pilot Project Program, 2001, p. 1).

The Federal Government, through the Character Education Partnership (CEP, 2005), has provided guidelines for establishing character education in schools. The

newest character education support coming from the United States Department of Education is the Character Education and Civic Engagement Technical Assistance Center (CETAC). CETAC has resources to enable the design not only of programs, but of evaluation tools (CETAC, 2007). Unfortunately, most of the resources are available only to grantees and members. Grants range from \$20,000 for National Schools of Character awards, to hundreds of thousands of dollars to individual states from the federal government (CEP, 2005).

Although grants, legislation, and state standards support character education, the paucity of real implementation has led to a lack of impact by character education programs (Meidl, 2006). Part of the problem is that schools develop character education programs to obtain Federal funds, but do not have time to share a vision with teachers, students, and community members (Meidl, 2006). The lack of accountability for character education has left it on an uneven playing field when compared to content education (United States Department of Education, 2001).

In summary, inconsistent program offerings and the lack of program evaluation leave room to question the impact of character education programs in schools. Informal character development remains based on the teachers' initiative. Character education approaches and their perceived effectiveness remain unknown. Components of effective character development and related programs remain relatively unclear among educators, especially practicing teachers. Thus, the key to a better understanding of character education is to understand teachers' perspectives on approaches to character development.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to examine beliefs and attitudes of teachers toward approaches to character education, and (2) to establish, qualitatively, the components that teachers identify as necessary elements for character development and character education programs to be effective. Each purpose is examined below.

This research examined teachers' perspectives on approaches to character education within public schools. Learning about practicing teachers' perceptions of character education is vital to understanding the different methods of teaching character. From the teachers' perspective, determining what character education is and how character is developed throughout the school day adds valuable information to the development of character.

Along with teachers' perceptions of their approaches to character development, this study identified components viewed by teachers as necessary to an effective character education program. The elements of character education include items such as: mission statements, curriculum, assessment, and school culture (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). An understanding of teachers' perceptions of the development of character education requires description of the criteria that support effective character development. Thus, the relevancy of learning which components of character education support effective character development can be used to inform practitioners and policy makers about the best methods for designing and implementing a curriculum that focuses on character development and how this subject can be taught most effectively.

In summary, the purpose of this research was to examine teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward approaches to character education, and to establish, qualitatively, the

components identified by teachers as necessary to effective character development and character education programs.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study. The first question was, “What are the beliefs and attitudes of teachers toward approaches to character education?” The second question was, “What components do teachers identify as necessary elements for character development and character education programs to be effective?”

There are significant differences in perceptions of how character is being taught in the classroom. Character is being interwoven into the school pedagogy, and character education is being taught as a separate lesson. Determining teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of a character education program is vital when evaluating its impact, since teachers implement the programs and teach the children. The rationale for this study was this need to identify the components of approaches to character education programs perceived to be more effective by teachers.

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to uncover teachers’ perspectives of approaches to teaching and developing character. Study findings provide valuable information about approaches to character education from the teachers’ perspectives. These findings may impact education policy about character education programs. Emphases on understanding the components of character education programs, the impact of accountability on schools,

and the evaluation of approaches to teaching character in schools were the end goal. The education process will always include character development.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was that the methodological research approach does not include observations. Observations were not included as part of this research because this study used a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) that focused on interviews. As a result, the perceptions of the teachers interviewed may reflect a viewpoint that generalizes only to comparable populations. Another limitation is that the participants came from the same general area with similar social norms and the students came from similar backgrounds.

Teachers were contacted through a mass email and on a volunteer basis only. This means that this may have left the researcher with individuals who wanted to talk about character education, but who did not represent a complete view of all teachers connected with character development in the classroom. The questions developed were meant to provide perspectives on components of character education. Since the interviews were based on a structured interview format to avoid researcher bias, responses were not investigated with follow-up questions that might have provided further depth.

Delimitations

The intention of this research was not to create a new method for teaching character. There was no intention to redefine “character.” This research explored

perceptions of selected approaches to teaching and evaluating character education, but did not intend to cover all approaches to character education.

Definitions of Terms

Terms used throughout this study included: *character education, democratic spirit, and morality*. Definitions provided here are broad because the fact is that teachers may perceive character education in many ways and the researcher did not intend to define character education for the participants. The intention was to provide multiple ways to think about character education based on the following terms.

Character education is an umbrella term used to describe many aspects of teaching and learning (Hall, 2000). Some of the aspects that fall under this umbrella include: “moral reasoning/cognitive development”; “social and emotional learning”; “moral education/virtue”; “life skills education”; “caring community”; “health education”; “violence prevention”; “conflict resolution/peer mediation”; and “ethic/moral philosophy” (Berkowitz, n.d.). As indicated by the variety of terms associated with it, character education is broad in scope and has many perspectives. Character education includes curriculum-designed character education programs and informal practices that lead to the development of character. Anything that leads to the creation of character through formal and informal practices can be considered character education.

The idea of *Democratic spirit* has been used by many different people in many different ways (Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, 1918; Conant, 1959; Jefferson, 1816; Plato, approximately 360 B.C.E.). The definition of democratic spirit used in this study includes the idea that schools function so that students

learn to be part of a small social setting with the ability to influence and change that environment. The students learn what being a citizen means by interacting within the school environment.

Morality pertains to, “principles of right and wrong in conduct” (Morality, 1996, p. 882). Morals consist of values related to right and wrong, whereas character is defined more precisely as traits that lead to an individual being successful as a community member.

Canned programs are programs that are created and sold as a whole product, usually in education a whole curriculum. *Canned programs* according to:

Missouri Code of State Regulations 12 CSR 10 -109.050(2)(A), are defined as standardized programs purchased ‘off the shelf’ or are programs of general application developed for sale to and use by many different customers with little or no modifications. These may include programs developed for in-house use and subsequently held or offered for sale or lease. A program may be a canned program even if it requires some modification, adaptation, or testing to meet the customer's particular needs ([LR3759](#), 2007).

Although this definition was used to define a *canned program* for computer software, the application of its definition can be used in other curricula designed in education.

The preceding descriptions or definitions are only meant to be used as a guide for understanding the concepts discussed in the literature review. This research does not intend to define these terms for study participants, but rather inform the design and direction of this study. The participants were left to interpret the meanings with as little researcher description as possible.

Summary

The organization of this study is comprised of the first chapter, which includes the: Introduction, Statement of Problem, Purpose of Study, Research Questions, Significance of Study, Limitations, Delimitations, and Definition of Terms. The second chapter reviews the literature about various approaches to character education. Chapter three describes the methodology used to collect the data and qualitatively analyze the results. The fourth chapter presents a qualitative analysis of the data, through the presentation of themes. Chapter five discusses the findings from the data and analysis, future research, and the implications of this study for practice and policy

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is to inform the reader about approaches to character education explored during the interview process. In an attempt to describe the ways that philosophers, theorists, and researchers discuss character within the realm of education, the literature review is meant to broaden the readers' understanding of approaches to developing character. Once the ways or approaches to character development are understood, this research then explores teachers' attitudes and beliefs about those different approaches.

This chapter contains descriptions of selected approaches to character education. In the first section, three categories are provided: (1) classroom pedagogy for teaching character education, (2) the culture of schools as a way to develop character, and (3) integrating multiple approaches. These three categories describe the three most prevalent approaches to character development. Embedded within the first section are historical and contemporary perspectives of the three approaches. The elements of historical perspectives of character education include how some early philosophers, educators, and theorists affected character education's role in schools to support an approach to developing character. The contemporary perspectives explain theory and research used to justify an approach in a more recent context. Both are needed to understand how and why character education is currently practiced.

Selected Approaches

Examining multiple approaches to teaching character in schools requires a focus on teachers' perspectives and perceptions of how character is taught. Character can be taught in many ways; as Shouse (2004) pointed out, this development occurs both formally and informally (p. 73). Shouse wrote that formal character development happens, "via explicit instruction, rules and sanctions, and class projects, for example" (p. 73). To paraphrase, Shouse discussed character as often being taught informally and more naturally within the contexts of events, peer socialization, and the presence of a school atmosphere or culture (p. 73). Discerning the different forms of character development is necessary to set the scene for understanding teachers' views on character education and its impact.

Jackson (1968), who coined the term "the hidden curriculum," pointed out that teachers' "influence" goes beyond just academics. He said, "Some of these 'lessons,' most of them 'untaught' in the sense of not being a part of the teacher's explicit agenda or lesson plan" (Jackson, 1992, p. xi). In some respects teachers have an effect on their students that is often not understood until later in adolescence or adulthood, if at all.

In *The Moral Life of Schools*, Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (1993) researched moral learning in schools through observations and interviews over a two-year period. The researchers discussed, "ways in which moral considerations permeate the everyday life of schools and classrooms" (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. xiv) and continued by writing, "Our hunch that teachers and school administrators are only partially aware of how they contribute to the moral upbringing of their students" (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. xv). Their study involved eighteen classrooms—

two public, two independent, and two parochial (an elementary and a high school of each type) (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. xiv).

From their observations, Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (1993) developed eight categories that involved moral issues. The first five categories were characterized as, “deliberate attempts to promote moral instruction and to encourage moral behavior” (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. 3). Moral instruction as a formal part of the curriculum was observed at two Catholic schools in Chicago and, “...consisted of the reading of a Bible story from the New Testament, followed by a discussion of its moral significance interspersed with information about its historical place within the Catholic tradition” (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. 4). Moral instruction within the regular curriculum was found in most of the classrooms and was extremely prevalent during English and social studies classes during discussions and interpretations of literature and different individuals, communities, and cultures (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. 5).

The rituals and ceremonies category was divided into two categories: whole school and individual classrooms. Rituals and ceremonies in the whole school included activities such as, “pep rallies, graduations, and assemblies that feature, for example, lectures by guest speakers against drug abuse” (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. 6). Rituals and ceremonies in individual classrooms consisted of the, “Lord’s Prayer or the Pledge of Allegiance, birthday parties” (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, pp. 6–7). Visual displays with moral content pertain to, “signs, pictures, and posters” that can be found in every classroom and on the walls of every school (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. 8). The final category in the deliberate attempt at moral development

was spontaneous interjection of moral commentary into ongoing activity. Within this category fits all behaviors, outbursts, and comments that either the teacher felt needed to be addressed or were just part of the teacher's interaction with students (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. 10).

The final three categories developed by Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen focus on the moral interchange in a much less obvious form. In-classroom rules and regulations that govern the small society follow an, "assortment of do's and don'ts whose contents range from the pious to the vacuous", from the mundane to the specific ('No talking during fire drills') (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. 12). The morality of the curricular substructure explores the spectrum of how and why things are taught in relation to other substructures and variables that are not quite so obvious to the observer. According to Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (1993), substructure might be: the order the text book maker put the units or chapters, the, "shared expectation of truth telling as it operates in classrooms," the, "practice of feigning interest and enthusiasm during the teaching of a lesson in order, presumably, to arouse a similar reaction from students," and the, "assumption of worthwhileness" in reference to content to be learned, which may be in the hands of the state or school district as much as the teacher (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, pp. 14–26).

The last category explores expressive morality within the classroom. Teachers are expressive in many different ways—facial expressions, body movements, and class organization and decoration (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, pp. 29–41). All of these ways of expressing relay messages from the teacher about who they are, what they think is important, and, most of all, if they approve or not. In the end, the authors

suggested that there are undeniably moral dimensions in schools to which teachers express themselves and that therefore have an influence on the students they come into contact with in positive or negative ways. The authors said that teachers have a, “moral duty” or, “live under an obligation to be as considerate and understanding as possible in dealing with their students” because they have a tremendous power over them (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. 293). Teachers need to reflect on how they express themselves to children as much as they exert power in influencing them (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. 294).

Several theorists on character education (e.g., Bennett, 1997; Kohlberg, 1986; Lickona, 1991) recommend different ways to teach character in schools. They are specific about what needs to happen to stimulate character development. In distinguishing formats for teaching about character development, two major approaches stand out: *classroom pedagogy* and *culture/school approach*. Between these two approaches, classroom pedagogy and culture/school approach, most theories can be incorporated. After the classroom pedagogy approach is described, the culture/school approach is explored. Finally, the most current trend is to intentionally use both, as described by Lickona (1991).

In summary, this section of the review of the literature sheds light on various approaches to character education. Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (1993) described eight categories in which moral issues were explored and developed. The eight categories support the selected approaches chosen to be investigated in the study. The categories also establish questions to be asked to the participants of the study while probing components that teachers feel are necessary elements of character development.

Classroom Pedagogy Approach

Classroom pedagogy consists of curriculum, instruction, and materials within the classroom related to character development (Stengel & Tom, 2006). The classroom pedagogical approach can be broken down into two categories: (1) curriculum taught separately from other content/pedagogical areas, and (2) character education integrated into the academic curriculum. Researchers' perceptions of classroom pedagogy in character education vary. The reason for the disparity goes back to the argument for character/moral education used by Piaget and Kohlberg (Hunter, 2000), who argued that children could only reason their way to moral and character dilemmas through curriculum, to Bennett (1997), who sees the need for direct teaching of virtues. Lickona (1991) believes in a classroom pedagogical approach, but also believes in investing in school cultures to promote character. This is discussed later in a more all-inclusive section.

Separate Curricula

Some people (Bennett, 1997; Character Counts!, n.d.) feel that specific programs that teach character and moral traits are important to use because they are straightforward and to the point about expectations for character. Separate curricula are almost always explicit about teaching character, but can be taught in both formal and informal ways. An example of a curriculum taught separately is classroom lessons that focus activities on learning responsibility or sharing. This type of lesson is designed solely to advance understanding of character traits.

Stories and books have been used to teach character throughout history, as seen in Plato's *The Republic*, the Bible, and the Koran, but recently character has been taught as

its own subject. Programs such as Character Counts!, Character Education Institute, Child Development Project, Community of Caring, Heartwood Ethics Institute, The Institute for Global Ethics, Quest International, intervention programs, and home-grown programs identify and teach specific character traits that have been identified as important (DeRoche & Williams, 2001, pp. 121–125). Home-grown programs, designed by the individuals teaching character, may be some of the most effective; however, because these types of programs are relatively new and each has its own individual packaging, it may be difficult to evaluate them on anything but an individual basis (DeRoche & Williams, 2001). District/school investment in the program may play a role in a program's effectiveness, but that is unclear at this point. The teachings of Greek philosophers and religious leaders provide both an early rationale for character education and information on methods of teaching character and morals; the ancient Greeks discussed include Socrates and Plato. Following the influence of Greek philosophers is the religious paradigm of character education, which involves the outgrowth of religions and their style of teaching about character and morals. Within this section separate curricular influences include the aforementioned influences of Plato and Bennett, along with Horace Mann and the Peabody sisters, religious paradigms, and some individual programs designed to teach character.

Deductive Reasoning and Discussion to Develop Reflective Citizens

Men and women in ancient Greece shaped character development at the very beginning of Western civilization. Socrates and Plato both spoke of the virtues and citizenship ideologies important to healthy communities (Plato, 1928). Creating responsible and contributing citizens was their rationale for character education. Their

approach to character education was to explore democratic traits and good citizenship by discussing issues and concepts (Plato, 1928). Plato's writings describe how Socrates attempted to use dialogue and deductive reasoning skills to educate youth on the contributions of character to a more advanced citizenship (Plato, 1928). These contributions are important as the first recorded approach to teaching about morals and character.

Religious Paradigms to Mold Morals and Character

Religious paradigms (2000 B.C.E.-1700 A.D.) begin with monotheism and its changes to how character and morals were understood, taught, and nurtured in churches, synagogues, and temples (Davidmann, 2004). Many religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) started to have a very strong influence on society in terms of politics and social functioning (Davidmann, 2004).

In *Exodus* of the *Torah* or the *Old Testament*, Moses, a Biblical figure, used the Ten Commandments to address moral and value issues with the intention of setting guidelines for the behavior of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Meeks, 1989). These Ten Commandments attempted to nurture character as a way to live in a community and worship one god. From a Christian perspective, Jesus used parables and stories to teach character to his followers. From an Islamic position, Muhammad wrote the *Koran* (*Qur'an*) as a guide of moral behavior. Both the *Bible* and the *Koran* contain religious stories that guide character and religious living (Usmani, 2004). Between 2000 B.C.E. and 600 A.D., to the present, many religions developed and continue to develop morals and character in real-life situations. These stories were the curriculum, with the rationale being that for religious reasons character development was necessary.

Religious Stories and Literature Discussing Morals

Horace Mann, a prominent educator and at one time the head of the Massachusetts Board of Education (McCluskey, 1958), was on a mission to make character development the most important curriculum taught in schools. McCluskey (1958) noted a quote in the *Common School Journal* in which Mann disapprovingly said that, “the intellectual, uncultivated as it is, is still more adequately cared for than the moral nature of children” (p. 40). His major points are summarized below:

(1) Moral or character education has the primacy in education, (2) “Piety” and “religion” include more than theistically based natural ethics, (3) There is a distinction between moral and religious education, and (4) Moral training and religious training should not be separated in education (McCluskey, 1958, p. 43).

Mann believed that students needed to have textbooks that taught character education. Mann’s enthusiasm for character education spread to those around him, including his wife.

Horace Mann married Mary Peabody of the Peabody sisters (i.e., Elizabeth, Mary, Sophia), educators who also heralded the issue of the moral development of children through education in schools. Elizabeth and Mary pushed for the morals being taught in schools as evidenced in their book, *Moral Culture of Infancy and Kindergarten Guide* (Peabody & Mann, 1864). The master text focused on character development through stories and direct lessons that were intended to make children think about right and wrong. According to Elizabeth Peabody (1864):

I am in the habit of speaking of God to the children as the Giver of love and goodness, and the power of thought and action, rather than as the Creator of the

outward world, and have found that the tyrannizing unity of the soul's instinct did the rest (Peabody & Mann, 1864, p. 55).

Horace Mann and the Peabody sisters established how teachers could directly teach character as the objective of lessons.

Story Books: Themes and Characters to Develop Character

According to Murphy (2002), William Bennett, former United States Secretary of Education (1985–1988), is another influential theorist in the world of character education. Bennett (1997) used his text, *The Book of Virtues*, to teach about specific character traits, although the use of literature to teach character education has occurred both as a separate curriculum and an integrated curriculum. Through stories, Bennett (1997) argued that virtues should be taught as objectives of lessons and that teachers should be expected to promote specific virtues or character traits.

Bennett and Sher (1982) defended the case for directly teaching character education. In response to the notion that directly teaching character takes away an individual's power to create their own values, Bennett and Sher (1982) argued that children's autonomy in learning morals is never without some influence and that young children are not able to reason without guidance. Further, "directive moral education need not be condemned as incompatible with pluralism," but in a pluralistic society values that support toleration must be taught (Bennett & Sher, 1982, p. 675).

In *The Book of Virtues* (1997), Bennett used numerous stories to bring out certain virtues that equate to showing character traits in context. He, along with fellow researcher Honig, both stressed the idea that character traits need to be decided on and then taught in the schools (Nash, 1997). Children understand character traits by having discussions and

thinking through character-contextualized stories, according to Bennett (Nash, 1997).

Like Bennett, Hall (2000) also used picture and story books to teach character education.

She stated that children absorb character as read in books because they, “see themselves as starring players in a story” (Hall, 2000, p. vii).

Some criticism of the story-telling approach in character education surrounds research that supports it. Leming (1993) stated that:

Those interested in character education have long believed that morally inspiring literature should be a part of any character education program. Surprisingly, not one research study has attempted to assess whether reading such literature has the expected effect on character (p. 69).

Narvaez, Gleason, Mitchell, and Bentley (1999) investigated the theory that children learn morality through stories. Study participants were 50 third graders and 54 fifth graders from a city elementary school. The children were read four stories with complex moral dilemmas. These researchers used four tasks to determine student comprehension of the morals from the study. These tasks included: (1) vignette rating, (2) vignette choice, (3) message rating, and (4) message choices. The results were measured using analysis of variance. The researchers found that as the children aged, they understood the morals in stories better. They also discovered that “reading moral stories to children does not guarantee that they will understand the moral message or theme as intended by the author” (Narvaez et al., 1999, p. 483).

Character Counts! and the Idea of a Character Trait Curriculum

Direct instruction on character traits may be taught through specific curriculum. Bennett (1997) professed that curricula meant to address specific traits was emerging.

South Dakota State University began a study of Character Counts! in 1998 (Character Counts!, n.d.). Using, “extensive evaluation forms, covering demographics, attitudes and behavior” (Character Counts!, n.d., p. 1), the researchers studied 8,400 middle and high school students. Also, 345 teachers responded to questionnaires about students’ behaviors and attitudes. Students’ self-reports indicated drops in: breaking and entering, using fake IDs, stealing, drinking of alcohol, taking illegal drugs, vandalizing, and racial/ethnic teasing (Character Counts!, n.d., p. 1). Teachers reported that elementary school students were showing signs of positive character traits by helping others and sharing. The negative or neutral effects of Character Counts! showed that although negative behaviors decreased, positive behavior did not increase. The “relation of teachers’ training in Character Counts! to their reports of student improvement is curious and hard to decipher” (Character Counts!, n.d., p. 1). Character Counts! is an example of a “canned program,” which means it was designed commercially to teach specific character traits through numerous activities. The idea of this approach is that teachers’ explicit use of questioning, discussions, and activities directly address character as the purpose of the lesson.

Summary

This section explored how character education has been taught to children explicitly throughout time. The methods for directly teaching character occurred through questioning and logic, stories, and discussion specifically designed to shape character. Socrates and Plato used character education to form principles related to moral judgments and social interaction. The religious paradigms (2000 B.C.E.-1700 A.D.) created a rationale that counted on worship and social functioning for character education. Stories

have also been heavily relied upon to teach character education. Mann and the Peabody sisters (1864) addressed character curriculum by emphasizing explicit lessons taught by teachers. Bennett (1997) stressed the teaching of character through stories. Finally, Character Counts! is one example of individual programs designed to use specific activities and discussions to develop character traits within students.

Integrated Curricula

If separate programs did not seem to have variety, integrated approaches certainly have an abundant number of activities and ideologies from which to choose. With an integrated curriculum, character education is woven into content area activities and curricula (Stengel & Tom, 2006). Unlike separate curricula that are taught more formally, integrated curricula usually teach character both formally and informally. Approaches are described as integrated curricula if the teacher is trying to teach both character and content knowledge.

Other examples of character development integrated into the curriculum would be exploring civic and service issues with a social studies class or utilizing physical education classes to promote sharing and teamwork. Lickona (1991), as mentioned earlier, used the integrated approach to involve: democracy in the classroom, the teacher as role model/caregiver/mentor, cooperative learning, teaching through issues, using moral reflection, and teaching how to solve conflicts.

The integrated approach can be used in reference to content area teaching. English and literature lend themselves to teaching character and especially morals in early childhood curricula. Character development integrated into social studies is a bridge into world issues and democratic principles are already a major factor in content taught in this

arena. Science, mathematics, and many of the other content area subjects require a little more imagination from the teacher in order to insert character education into the curriculum, but proponents say it is possible (Lickona, 1991).

There have been political leaders (e.g., Jefferson, Clinton, Bush, Jr.) and theorists (e.g., Dewey, Kohlberg) who advocate for integrated curriculum. Most proponents of integrated curriculum look to integrate character throughout the curriculum so the value is seen in light of existing curricula. Individuals referenced within this section are Thomas Jefferson, John Dewey, and Lawrence Kohlberg. Each individual's ideas fit best in the integrated approach for reasons to be discussed.

Developing Citizens Through Literature, Not Religion

America was shaped and framed by the leaders who were tenacious with regard to character as a main staple in democratic life. President Thomas Jefferson (1801–1809) spoke of the need to have a democracy that cultivates loyalty to the nation, individual rights, and contributing to the greater good of society (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005). One of President Jefferson's six objectives of primary schooling was, "to improve, by reading, his morals and faculties" (Jefferson, 1818). Jefferson's strong emphasis on incorporating morals into reading rings closely to the same premise of the McGuffey Readers (Westerhoff, 1978). Jefferson also represents a political interest that has influenced how schools go about teaching character.

Progression from Discussion to Context for Teaching Character

Lawrence Kohlberg, a renowned children's psychologist and educator influenced by Piaget, developed a theory that moral development forms in a structural view consistent with constructivist thought. Like Piaget, Kohlberg argued that children

progress through moral stages that parallel their cognitive stages. Kohlberg (1986), “stressed moral stages as part of a general cognitive-developmental approach to an evolving unitary self oriented to a unitary social world” (p. 485). The theory is based on the progression through six moral stages incorporated into three levels that Kohlberg called pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional or principled. These levels involve elements of knowing, “what is right,” “reasons for doing right,” and, “social perspectives of the stage” (Kohlberg, 1986, p. 488).

Several authors (e.g., Gordon, 1986; Leming, 1986) mention some of the strengths and weaknesses of incorporating Kohlberg’s theory into the classroom. Leming (1986) talked about how Kohlberg’s idea of “developmental moral education” was based on studies done by Turiel (1966). He mentioned how Turiel’s research showed that children could understand the moral stage that is one up from where they were. Moshe Blatte was a doctoral student of Kohlberg’s who, in his dissertation, found that moral development could be promoted through, “classroom discussions of conflict-laden hypothetical moral dilemmas” (Leming, 1986, p. 247). Leming argued that Kohlberg may have been too rigid with his stages and not understood the complexities of teaching morality step-by-step (1986). In light of that criticism, Kohlberg eventually refocused his thoughts on how to teach morality.

Kohlberg (1986) described the teacher’s role as Socratic “facilitator,” who developed morals within children by reasoning what is right and wrong. Kohlberg (1986) saw difficulties in moving through the stages in the Danforth Project and revised his theory to take a “just community approach.” Rather than concentrating on getting children to reason through one moral stage to the next, Kohlberg advocated for the “just

community approach,” which addresses real issues and circumstances that cannot wait until the child was on one or another stage to learn. Kohlberg’s later theory fit better with a school culture approach. He felt moral education should be taught in the sense of what John Dewey emphasized, “caught and not taught.” From a modeling mentor perspective, Kohlberg saw the teacher as a “socializer” and “advocator” of moral development through peers and group interaction (Leming, 1986).

Scaffolding in Character Development

Using discourse analyses, Clare and Gallimore (1996) investigated how literature combined with scaffolding helped develop character in students. Clare and Gallimore (1996) analyzed the classroom discourse of students talking about moral issues after reading a story with their teacher. In one teacher’s classroom the students were part of the study that included interviews, video-taping of lessons, and portfolio data. There were 24 children in the class transitioning from Spanish to English. The teacher who had studied Kohlberg’s development theories attempted to integrate moral education into her classroom. The teacher combined Bennett’s theory of teaching morals through stories and direct instruction with Kohlberg’s idea of helping children reason through dilemmas to create moral aptitude. In the conclusion, Clare and Gallimore (1996) stated:

Teachers must become versed in asking open-ended questions, in clarifying, summarizing and building on students’ contributions, and in encouraging students to respond to each other. These more facilitative verbal skills are not easily mastered. Yet, we believe that explorations of moral dilemmas guided by a discussion model based on such elements can significantly enhance the efforts of

educators concerned with infusing moral education into the curriculum (1996, p. 29).

Clare and Gallimore's (1996) study emphasized the development of verbal skills, also known as scaffolding, in character education.

Summary

Within the integrated approach, which entails character education being woven into content area activities and curricula, several educators and government leaders thought character was best taught interwoven into academic curricula. Jefferson (1818) argued for the teaching of character so that individuals have the moral and work ethic character traits to contribute to a democratic society. Kohlberg (1986) originally would have fit in a separate curricular approach; however, after difficulties in implementing his multiple stages of moral development, he created an approach in which the teacher would incorporate character development into activities and community standards. Kohlberg (1986) seemed to transition from a separate curricular approach because the goals of building moral awareness with isolated lessons to incorporate character as part of daily learning and activities. Clare and Gallimore (1996) discovered that teaching character through literature standards and curricula required teachers to develop substantial skills in scaffolding as an instructional technique. The integrated curricula suggest that teachers incorporate character education into academic lessons and as professional development to promote implementation.

School Culture Approach

The cultural approach to teaching character education focuses on whole school environment and culture to encourage character development. There are many aspects to school culture. Every classroom has certain rules and well-organized schools have some universal rules that help govern how students behave in areas not controlled by specific adults. This might include times when students are at school before school starts and are under their teacher's authority or it might mean how children act in the bathroom. The "golden rule" and the idea of "caught, not taught" apply to school cultures that teach character in the contexts of peer conflict and issues that arise during the school day.

There has always been an emphasis on sharing and kindness in the classroom as part of what is naturally expected. Unfortunately, not all children are learning about sharing and kindness. Some politicians (e.g., Clinton, 1996; National, 1983; United States Department of Education, 2001) and some researchers (e.g., Glazner, 2006; Lickona, 1991) say there is evidence that United States schools and communities have seen a decrease in values and character among its citizens and need to engrain those concepts into children during school so there is a sense of one responsive entity rather than individual classrooms each building in their own way (Clinton, 1996; Glazner, 2006; Lickona, 1991; National, 1983; United States Department of Education, 2001).

Some examples of school culture that help educators teach and develop character include mission statements, valued and rewarded character traits, and professional expectations communicated in regard to character development (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Although some authors would argue that many schools function very well without mission statements, others find them to be vital to making the purpose of schools more

explicit and clear. Mission statements need to be clearly stated and emphasize character education expectations in order to communicate definite behaviors and expected attitudes (Meidl, 2006). A shared vision allows for issues and actions to be promoted in unity by community members. Ryan and Bohlin (1999) illuminated the importance of a shared vision:

When a shared vision or set of ideals is not embedded in a school community, then “Who cares?” and “Why bother?” become the silent mantra of many students.... We suggest posting the school’s vision and mission statement prominently and referring to it frequently in both class meetings and faculty meetings (p. 66).

Within this approach to character education is the thought that parents are also benefactors of clear mission statements regarding character education. In the culture/school approach, an emphasis is placed on students understanding the importance of having good character traits and they should not be rewarded for simply not having bad character traits. The importance of character education led by districts and administrators is seen as important in unifying character development across the grades and teachers (Lickona, 1991).

Following is a synopsis of three individuals whose work emphasizes the cultural element of character development in schools. Dewey (1916) is a long-standing leader in the philosophy of education. Conant (1959) discussed the use of informal learning environments to promote respect among students of differing backgrounds and interests. Hays (1994) promoted school cultures that embody character.

Character Development as Part of the School Day

John Dewey, a 19th-century renowned educator, had a major influence on education philosophy and curriculum. He advocated for the establishment of character education to mold and shape children. His idea was that character education should be taught in the context of daily activities rather than directly as a lesson. Throughout the day there are moments where the “caught not taught” ideology fits well in teaching character in the context of events. Issues or problems relating to student interaction and inappropriate actions come up during the school day and teachers have to deal with them in the context of those events. These moments are called teachable moments and happen because quite often children are caught doing something they should not be doing. Murphy (2002) quoted Dewey as saying, “moral education in school is practically hopeless when we set up the development of character as its supreme end” (p. 29).

John Dewey discussed the development of the thinking process that evolves when character development is taught in relation to normal school activities. He believed the important part was to teach the “process” of thinking about character formation and making moral decisions rather than merely delineating what was right or wrong (Dewey, 1916).

Democratic Schools Create Character

James Bryant Conant (1893–1978), a chemist, diplomat, and educator, wrote *The American High School Today*. In his book he addressed the systematic use of United States high schools as learning environments that fit the learning needs of all students.

The three main objectives of a comprehensive high school are: first, to provide a general education for all the future citizens; second, to provide good elective programs for those who wish to use their acquired skills immediately on graduation; third, to provide satisfactory programs for those whose vocations will depend on their subsequent education in a college or university (Conant, 1959, p. 17).

According to Conant (1959), all students are able to benefit from shared classes and interaction. As part of the comprehensive school, Conant incorporated the ideas of schools helping to develop student morale and social interaction (Conant, 1959).

In Conant's study, criteria were set up to judge whether or not a high school was a comprehensive high school. The criteria were evaluated based on interviews, classroom visits, checklists, and analysis of school records. A total of 153 high schools participated in the study. Conant (1959) suggested that the use of homerooms can help to develop, "mutual respect and understanding between students with different abilities and different vocational interests" (p. 74). Additionally, he recommended that students vote for student body representatives who influence school functioning. The underpinnings of the comprehensive high school are that an understanding of differences among individuals and students having a voice and influence lead to character development. This connects well with the thought that individuals need to be prepared with certain character traits to lead a successful adult life in society.

Schools Cultures That Expect Character Development

Connected to Conant's idea that diverse learners and systems lead to a greater understanding of different perspectives, Hays (1994) discussed how two different

educational environments designed to accentuate character and morality develop those ideas. During an examination of how character was instilled in students at Quaker schools and military schools, Hays (1994) investigated Emile Durkheim's idea that moral development occurs and is developed as part of a social context (Durkheim, 1973). In Hays' (1994) qualitative study, she used an ethnographic approach to interview and observe students and staff in six schools (3 Quaker and 3 military). She found that, "a school culture with a moral tradition provides for a sense of belonging to something with virtues, a history, and sacredness" (Hays, 1994, p. 220). According to Hays (1994), "Durkheim paints a harmonious picture of human beings' need for the three elements of morality, implying that these needs are smoothly coordinated, but in real life the everyday demands of discipline, attachment, and autonomy frequently clash" (pp. 222–223).

Hays (1994) reiterated that communities with strong beliefs in common values contribute to building similar character traits that are continually strengthened through organizational functioning and social interaction. The Quaker tradition promotes individual decision making emphasizing community consciousness. The military academies start with the premise of responsibility for not only oneself, but the total group around an individual. When one thinks about those around him first, they soon develop the ability to monitor their own autonomy balanced with the community (Hays, 1994, p. 225).

Social Control Theory

Ross (1896) originally introduced social control as a way to introduce immigrants to United States life and keep youth off the streets. More recently, social control theory

has explored how schools are used to, “perform functions of education, socialization, and preparation for adult social roles which previously occurred within the family”

(Wiatrowski, Griswold, & Roberts, 1981, p. 539). Social class is often the way by which the degree of control is expressed. The students who lacked the ability to interact with their peers seemed to have greater incidences of delinquency. Those students also had peers with similar delinquent behaviors (Wiatrowski, Griswold, & Roberts, 1981).

Summary

In the culture/school approach, character is thought to be developed formally and informally throughout the school day. Dewey (1916) promoted the use of teachable moments and events during the day as one way that teachers may capitalize on character building. As Conant (1959) advocated, character is developed in the comprehensive high school by interaction among students with different interests and backgrounds. He pointed out that providing students with a representative voice in school leads to a greater democratic spirit. Hays (1994) noted that Quaker schools and military schools have the primary goals of teaching character as a result of their “missions.” The two schools develop character in different ways; however, similar outcomes are achieved and based in an inner-connectedness. Conant (1959) and Hays (1994) both agreed that different ideas lead to conflict, which is what adds to the process of understanding how a culture within an organization can influence character in its members. The culture/schools approach fosters the concept of organizational rules, and interactions and relationships among school community members as part of the process of developing character.

Integrating Multiple Approaches

As with anything that may be done in two or more ways, a combination approach has evolved. Although some of the former theorists mentioned in this literature review might encourage the use of multiple approaches, they advocated for a style that lent itself to one or the other. This next section contains a description of how curricular reform within politics has produced a multiple approach methodology advocated by federal and state agencies. The work of Thomas Lickona, one of the foremost theorists of character education, is discussed with regard to his vision of character education in the classroom and the school through different activities and structures involving both classroom and school culture approaches.

Cardinal Principles

The Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE) developed the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*. Recommendations for the reorganization of secondary education were in the following areas: (1) health, (2) command of fundamental processes, (3) worthy home membership, (4) vocation, (5) civic education, (6) worthy use of leisure, and (7) ethical character (CRSE, 1918, pp. 5–9). In 1918, the CRSE members believed that the socialization of immigrants and all students would occur through subject curricula and school organization. In discussing character or values, the report reads, “*Civic education* should develop in the individual those qualities whereby he will act well his part as a member of neighborhood, town or city, State, and Nation, and give him a basis for understanding international problems” (CRSE, 1918, p. 7).

The report's authors recommended that civic education occur as part of group work and "class as a whole develops a sense of collective responsibility" (CRSE, 1918, p. 8). Continuing, the CRSE recommended that, "While all subjects should contribute to good citizenship, the social studies-geography, history, civics, and economics-should have this as their dominant aim" (p. 8). English is also pulled into this process of teaching character. The CRSE expected "social conditions" and "personal character" to be scrutinized within the realm of the English curriculum.

The CRSE does not end by putting the expectation of character development solely in the hands of teachers in their classroom. School leaders (i.e., principals) play a very important role in the unification of social norms according to CRSE (1918) through a variety of activities such as assemblies and organizations. Also, principals can unify the school by stressing the use of group activities to promote cooperation. The CRSE (1918) suggested that through friendships with students, "pursuing other curriculums and having vocational and educational goals widely different from their own," the students will realize they are more alike than different (p. 20). The CRSE (1918) summarizes ideas about unification:

In short, the comprehensive school is the prototype of a democracy in which various groups must have a degree of self-consciousness as groups and yet be federated into a larger whole through the recognition of common interests and ideals. Life in such a school is a natural and valuable preparation for life in a democracy (p. 20).

Legislation of Character Education

The politicizing of character education has increased in the last fifteen years. Initial government involvement in character education was revitalized in the 1980s and has continued on through the “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001” (United States Department of Education, 2005). In a 1994 poll of Americans, Fineman found that, “76 percent of adults surveyed believe that ‘the United States is in moral and spiritual decline’” (Fineman, as quoted in Ryan & Scott, 1995, p. 438). Character education has become a focused and articulated part of some school districts’ curricula.

Many different character education/development philosophies and curricula have been developed and federal grants are given to schools that teach character. The Character Education Partnership (CEP) has published *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education*. According to these *Eleven Principles*, the best ways for states to create character education programs involves ensuring the generalizability of legislation, community involvement, comprehensive programs that include curriculum and culture, all grade levels, and monetary support both in training and materials (CEP, 2005).

Since the 1994 congressional legislation “Partnerships in Character Education Act,” twenty three states have passed legislation related to character education (Glanzer, 2006). Much of this legislation has played out in three different forms according to Glanzer. The first form of character education legislation includes lists of character traits or virtues to be taught in the following states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, North Carolina, New York, and West Virginia. Other states, such as Arizona, Kentucky, Nebraska, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, and Washington, demonstrate the second form of legislation—mandating a list but allowing for additional traits to be added by the local

authority. The third form of legislation, used in Colorado, Louisiana, Iowa, Texas, and Virginia, provided lists that could be used or deferred according to the decision about which traits to teach (Glazner, 2006). Character education is integrated into existing programs in some states and is taught as an “intentional and comprehensive” program in other places. For example, Virginia’s law pertains to the integrated approach to character education:

Classroom instruction may be used to supplement a character education program; however, each program shall be interwoven into the school procedures and environment and structured to instruct primarily through example, illustration, and participation, in such a way as to complement the Standards of Learning (Character Education Required, 2004, Va. Code Ann. 22.1-208.01 A).

Virginia law suggests incorporating character in school culture, while Louisiana law takes a different approach.

Louisiana law takes more of the intentional approach by stating:

Any city or parish school system may offer a nonsectarian character education curriculum pursuant to the provisions of this Section in kindergarten through twelve, which focuses on the development of character traits as determined by individual school communities (Character Education Programs, 2004, La. R.S. 17:282.2 C).

Louisiana and Virginia have addressed character education with legislation, while the courts have looked at cases related to teaching character.

The courts have also given schools a direction for character development. In the 1986 case, *Bethel School District No. 403 v. Fraser*, the Supreme Court ruled that a

school can sanction speech that is “lewd and indecent.” In Chief Justice Burger’s delivery of the opinion, he read, “The process of educating our youth for citizenship in public schools is not confined to books, the curriculum, and the civics class; schools must teach by example the shared values of a civilized social order” (*Bethel School District No. 403 v. Fraser*, 1986). Through legislation and court judgments, character education has been endorsed using classroom and school culture approaches.

A Primary Focus on Character Education Using Multiple Approaches

Lickona (1991) has influenced some of the most current thought on character education. Increased amounts of stealing, violence, cheating, and self-destructive behaviors are indicators of a decline in moral values and support the need for character education, according to Lickona (1991). He made a case for teaching values and character in school in many forms.

In his book *Educating for Character*, Lickona (1991) talked about teaching character in the classroom and as part of the school culture. There are many ways to teach character in the classroom, including: “the teacher as a caregiver, model, and mentor;” “creating a moral community in the classroom;” “moral discipline;” “creating a democratic classroom environment-the class meeting;” “cooperative learning;” “the conscience of craft;” “encouraging moral reflection;” “raising the level of moral discussion;” “teaching controversial issues;” and, “teaching children to solve conflict” (Lickona, 1991, pp. 71-286).

In addition to the classroom culture of teaching, Lickona promoted schools that showed varied strategies for nurturing character. In this realm he talked about the following: caring beyond the classroom; creating a positive moral culture in the school;

sex education; drugs and alcohol; and schools, parents, and communities working together (Lickona, 1991). Many schools incorporate these topics and “good” decision making into health classes.

Most recently, Lickona and Davidson (2005), who examined adolescent character, are both founding members of the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility) at the State University of New York at Cortland. These researchers visited 24 high schools, large and small, public and private, secular and religious, representing all geographical regions of the country (Lickona & Davidson, 2005, p. xxii). They identified schools that were recognized for character initiatives. Their mixed-methods design included:

Focus groups with stakeholder; classroom observations, typically followed by an interview with the teacher; interviews with principal/head of school and other school leaders; observing, in action, particular school programs identified by a school as its “signature practices;” individual or paired interviews with the two students nominated by the school for our National Students Leaders Panel; and analysis of program materials and archival data (Lickona & Davidson, 2005, p. xxii).

Lickona and Davidson (2005)’s led to the report, *Smart & Good High Schools*. The researchers revealed two major findings: (1) the existence of a national consensus of the need for character education; and (2) *Smart & Good High Schools* teach both performance character (i.e., work ethic, self-discipline) and moral character (i.e., caring, respect, responsibility). Lickona (1991) was the first to talk about the connection between character traits as being performance- or morality-based.

Summary

The integration of multiple approaches to character development allows for the incorporation of both classroom curricula and a school culture. In the United States, both federal and state governments have established the need for character education. Character education also has been molded to include the classroom pedagogy approach and the culture/school approach. Lickona (1991) took an eclectic approach to teaching character education. He concentrated more of his theory on the integration of character into the curriculum and school culture. Teachers use and are part of a system that uses multiple approaches in developing character. A greater understanding of teachers' perceptions of multiple approaches and their roles within that pedagogy is needed.

Summary

From the time of prominent United States figures like President Thomas Jefferson to the current administration of President George W. Bush, Jr., character education has been described and debated. Many have used societal functioning as the rationale for character education. Jefferson agreed with the Greek philosopher Socrates that developing character in people led to a better citizen who contributed more to society. That rationale was reawakened in the latter half of the 20th century with Presidents Reagan (1981–1989) and Bush, Jr. (2001–present). The Supreme Court also credited schools with the responsibility for developing character in students. Lickona established that character education can be used to support the functioning of society and for personal progress.

With the rationale for character education fashioned by politicians, philosophers, and researchers, a brief review of the sanctioned approaches was provided as insight into the ways teachers are being asked to teach character. Classroom pedagogy approaches address curricula and activities that either have the sole objective of teaching character or integrating character into other academic subjects approaches. As the principal investigator of this study described here, no research has yet specifically focused on teachers' perceptions of character education as taught directly or integrated into other content curricula.

The cultural/school approach implies an environmental approach to character education that utilizes teachable moments and the Golden Rule. In the culture/school approach, emphasis is placed on the infusion of values throughout the school day (e.g., hallways, bathrooms, recess, lunch, etc.). What are teachers' perceptions of teaching character in a fashion that allows autonomy in character development? How effective do teachers believe the school culture approach to be?

The study described in this thesis found few qualitative investigations of the assessment element of character education programs. In relation to the evaluation of character education programs, a limited number of studies have investigated the techniques of evaluation. Some character education programs do not have any assessment component. Character Counts! is one of the few programs in which the effectiveness of curriculum and activities was studied (Character Counts!, n.d.).

Several studies (e.g., Character Counts!, n.d.; Clare & Gallimore, 1996; Hays, 1994; Lickona & Davidson, 2005; Narvaez, Gleason, Mitchell, & Bentley, 1999) have been done to help explain and understand individual character education programs and

approaches. Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (1993) shone one of the brightest lights on this topic by categorizing the ways in which morality or character is meant to be developed at school. These researchers also identified the significance of investigating this part of schooling, “when it comes to questions whose answers affect all students, regardless of age or locality, we can think of none more important” than “what kinds of moral influence our schools exert?” (Jackson et al., 1993, p. 294). From there, this researcher would add that teachers are an important piece of character education. An exploration of their perspectives on approaches to developing character in students may shine new light on understanding character education.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to examine teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward character education approaches, and establish, qualitatively, the components identified by teachers as necessary elements in effective character development and character education programs. The methodology description is separated into five parts. They are: (1) population and sample, (2) design of the study, (3) instrumentation, (4) data collection procedures, and (5) data analysis. Overall the methodology section describes the participants, settings, and conduct of the study.

Population and Sample

Participants and number of participants were based on a grounded theory tradition defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as a theory generated as, “an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, a theory that explains some action, interaction, or process” (pp. 23–24). According to Creswell (1998), grounded theory, the research tradition taken in this study, is best reached with interviews of 20–30 people. Theoretical sampling was used to identify participants. The final sample was composed of 30 teachers who volunteered to be interviewed after being contacted via a mass email that invited them to participate in this study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The teachers were all Pennsylvania-certified teachers from 6 school districts who teach in public schools. There were: 10 high school teachers, 5 middle school teachers, 12 elementary school teachers, and 3 teachers who taught at alternative schools with students in the 7th–12th grade. The

experience of teachers ranged from 1 year to 34 years as educators. There were: 10 teachers with 4 years or less of experience, 11 teachers with 5 to 10 years of experience, and 9 teachers with more than 10 years as a teacher. Most of the districts in which the teachers worked gave them a great deal of autonomy; the teachers were free to create their own curricula as long as they addressed state standards.

Design of the Study

Using a grounded theory approach, this research attempted to initiate and generate new theory on beliefs and attitudes toward teaching character education in schools. Grounded theory, as a qualitative approach, was used to establish a theoretical framework that explores teachers' perceptions of attitudes and beliefs toward character development (Mertens, 2005).

This study was done in four steps. In the first step, the literature review and research questions were used to develop an interview protocol. The second step consisted of finding participants to participate in the research. Administration of the interviews followed.

The third step, data analysis of the qualitative data, involved transcribing and coding the information gathered during the interviews. Coding was based on interview question grouping, open coding, and groupings that naturally occurred during the research process. Once open coding was established, axial and selective coding were used to develop a, "discursive set of theoretical propositions" (Creswell, 1998, p. 150).

The final step in the design was the interpretation of the qualitative method to create a narrative on the results. The data from multiple interviews were merged into a

single interpretation for the purpose of data analysis. Additionally, other findings from the data analysis provided guidance for future research on character development.

Instrumentation

In the instrumentation section, two areas related to the data collection tools are explained. The areas are: (1) development of the tools and (2) the verification of the tools. These are discussed below.

Development of the Tools

The interview protocol was created to understand the perceived level to which a school incorporated character development. The protocol was based on multiple theories and the researcher's prior pilot study of how character education had been developed in three different types of schools (Meidl, 2006). The interview questions were designed to be deductive and were open-ended, addressed issues, and anticipated approaches addressed in the literature review. Through interviews with teachers, some overall statements were elicited to explain teachers' perspectives on approaches to teaching character education. The interviews with 30 teachers directly involved with teaching character to students provided data used to establish a theory about teachers' perceptions of what should be involved in the education process to develop character.

Verification of the Data Collection

To address reliability and objectivity, questions were created to address the spectrum of approaches to character education and are meant to provide one lens through

which to look at character education. Verification of the instrument used to gather data for this study established its trustworthiness through a number of means (Creswell, 1998, pp. 193–217). First, researcher “bias” was minimized by developing an interview protocol and criteria that did not emphasize one approach to character education over others. Committee input was vital in countering researcher “bias.” Also, researcher “reactivity” was checked by having a protocol for the interview questions (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108).

Data Collection Procedures

In this research, data were collected from participants through interviews. Data collection procedures consisted of three parts. First, schools were chosen based on proximity from the researcher and with some random picking of schools from several school districts. Secondly, all the teachers from chosen schools were sent a mass email inviting participants to email back the researcher if they were interested in being interviewed. About three hundred teachers were contacted by email asking for volunteers to be interviewed and thirty participants responded. (See Appendix B for an explanation of the purpose of the study and the requirements of the participants.) And thirdly, interviews were administered after the participants agreed to participate. (See Appendix A for a copy of the interview questions.) The participants were told that identifying data would be kept confidential, as described in the Internal Review Board-approved consent form provided to each participant.

Cover letters and informed consent forms were used to explain the purpose of the study and explain what participation would mean. The participants kept a copy of the

cover letter and consent form, which provided details for contacting the researcher in case of questions or concerns.

Data Analysis

In this study, data gathered from interviews were qualitative. Data analysis involved transcribing and coding the information gathered during the interview. Based on interview question groupings and open coding, information was organized for further coding. Coding began on a microanalysis level and progressed to general analyses. Techniques for “probing data” included the, “use of questioning, making comparisons, various meanings of words, drawing upon personal experience, waving the red flag, looking at language (in vivo), looking for words indicating time, thinking in terms of metaphors and similes, and looking for the negative case” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 68–84). Corbin and Strauss continued by saying, “Analytic tools are heuristic devices that promote interaction between the analyst and the data, and that assist the analyst to understand possible meaning” (2008, p. 85). Axial coding was used to establish the interconnectedness of the open coding; selective coding merged all previous coding to develop a “discursive set of theoretical propositions” (Creswell, 1998, p. 150).

Qualitative Validity

In the text *Basics of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.) by Corbin and Strauss (2008), Corbin explained that “the term ‘credibility’ indicates that findings are trustworthy and believable in that they reflect participants’, researchers’, and readers’ experiences with a phenomenon but at the same time the explanation is only one of many possible

‘plausible’ interpretations possible from data” (p. 302). Several other items were implemented to safeguard findings and ensure that they were trustworthy. In line with Corbin and Strauss (2008), “sensitivity” was emphasized. Also, as Corbin and Strauss described, the idea of “feeling right” was emphasized, where a researcher is, “immersed in the data” for a long enough period that he or she can describe the ideas, “participants are trying to convey through word and action and emotions” (2008, p. 45). Selective coding uncovers the propositions of the study, which elaborate on the meaning of the relationships within the axial coding, establishing a theory (Creswell, 1998, p. 242).

Other procedures used to establish trustworthiness included concepts of triangulation, peer review and debriefing, rich descriptions, member checking, and memo writing (Glesne, 2006). Triangulation, described by Glesne (2006) as, “the use of multiple data-collection methods,” occurred through several sources of data: digital recordings, researcher notes during the interview, and some materials provided by participants (p. 36). Findings were discussed and defended with colleagues, using peer review and debriefing (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). An attempt was made to provide rich descriptions of themes through “in vivo” (Creswell, 1998, pp. 203, 241). Member checking, defined by Creswell (1998) as, “the researcher solicits informants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations,” was another method of verification. Memo writing molded thoughts about propositions as they arose throughout data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1998, p. 241).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to: (1) examine beliefs and attitudes of teachers toward approaches to character education, and (2) establish, qualitatively, the components identified by teachers as necessary elements in effective character development and character education programs. The results are based on responses from the interviews with 30 teachers. Data analysis included the, “use of questioning, making comparisons, various meanings of words, drawing upon personal experience, waving the red flag, looking at language (in vivo), looking for words indicating time, thinking in terms of metaphors and similes, and looking for the negative case” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 68-84).

At the beginning of the interviews, the process was viewed by this researcher to be a superficial question-and-answer session. This researcher found himself wanting to really agree or confirm those comments made by teachers that were connected to his experiences and thoughts. At those times this investigator had to remember that he was the researcher and could not, should not, intentionally or unintentionally bias participants. Conversations before and after the interview helped the researcher to realize the complexity of this issue. People would say things or remind themselves of activities or routines related to character development later. Character education and development are not clearly assigned to curriculum, instruction, or assessment.

In analyzing participants’ perceptions the researcher identified seven themes: terminology of character, as the law, roles, coordination, simplicity of implementation,

authenticity, and subcultures. Terminology exposes many of the variations in thoughts about character and its development. The laws and roles (teachers, schools, and parents) may be examined to see whether character education should be part of public education and the different ways in which it has been implemented. Coordination, simplicity of implementation, and authenticity themes were used to describe attitudes and beliefs about how character is developed in schools. The section called subcultures, students and teachers at high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools, describes some differences in teacher attitudes about and perceptions of the influence of character education on students. Participant perceptions are interjected throughout this chapter to share how and what these educators perceive and/or believe character and character education means to them.

Terminology of Character

In defining character, most teachers referred to it positively, although several teachers mentioned character traits that were the opposite of positive ones or as negative traits (e.g., opposite of kind is cruel). Difficulty in defining character occurred almost immediately when one teacher said:

I'm not sure I know, what is meant here by character traits. Do you mean behavior traits? How the kids act? When they're in a class, when there are out in life? By the end of the day are they upstanding citizens, moral, better people, but are individuals? Are they going to be, is character something they need to function in society? I'm not sure exactly what, I don't know what this means character traits.

Three frameworks emerged during discussions about character-related terminology: classification of behavior or behavior as concepts, character conceptualized as a verb, and character conceptualized as a noun. These three ideas are explained below.

Classification of Behavior or Behavior as Concepts

Difficulties in teaching and implementing character education begin with defining character. One teacher started by describing character in this way, “I like to give examples if that is okay, honesty, trustworthy, doing a personal best, having empathy, those types of things, having a sense of humor.” Do we start with behaviors and attempt to classify them? Are decisions about right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, precursors to social functioning that become themes in these concepts in order to achieve a better understanding of the thousands of behaviors that can be discussed with a few ideas? Do teachers who teach character do so through teachable moments or as concepts taught as lessons with a “common language” that can be applied as behaviors and interactions?

Character can be defined as both a noun and a verb. The noun form leads to arguments among parents, teachers, and administrators about the meaning of different character traits such as honesty and which ones are the most important. As one teacher suggested, students are also left wondering what these abstract ideas are and teachers wonder how they are going to get their students to understand the abstract concepts. Character education that explores actions leads to the verb form of character, which consists of multiple behaviors that might all be examples of the character trait depending on your own personal values.

Character Conceptualized as a Verb

Character education was often described in verb form. Participants used these verb phrases: “How you deal with other people,” “how you interact,” “ways you behave, ways you handle certain situations,” “way of thinking, way of behaving.” One participant summed up this idea best: “Character is what you do, when no one’s looking. No one is going to give you a gold star or a reward for returning that purse. Are you going to still do it?” There is strong emphasis on behavior. Behavior is the most tangible way to describe positive or negative character traits. Formal assessment of positive character traits was based primarily on behaviors. Part of using behavior to describe character is the thought that teachers, parents, and/or society “can change aspects of a child's character easier than basic personality.”

The verb form of character is also safer for teachers in the sense of not overstepping their role. Several high school teachers used verbs such as “scrutinized” and “explored” with regard to teaching character within topics such as “consumerism” or novels. Teachers also feel comfortable using “narrative comments” based on behaviors to evaluate how the goal/success-based character traits of their students, “speaks well in class, reflects well with others, shares feelings, and thoughts.” One teacher said, “Behaviors, you can evaluate behaviors.” The problem with character as a verb is, “Multiple behaviors based in pluralism of personal values which are not always consistent.”

Character Conceptualized as a Noun

Describing character in the noun form becomes more difficult to explain, as one participant defined character: “Words that describe positive attributes of a person,” “...a

functioning member of society.” Character traits are, “. . .abstract; honesty, you know is not a thing that you can see” and teachers mentioned, “It is easier to give you an example rather than define character traits difficult.” Some of the examples of character and character traits used by participants included: “respect, honesty, trustworthy, doing a personal best, empathy, cooperation, fair, kind, responsibility, persistence, anti-bullying, values, kindness, attitudes behind our actions.”

The abstractness of character terms leads to a lack of lessons or programs meant to teach about the character traits, especially at the high school level. Several teachers responded that character traits were evaluated based on personal values. A few of the teachers commented that teaching character in schools leads to friction between personal values and community values, which are contestable based on who you talk to in the community. Even if there is a consensus on how to define positive character, disagreement about how to develop those traits would occur. Implementation is as great a problem as definition.

Implementation of Character Education

Within the noun form, a major issue emerges—agreement on what character traits teachers, schools, parents, and society want to instill in students/children. This issue leads to two additional concerns within identifying the character traits to teach: (1) should schools be responsible for the explicit teaching of them, and if yes, how do you teach those abstract concepts, and (2) should schools evaluate those concepts and how should they do so?

This comment from one participant states the problem best:

Our society has not agreed on what character goals are the ones, we give lip service to things like integrity and honesty. But then we elect political leaders who are dishonest and have no integrity. So what does that tell us, our celebrities are dishonest and have little integrity. How are we going to teach what society hasn't decided, it is very nebulous and ambiguous about the whole thing. So how are we going to teach it?

Another participant really brought out the complexity of the problem by saying that schools do “not have a clear definition”, and continued, “We started this conversation off by not knowing what character is—what is it?” Later, the same teacher questions, “Whose character are they supposed to have, who says we all agree on what character is,” “Whose character education, are we building, whose character are we assessing?”

In regard to character education, a teacher pointed out that there are a lot of “connotations.” Some of those “connotations” create wariness of where character traits are coming from. As a teacher said: “I try to stay away from the word values, and religious words” and continues to say that parts of character education “remind me of the religious right”, especially with definitions that are, “morally defined, and could be religiously defined.”

Although one participant was adamant that, “before I were to teach them I would want to know what they were, how we decided they were the positive ones that we were going to teach,” in a different context he said:

Character is very important in dealing with reading, and fiction and even nonfiction. And character is the sum total of what people say, what they do, and how we react to what they say and what they do. I guess that's what it means here,

the ability for students to know what they should say, and what they should do in order to be able to function successfully.

Just the discussion of whether character should be taught in schools can make a difference in a teacher's perception of character education. In the context of subject content, teachers are all very comfortable in discussing character even though they admit it's subjective.

The lack of consensus in defining character and how to teach character leads to concern about how to assess character education. At best, some suggestions are to "keep track of incidences of criminal data," "how many times did the cops come," and, "how many students were arrested on school premises for fistfights?" A further problem in dealing with the evaluation of character is the "plurality in making good and bad choices." Defining character can involve evaluating character traits based on personal values; some teachers are extremely hesitant to do that. Instrumentation for assessing character is also of concern, as a participant expressed, "I haven't seen the instrument that's not subjective because it's such a subjective issue" and, "Your question assumes that assessment is always legitimate and accurate-there are things in this life, just like, there are lots of things in this life that are intangible."

As the Law

The following quote encapsulates the issue of legislating character or character education within schools:

You're trying to take something as complicated as anything at all could ever be and simplify it. And it just doesn't work. One could have this character discussion in class and ask if it made any difference whatsoever. And that's not clear either.

Exploring character as the law incorporates two parts: (1) what is the purpose of character education and whose agenda or values does it reflect, and (2) social control.

The Purpose and Agenda of Character Education

Legislation of social issues, as described by one teacher, is, “reactionary behavior to tragedy” describing, “fear is a major motivator.” Other participants noted that, “right after Columbine, we saw a need, the state saw a need, the country saw a need. Money became available, so that came together quite nicely.” Legislation seems to be a quick-fix to problems and leads to programs that are wrapped in compact packaging, also called, “canned programs.” Many teachers mentioned, “Legislating it [character education] is very ineffective.”

Teachers also mentioned that other educational legislation has made teaching character even more difficult:

With PSSAs [Pennsylvania System of School Assessment] and things like that in high-stakes testing and what they're doing to us, I think character Ed is one of the first things getting cut. He did at the beginning of school. You get everybody on the same page, and then God help them the rest the time. If there are in the upper grades, because I am sorry, we don't have time. We had to get ready for these tests.

In adding educational reforms as implemented through legislation, the context of developing character in students was compared to, “15 years ago maybe and we had something called outcomes-based education that floundered on the rock of teaching tolerance.” Continuing teachers described how legislation of one kind counteracts other legislation, “just PSSA’s scores, this stuff [character education] is all going to the

wayside. They don't have character on the test and so these kids are getting the impression that it's not important" and, "Teachers are very concerned with testing, raising our state scores. We have the government breathing down our neck with 'No Child Left Behind.' Testing is more of a priority (than character education)."

The importance of legislation in academics is inferred as more important than that for character: as noted, there's, "no room for that in the schedule, need to make proficient and meet yearly progress." A veteran teacher professed her feeling: "Not a curriculum set by a school district or the government," and, "I'm against someone telling me to do this." Teachers disagreed with using character education and schools as social control at a political level, but not in the context of classroom management.

Social Control

A number of teachers expressed the belief that character education was used, as noted by Ross (1896), in the interest of social control and behavioral expectations in school. When legislators pass laws on character, their intention is usually to create good citizens and decrease social issues, crime, unemployment, etc. Legislation leads to programs that make people feel like they are:

...doing things about tough complicated problems. That makes it easy, if you have a program you're trying to do something. It feels better to do something than nothing, and the sad thing is, you can end up with a program like D.A.R.E. [Drug Abuse Resistance Education] that has taken thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars away from our schools, and we don't even fund all the textbooks. And the program doesn't work, and we keep on doing it, because it's better to do something than nothing.

Character education is used to help students understand social norms, but in terms of, “won’t be tolerated.”

Included in the idea of minimal expectations of behavior is that, “Physical harassment will not ever be tolerated. Touching other people is not tolerated. Demeaning is not tolerated.” At the same time special education legislation and litigation have made school districts, “afraid of going there, afraid to cross, that border, the boundary with families.” One participant said districts, “financially can’t afford it” because character education “costs money.” Teachers in this study expressed the idea that communities expect schools to, “fix [social issues], having something happen without the parents having to do anything, without making any major changes to society, and you also want to have it free.”

In relation to using character education, thoughts went back again to teachers being, “very uncomfortable with someone else's agenda, and rightfully so.” As mentioned in the introduction, social control theory from the turn of the 20th century connects similarly to today’s character education. People want schools to create, “good citizens” and talk about, “good and bad character”, but there is, “plurality in making good and bad choices.”

Character education is linked with classroom management as a way to, “avoid chaos and so we teach them to raise their hand.” Many teachers talked about using, “policies,” “rules,” “guidelines,” and “handbooks” to help students understand the kinds of behavior that are expected of them. The teachers or administrators read and discuss the handbook with the freshmen in one high school.

After the students have been introduced to the policies and rules, other forms of social control were implemented, including: “discipline,” “referrals,” “punishment,” and “consequences.” In connecting this to program evaluation in terms related to the law, several phrases stand out: “intention is to reduce the numbers,” “tracking incidences,” “reported bullying,” and “punishment that didn’t fit the crime.” Teachers and administrators are the ones to “enforce” policies and run programs like the “motivational resource center a.k.a. detention,” because the students were, “not acting the way-want them to act” and needed to be, “held accountable for their actions.” A significant point was made by one teacher: “fact that you don’t have robots teaching, you have human beings teaching.” Teachers can, “make an assessment of every child’s needs. And when necessary make the exception” for school rules and policies.

One point made by many teachers was that they, “see a lot of unfairness in punishments” and supported by, “the rules aren’t fair for everybody.” Also, parallel terms were stated in terms of dealing with unwanted behavior and being proactive with “conflict resolution,” “peer mediation,” “positive reinforcement,” and “positive and negative referrals.” A middle school teacher wanted students to think of rules as not being about control: “I didn’t want them to get into not doing something because that’s the rule; I wanted them to understand that there’s a reason for that rule.”

Legislating character education leads to an approach that, “instead of being proactive, it’s reactive.” Socially, the idea becomes that communities “have a problem with this [whatever the social issue], so here’s a program.” In one scenario, districts say let’s, “buy a program and check it off, some administrative office somewhere and they say we’ve done this; we’re covered. We don’t have a liability any more, whether it

actually makes a difference nobody even wants to know.” Districts end up in this position—as teachers stated, “Another thing that doesn’t exactly work is assemblies; we show expensive movies with three screens at once, with big national outfits that come around” with a “jazzy, modern approach to character building.”

Teachers’ feelings about the ineffectiveness about canned programs is summed up by saying that legislators, “Try to take a difficult problem and simplify it. It’s just like No Child Left Behind.” The sentiments, “I don’t think that you can legislate it,” are connected with the inability to solve social problems through schools. Quite often canned programs have “no saliency to their [student’s] life.” Canned programs continue to be used to solve social problems unsuccessfully. As a high school science teacher stated, there are, “many reasons why forcing things fail over and over and over.”

A note of contention in regard to the legislation of character education came from teachers—many felt that plenty of entrepreneurs take advantage of the simplification of educational issues. Committees decide “how you implement it,” but also school districts buy into, “programs brought on by outside experts.” Unfortunately, the same teacher discussed his feelings about experts and canned programs: “I’m a little cynical, but I find it a bit exploitive.” He continued by saying that canned programs are, “another way to get money out of the calf.”

Roles

Teachers reflected a consortium of thoughts about different roles played by teachers, principals, and parents in character education. Some teachers believed that various people should take ownership of a role in developing character in students and children. These different roles are discussed from teachers’ perspectives in the following

paragraphs as: individual role and ownership, professional role, collective role, and parental role.

Individual Role and Ownership

Individual ideas about roles in developing character cross over into philosophies about living and community as an, “individual person’s investment regardless.” Some define their perspective on character education in terms of democracy and citizenship—“done this [incorporated the teaching of positive character traits] even if it was not part of my classroom book collection because I understand what it means to live in a democratic society and understand how to exist with other people.” One participant noted that character development lies within a person’s social norms—“probably middle class expectations. Most of us [teachers] come from middle-class backgrounds and mirror those characteristics.” A great deal of personal ownership in developing character is based on, “personal development,” “personal religion,” and, “development as a person—the ability to grow and mature, see things differently.”

Many teachers expressed feeling very “passionate” about character education. It’s something they would do no matter what their job—teaching character is one of the things that drew them to teaching. Teaching character is, “inherent to teach students to act one way, be one way” and, “provide the structure and guidance to help students that struggle the most with behavior.” But participants also said that “role is different for each person.” In contrast, another teacher argued that character and character education is a “subjective issue.” His major point was that, “How are we going to teach what society hasn’t decided, it is very nebulous and ambiguous about the whole thing.” More so, “a lot of it gets placed on us and I sort of resent that I guess.”

There were two opposite perspectives on the role schools play in character education as demonstrated by the following statements that character has, “always been responsible for developing certain traits in the school room” and, “children need direct instruction on how to be a good friend, how to eat lunch appropriately,” versus, “traditionally [teaching character was] not the role that we find in high school.” Character development is, “done all the time although not structured.” Also, “It is part of the high school experience, but I don’t know if we have any control over.”

Certain teachers and principals make developing character a personal goal and take great pains to have positive relationships and interactions with students. One participant shared, “Our principal knows the name of every student in the school.” All of the teachers stressed that creating personal connections is important—“sees them in the hall and asks how is this person or that person,” and, “personalizes everything” by “connecting the material with something in their life.” Another teacher said, through “a student questionnaire” she, “knew kids families lives frontwards, backwards, upside down.” Other people do not want that level of involvement because they are interested in teaching the subjects they were hired to teach, according to several participants.

Teaching character is in, “the hands of the individual teacher.” Teachers’ attitudes towards children can make a difference. One teacher lets his students know: “I love a good challenge” and, “you have to be light hearted and some teachers don’t have that.”

Many teachers at the high school level were more comfortable teaching character integrated into the context of their subject. Within the “English curriculum, we talk about consumerism” and use literature to, “explore issues.” An English teacher stated:

I'm an English teacher so we are constantly looking at this kind of stuff, character. And so I don't know if it is developed, but it is certainly scrutinized in the English classroom, but we are constantly making judgments on the way people act. We're reading a Brave New World byright now. And so we are constantly asking ourselves "well, is the way we act okay?" So as I said in an English classroom I don't think it is developed as much as it is discussed, it is scrutinized ,it certainly is something we talk about an awful lot. So at the end of the day I hope they make an informed judgment about the way that they should act.

A middle school social studies teacher stressed, "I challenge their [the students] character safely, which is why this school district has the habit of restricting certain books. I ignore that as a teacher, I assume they hired me because I can use my best judgment to explore character in a safe environment." A fine line exists between incorporating elements of character evaluation; however, "Too much of that is distracting from the English curriculum."

Professional Role

Teachers' beliefs vary about teaching character as a part of a professional role. Some teachers described character education as a part of schools and learning that comes as part of the educational atmosphere. Character education is a "byproduct of the educational process." The second belief expressed by participants was that teaching positive character formally and explicitly was not part of their professional role.

The teacher is a role model according to all participants. A teacher expressed, "The school district has reasonable expectation that teachers will be fair." Another point

made was that students “view us as a positive role model, a teacher role model, or a parent role model.” Similar to that thought is, “I don’t think there’s any way not to implement, it’s going to happen whether you’re trying to or not to teach those things.”

One teacher described her perception of her role as a teacher: “I never thought about it as some thing with a specific set of things that you do. It’s just a way of being as a teacher.” Continuing, other teachers described character education as, “how you teach,” “part of the profession,” and, “inherent in the profession.” On the extreme end, one veteran teacher stated, “I would probably quit before I would back off because that’s the part I enjoyed.” Many teachers interviewed felt character education was as important, if not more important, than any single subject or academic endeavor.

But other teachers gave a different perspective of the professional role of teaching character: “I have some colleagues that are vehemently opposed [to teaching character], that is not why they are in education. That’s where they draw the line.” To encapsulate the issue, a middle school teacher describes teachers’ philosophies as:

Sixth grade [teachers] are primary and seventh and eighth grade [teachers] are secondary. Secondary teachers became secondary teachers because they loved their subject area and they liked teaching. Very rarely is it the other way around, but they loved teaching and they liked their subject area. Usually, it’s they loved their subject area and they liked teaching. So they think they went into secondary teaching to teach their subject area, everything else seems beyond their scope and a lot of their minds. Not all of their minds, but in a lot of the minds. You have elementary school teachers who think we are shaping these little kids.

Grade levels seem to determine to a certain degree teachers' attitude toward formal versus informal and explicit versus implicit teaching of character, but academic content also plays a role in how teachers feel about character education.

It was typically elementary teachers who said, "who do you have more contact with during the developmental portion of your life," "teachers access to kids and spend so much time with kids," and, "yes, its part of our obligation." How far should school travel cover the gray area where the comment was made, "[I] don't think we're the sole people responsible" and, "I hope we instill some sort of responsibility, some sort of positive modeling, some positive norms that they will carry on."

Many participants said, "Teachers have a lot on their plate. They have to make No Child Left Behind, pass PSSAs. They are over burdened, their plate is too full." One teacher stated, "Every time we turn around there are more demands to perform better, more tests on them and then throw in character education." Additionally, during school there are, "not enough hours to promote manners, right things to do. If they come to school with manners, knowing the right thing, we might be able to teach the curriculum and character traits." In a summary of professional responsibility for developing character, many teachers expressed irritation and frustration with mounting stress from tests and the continual stacking of new curricular and district initiatives onto their current responsibilities.

Collective Role

The collective role of people who interact with children to help instill character is best described here:

Everybody who comes in contact with an uninformed youth, a malleable youth, even a 16 or 17-year-old, these people, whose chemicals are raging, these people who have less control of themselves. All of us who come in contact with children are responsible to assist in this effort to make them the best people they can be.

The collective role involves how teachers believed parents, communities, school administrators and faculty all need to participate in teaching character from a very young age and thereon through the years. Several teachers stated that character should be: “taught from when children are very little at home by their parents and then reinforced at school.” Reiterating similar sentiments another teacher described:

It should actually be developed in three and four-year-olds from their home. And unfortunately it's the same story, it gets dumped on the schools. You know, teach my child some character. But on the other hand, a persons character doesn't really come out until they are in society or in a small group or in a large group. So it would probably start in kindergarten, learning to say please and thank you.

And at school, “commitments from all three, teachers, administrators, and parents” are needed to develop character.” Collectively, teachers said that character will be developed, “formally and informally; formally the decision to put the time and effort into doing it, informally the decision to do it or not.”

A few cautions were noted when talking about responsibility for developing character. A middle school teacher noted, “the word responsible kind of sticks out, a red flag there. The role [of teachers] and no one else's and that's not the case.” Securing the idea of teachers' role in teaching character instruction, a high school teacher cautioned

that at, “a certain point at which the school should not try to play parent, there is a line. Schools and teachers should not go overboard in trying to develop traits.”

Parental Role

Many of the teachers expressed a desire to have parents take an increasing role in developing their children’s character. Several teachers felt that they have been given responsibilities that should be handled by parents. One teacher stated, “We had to each week on a weekly calendar, we have to update our grades. All these things. Where is the parent’s responsibility? Where do the parents come in?” This idea that, “parents don’t take part in their (the kids) growth as a human beings” and so character development is, “dumped on schools.” Although most teachers stated that character development “primarily falls on early development with parents” and is, “developed in three and four year olds from their home,” the consensus was that character was, “not being taught at home.” One teacher mentioned:

It has to start at home. It has to. You can have consistency at school, and you can have teachers that require certain standards. And if it's not reinforced at home, as soon as they walk out the classroom door. It doesn't transfer. It may for one or two, it may for a few that see you as a role model. But if you don't have parents at home saying honesty is important and homework and strong work ethic are important, it doesn't matter. They have to be taught from when the kids are very, very little at home by their parents and then reinforced at school. Not the other way around.

In the big picture, some teachers felt that they, “should not be responsible because they already had enough to teach. They had to teach students to read, write, think, do math, geography.”

Coordination

Cultures rely on a certain coordination of goals, ideas, and procedures or routines. School districts and administrators attempt to align staff on curricular matters and on school policy and discipline. In the context of curriculum and culture, several concepts are important in terms of unifying students, faculty, and administration: creating a culture, team approach, and consistency.

Creating a Culture

Two ideas contribute to the coordination of culture: “understanding as a staff what your goals and expectations” are, and teacher and student acceptance of the goals and approach to those goals. Schools and teachers are both invested in children and the community. Teachers quite often believe they, “personally work really hard to have a school that's reflective of the community.”

Almost all of the teacher participants mentioned that, “formally, a decision whether you’re going to put the time and effort into doing it” has to be made. Many different approaches to developing character in school intend to create a culture by, “instilling [character education] in different ways.” Examples of those ways include: “assemblies, student panels, good sportsmanship, surveys, conflict resolution and peer mediation, student of month, cooperative group work in class, understanding emotional quotient (EQ), community service, signing a contract, talks about the handbook, rulebooks, block scheduling.” These are all activities that schools have designed to

develop character within the student body. Students need to accept goals, but the problem lies here: “schools do not exactly know what they’re trying to develop in terms of character traits” and, “can’t implement it until you know what you want.” Also mentioned several times was the idea that, “smaller schools, smaller numbers of kids in a place” made coordination and expression of expectations easier.

Coordination of the staff begins with administrators’ “interview question” on the teacher’s role as a person and professional in developing character. Are the goals and expectations expressed? Were the teachers involved in making the decision about how to develop character? A common phrase used by many participants about faculty and staff coordination was, “on the same page,” is it a “group effort,” and do they feel character development, “is a priority.”

Coordination of curriculum and character education can be clearly seen in report cards. Teachers report the “general behavior of the students” based on comments about behaviors such as, “demonstrated good character,” “organized,” and, “does well.”

Team Approach

The concept of a “team of teachers that have the same expectations and standard of expectations” allows the teachers to be in touch with their students, “two hundred minutes, every single day, we are communicating and can see change from the beginning to the end.” To create a useful curriculum, connectedness and communication are important in the revising process, “we rewrite, get feedback from teachers.” Character education is most successful, according to teachers, when it is communicated and understood as, “A clearly articulated set of goals for it [character education]. What do we want?” Then, training is provided so that teachers are able to achieve those goals.

Having a team implies several ideas: working together and understanding what the group is trying to do. A high school teacher said:

You need a group of people who think it's important enough to do it. I think you need administration who think it's important enough to do it and to get together to figure out a way to make it work because that's what we don't have. And you need everybody to be on the same page, it can't be some teachers saying that this is really important and other teachers not worrying about it so much. And it has to start at the top because if you don't have to support then where is it going to go?

The teachers who were part of teams described several important ideas that stemmed from being part of a group: feeling connected and communicating, having teacher acceptance of a program, and using a common language to convey a message. These three notions are explained below.

Feeling Connected and Communication

A team or association through teaching at a certain grade level can be used to create a culture of positive interaction. This is important because it enables teachers to, "feel more comfortable" expressing their opinions and feelings, leading them to be honest and open. When "creating good citizens," teachers said having teachers support the team developed a culture in which students know they will be, "confronted."

Leaders also develop a sense of connectedness by stressing character development, "the principal preaches it religiously, devoted dollars." One teacher explained:

You need a group of people who think it's important enough to do it. I think you need administration who think it's important enough to do it and to get together to

figure out a way to make it work because that's what we don't have. And you need everybody to be on the same page, it can't be some teachers saying that this is really important and other teachers not worrying about it so much. And it has to start at the top because if you don't have to support then where is it going to go? Another teacher said that her principal, "knows every student." A "sense of community and family" that is embedded into the school, "gets the ball rolling" in regards to developing a culture of character. During further discussion a participant said, "school climate [was] built" to establish a "positive atmosphere" and is reflected in, "happy students. You see their work in the hallways, see teachers interact with them in a way. They're smiling."

Teacher Acceptance

For a character education program to have an impact on the school culture, the staff as a whole needs to unify and agree to approach character education in the way they have chosen. Teachers described the frustration of teaching character and following through on discipline and consequences and not seeing other teachers do the same. An elementary teacher said, "You can do everything possible in 3rd grade, and in 4th grade if they don't care about that" [character education], then other teachers feel like, "why did I work so hard?" If, "staff is resistant to participating, it wouldn't have gotten very far," said another teacher.

Coordination can lead to programs that are "scripted" or seem unauthentic. Scripted curricula are often based on discourse that children would have difficulty connecting with, according to the teachers. Having administrators or districts provide

scripted or canned curriculum and asking teachers to, “teach them what they’re told” led teachers to “hate it [scripted curriculum].”

Common Language

Use of a common language facilitates better understanding of the character traits to be taught and potential descriptions of interactions among peers. Use of language to change the dynamics of interaction is one of the main ways to deal with bullying. A middle school teacher said:

The vocabulary thing becomes much more important than I would have ever imagined. And I probably would not have been a big proponent of pushing on this vocabulary when we started the first write these lessons. But I feel as though having a common vocabulary really does help begin to create a culture. And so I say now that we have these bully, victim, ally, those words really allow the students to be able to make some judgments about what the culture is and then began to request changes.

All across education, a greater understanding of terms such as “bully, a bystander, an ally” are used in order to increase, “awareness” and empower students to deal with situations.

Elementary school teachers also use specific language, but that vocabulary is determined by the individual teacher. One elementary school teacher described using a “Wall of Respect” to develop an understanding of that word’s meaning. He then discusses with his students what respect “looks like” and role-plays some possible situations related to respect.

Consistency

Consistency becomes a concern with teachers, particularly in regard to discipline and having teachers follow through on school policy. Teachers want and expect, “consistency with the discipline policy”, saying:

That’s (discipline or behavior) the type of thing teachers get pumped up on. We have eligibility issues at this school. We have eligibility, how is it that Ted wrestled at state last month when they weren’t eligible. Does it only apply to some kids?

To have students really internalize character education, they need to, “hear from sources they respect, hear it from sources they don’t respect. They need to hear from everybody” and on a “consistent basis.”

Discipline needs to be, “supported by referral” and used, “explicitly and building wide, in every classroom.” The most significant problem with inconsistency is administration not following its own policies. One of the high school teachers said:

One principal said you have to get over it. I said it’s not your kids getting threatened; it’s not your car getting paint balled. And what did I do, I did what the school asked to do by confiscating the cell phone.

Consistency in the character education curriculum and discipline are essential components of character education, especially in dealing with unacceptable behavior. Desired behavior is encouraged through “reinforcement of good behavior /consequences for negative or bad behaviors.”

Smaller schools allow for, “an all school meeting every Tuesday” or, “end of the day meeting every day,” designed to help faculty at a school for behaviorally challenged

middle school and school students.” Several teachers implied that smaller schools or breaking down into teams facilitated use of a common language, common goals, consistency, feeling connected, and teacher acceptance.

Simplification of Implementation

“Everyone is looking for the easy answer with the canned program.” Do canned programs make implementation of a curriculum easier or more difficult? This question is at the root of the simplification of implementation. Participants expressed varying views on a curriculum meant to be easily implemented because teachers did not have to do any work to implement materials and activities.

Teachers are bombarded with state standards and objectives. As one teacher said, “We have a lot on our plate.” Curricula that can be implemented simply and in an individual manner were important to teachers. From the discussion of the simplification of implementation, two perspectives developed: (1) positives of simplification, and (2) negatives of simplification.

Positives of Simplification

In regard to the implementation, teachers desire curricula to be “practical.” Especially in character education, teachers desire access to a curriculum and instruction that allow them to ask, “What teacher has never done this?” When a character education curriculum is, “taught as lessons and reinforced through situations” and switched so that, “actions and behaviors come up” and are, “addressed as a lesson,” implementation is both simple and seen as effective.

Lessons that can be part of who teachers are as people and how they teach and manage their classrooms are best. Character education taught, “naturally occurs on a day-

to-day basis intertwined with every other subject” and creates a culture that nourishes character development.

The subconscious side of character extends to a “general class atmosphere” in which character is developed in a class or a school. Another context of atmosphere is in those situations in which, “Test scores remain the same; the quality of the work, they [students] take pride in work.” Another take on the subconsciousness of character is that it is, “best developed in students in ways that are kind of subtle and obscure; and also at times, through direct, clear discourse on the subject.” The complexity continues in this statement that character in schools, “isn’t really anything you can put your thumb on, can’t say this is what’s working, this is what’s not working.” Several upper-level teachers believed the character traits of teenagers may be better understood and possibly developed if professional development included some “really good classes about the nature of a teenager.”

Negatives of Simplification

One quote from a high school science teacher puts the negatives of simplification into perspective:

You’re trying to take something as complicated as anything at all could ever be and simplify it. And it just doesn’t work. One could have this character discussion in class and ask if it made any difference whatsoever. And that’s not clear either. Simplifying curriculum into canned programs leads teachers to “see it as kind of standing alone programs. I don’t think they work at all.” Several teachers, “do the lesson” and do “not refer to it at all the rest of the month.” Some of the middle school curricula on bullying included games. One teacher, “seriously doubts that playing team building

games helps build team skills. Students can't see the connection between the game and team building skills.”

The reality of character education programs focusing on awareness in high school can raise student awareness but a “kid being bullied is already painfully aware of it.” Discussion of character development led a high school teacher to describe the complexity of the situation: “a lot of times, the teachers and the parents don't want to see it, the so called good kids in class turn around and blast the special needs kid who walks funny.” Character education programs, “try to take a difficult problem and simplify, just like No Child Left Behind.”

Authenticity and Teachable Moments

Authenticity of character education occurs both formally and informally. Part of authenticity involves how teachers develop some aspects of character development in a manner in which they do not even think through, “activities that model those traits, reinforce good character” and are, “woven into the everyday.” The explicit and formal teaching of character also occurs authentically in teachable moments. Several areas that address issues of authenticity are: lack of authenticity, explicit teaching, evaluation and teachable moments, time, and the metacognitive process.

Lack of Authenticity

Establishing a culture of positive character begins with schools directly and explicitly addressing certain behaviors. Several teachers suggested that the school create a culture by saying, “Harassment is unacceptable and is not done, not tolerated ever.” “Don't coddle it, don't sugarcoat it” is the message to teachers and administrators. Teachers stated, “Honesty with the students at all times” is needed because students,

“sense dishonesty or hypocrisy and you lose credibility very, very quickly. You’re not effective at that point.”

This was a point on which many of the teachers had strong opinions. There weren’t always clear ideas about what works in character development, but the message about what did not work was clear, “I don’t think kids really buy into canned programs, and infomercials, afterschool specials, if you try to tell them how to make good decisions it goes in one ear and out the other.” In discussing a vignette that was sent by a company marketing its character education, a science teacher said:

And my students can’t pick up that that’s what they were supposed to get at all from this. They had nothing to say, but why are we watching a video about rock climbing. I don’t think it’s authentic, the kids see right through it.”

Other items categorized as unauthentic included: “assemblies” with “a three screen movie, jazzy, modern approach,” “vignette,” “media announcements on the screen in the morning,” “assemblies with jazzy movies,” “guest speakers,” and “homeroom rules.” Some high school teachers pointed out that, “kids that I teach are a little bit more, how do I say it, more sophisticated, and they feel like they’re being conned with a canned program.” However, there was a sense that teachers did not feel animosity towards administrations that selected programs that did not work. Some attitudes were there was, “no silver bullet” and districts and administration were, “attacking the issue of character on all fronts.”

The problem with artificially addressing character through programs and activities was that most teachers felt they “lose credibility” and that “throws off the whole school culture of character development.” In regard to the scripted programs, one teacher

believed the script was, “a little out of touch. The writer who wrote the script did not understand the attention span of young children.” Voicing an opinion that was the opposite of that stated the teacher who thought something was better than nothing, another teacher said, “by the time you get to the high school, where there’s a ton of bullying certainly going on.” The teacher continued to suggest:

I have to tell you this my experiences, are they work fairly well at the elementary school, and probably at their best in middle school. But by 10th, 11th grade, and 12th grade, the kids that I teach are a little bit more, how do I say it, more sophisticated, and they feel like they're being conned with a canned program. In fact the whole bullying by the time you get to the high school, where there's a ton of bullying certainly going on. But anti-bullying programs that put up little signs, I think they hurt everyone in the long run, because what they do is. The positive the thing they do is they say this is not acceptable, just like saying racial discrimination or sexual discrimination are not acceptable behaviors. But everybody knows that they are not acceptable does not keep them from happening. And sometimes makes it worse, I think you have to get away from funny little words like bullying. Harassment is unacceptable and is not done, not tolerated ever, and you don't coddle it. You don't sugarcoat it.

By devoting so much time and effort to an issue, schools are seen by some teachers as trivializing issues in a manner that trivializes complex problems with childish gimmicks. According to high school teachers, students at that level are making their own judgments and aren't influenced by propaganda based on a program or some hokey saying.

Explicit Teaching: Content and Events of the Day

Authenticity and explicit teaching of character directly or in a lesson are not exclusive activities. In one middle school, “all learning of an academic nature shuts down and they focus on the character education for half an hour.” The culture of the school creates a sense of authenticity. Some teachers believe so strongly in the lesson about character that they authenticate it. Examples of events that allow for explicit teaching include, “manners” and “skills learned in line with the times of the year.” The teachers, “talk about these things once a week or twice a week no matter what during the morning meeting, every morning.”

Many teachers address character explicitly and authentically through their passion for a subject area. English teachers said that, “literature teaches us about life” through “description, nature, discussion, people, [and] dialogue.” A social studies teacher elaborated on the use of modern media and social issues that are both interesting and contribute to character development, describing “a story about a boy in Cambodia, talking about paying forward, and using YouTube, a video from Nickelback, Sarah McLaughlin discussing how much it costs to make a music video and what they used the money for instead.”

Some other areas that could be considered to involve the explicit teaching of character in authentic ways are: “routines,” “active engagement in lessons,” “health class,” while, “doing research and talking about how to do research; we talk about plagiarism, we’re really talking character development.”

Teachers who have the greatest impact in creating character, according to participants, know how to “relate,” make a “real connection,” create a “personal bond,”

by “establishing a rapport, good relationship with my students.” These bonding words led one teacher to state that the best way to develop positive character is to, “love their students; let kids know they are loved in some kind of corny or superficial way. But hard earned real love takes time to develop, that love fosters imitation.” Student expectations are important. One teacher described:

I like to tell my kids that need to have an attitude of gratitude. That is the explicit teaching of the good life. The good life is reducing consumption, reduced in the impact you have on society. Giving back, do you want to be a taker or a giver? I give my classroom sermons about an attitude of gratitude for a lot of people helped him get to that point in their life. Sympathy is the path to greatness. My approach, does not like I'm on my high horse, you can't behavior and character, without getting a little bit. If there's anything that teenagers have radar for its hypocrisy and insincerity.

Authenticity is not confined to the curriculum or instruction of character, but relates to the individual teachers themselves.

Evaluation and Teachable Moments

Within a teacher's classroom management (i.e., rules, routines, etc.), teaching character is inevitably developed both implicitly and explicitly. Teachable moments are common in the teaching profession where behavior and situations are introduced by “catching them [the students] in the act.” Some of what is, “caught and not taught” is positive behavior and some is negative, according to teachers. Participants stated that students demonstrate their character during, “not directed time” or “non-structured time” such as “recess,” “in the hallways,” “on the bus,” and “in the bathroom,” where students “know they're not

being watched as closely.” “Inappropriate behaviors and bad choices” occur and are addressed on the spot or shortly after making them teachable moments.

Manners are often taught during teachable moments in the classroom, more so at the elementary school level as described in this example: “holding the door for somebody. Are you going to not say anything or are you going to say ‘thank you’?” Teachable moments go hand-in-hand with, “building community every day in the classroom”. As stated by one participant, “more character traits are caught and not taught.” A teacher in his first year of teaching elementary school noted that “80% of my time with teachable moments is on character traits, 20% of the time is on content types of things.”

Teachable moments have an evaluation component embedded within them, according to teachers. Many teachers stated that character is assessed, “informally through observations, anecdotal notes” and by “watching.” Evaluation of a situation or an interaction occurs before a teacher decides it is a teachable moment, but the authenticity of the moment increases because it is based in immediate experience. Participants said that, “You teach them to practice in a controlled setting so that at recess, [and] moments during the day, they use them.” Those “moments might be calling someone a name” and then as a learning experience the class “role plays and talks about it.”

In social settings, people “constantly interact with people”, which makes teachable moments so important.” “Something happens and you try to say it was an appropriate or inappropriate thing.” The following vignette puts learning as part of a social interaction in context:

And she ended up saying I have a right to hate these people if I want to, which was really not a perfect thing to say. And so when my class started there was a huge brouhaha. You're not going to believe what this girl said! And we ended up having a really authentic discussion in all my classes for the next day with kids I know and trust.

Teachable moments are vital tools that enable teachers to personally manage their classes and instill personal and community values into education.

Time

Interconnected with use of teachable moments to create authentic contexts for character development is the issue of time. The teachers interviewed, especially the elementary school teachers who try to teach character education, said that they were having difficulty because of, "things falling to the wayside because of testing," continuing with "pressure is on us." Time becomes an issue, "where do you fit in other things except teachable moments." The time crunch leads to various outcomes:

But as for the actual lesson, that and honestly, we don't have tons of time in the day to do that. These paths lessons have home activities, and this and that, development activities. I have maybe 25 minutes that I can deal with content learning, which is PATHS or social studies or science. At the beginning of the year, it's mostly PATHS, character stuff and friendship stuff. As we go through the year, we have to visit social studies and science. So I try to do PATHS lessons where I can. I'll throw it in between units, but there's no way I make it through both binders. Of the teachers I've talked to, there's a real variation in how much it's implemented. Some people do it quite a bit. Some people do it at the

very beginning of the year and that's it. But I don't know of anybody that I've talked to that has made it through both binders. It's just an amazing amount of lessons.

Standardized testing has caused a “go, go, go” culture for teachers in which “health curriculum, [and] social studies curriculum gets pushed aside.” Some teachers felt they, “miss those opportunities [teachable moments] because of being overworked” and character development “gets put underneath the table.” A great concern of teachers is authenticity as a whole for all subjects because with “PSSAs coming up” and “accountability for high-stakes testing” there is no time for any learning of substance. A veteran teacher stated, “If you have been teaching you can probably find time, but new teachers are overwhelmed.”

Metacognitive Process

The metacognitive process involves thinking through situations and interactions. Teachers, “use the metacognitive process” to create an understanding of interaction and personal analysis. Teachers cognitively teach character subconsciously and consciously, and through the use of vocabulary.

The first part of the metacognitive process is to look at how the subconscious is involved with the development of character. Many teachers considered themselves to be “role modeling.” All of the participants believed students view teachers’ actions to “see how they’re interacting,” how they “solve problems,” and “make decisions.” An elementary school teacher decided to exert “more effort this year, not really thinking it, teaching character traits and what that means.” Character is taught by teachers. One participant said that development, “happens without them knowing it, subconsciously and

internalizing it, and then reacting.” The downside of the subconscious teaching of character is it’s a “hit or miss thing unfortunately.”

Methods that help children grow include helping them “think out loud,” use of “I” messages,” and “the use of questioning.” Some examples of questions teachers used during teachable moments include: “Why do people make decisions? What is my response?” Added into the consciousness of character education is an evaluative piece about teaching students to “constantly ask, ‘How did I make this person feel?’” Teachers also stated that they helped students find “ways to cool off” after realizing they were angry. Essentially, students are taught that they need “time to reflect,” an important element of moral development according to Kohlberg (1986).

The vocabulary of character addresses definitions of concepts such as respect and cooperation. With his students, one participant explored “respect, what does it mean, what does it look like”; another participant said, “What does cooperation mean?” A middle school teacher was forthright in saying that in character lessons, “the objective was to understand the language and speak with the vocabulary. That makes it easier to say, ‘you stop.’ It’s harder to just say stop being mean. It’s easier to say, ‘You are being a bully.’” The purpose behind the language is to “empower” students to interact with other students who might be physically and verbally aggressive, according to the middle school teachers. The students learn about, “Communicating and cooperating and have been practicing it for several years now.” The idea of empowerment of students is essential during unstructured times.

Subcultures: Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

Subcultures are subgroups that arise from a common large group. In schools, the students as a whole are a subgroup and within that subgroup are the “jocks”, as one teacher stated. Subcultures focus on what students and teachers feel is important and worth exploring. Three levels of schooling—elementary, middle, and high schools—are examined in regard to the subcultures of teachers and students. In high school the student subculture is very powerful and based on its own norms.

Elementary Schools

Most elementary school teachers said they were willing to take responsibility for teaching character, “as role models, teacher role models.” Teachers who work with this particular age group tend to accept programs and parents encourage character development in school. Character is taught as part of “early childhood education” and students “learn from each other as well, especially in the primary grades.” Positive reinforcement includes strategies, such as “a reward system for second graders works pretty well. They love that and they love being able to please you.” Considerable time and numerous interactions occur between teachers and students, who spend up to seven hours together a day in the elementary years. The sense that student culture can be influenced by adults is apparent in the younger grades.

Middle School

The focus in most middle schools right now is on “anti-bullying programs”, according to participants. At this level, the student subculture begins to challenge the norms of the adult school culture, but through a “team approach” students can be guided and the subculture can be controlled. Participants stated that most of the programs

concentrate on empowering students and seem to be effective at the middle school level. There are several difficulties, including that, “middle school is tough place to evaluate (character) with all the hormones going on.”

High School

Based on statements from participants who teach at the high school level, the student subculture is stronger than the teacher culture at this level. One teacher explained that as the students get “older, it becomes less cool to be a good person” and as “students get older they begin to question the nature of the beast.” For high school students, “What truly matters is what the other kids are doing. To say that teachers have that much influence is overstating, I don't know that we do.” “It is part of the high school experience, but I don't know if we have any control over it.” Many influences cause students to be, “veering toward the negative more than the teachers” because in “the high school setting, students are influenced by peers’ character and care more about what peers think than the adults around them.” Students are “sophisticated” enough that they “don’t like to feel like they’re being imposed upon” or someone is “infringing on their beliefs.” Older students, according to some teachers, start to establish their own values and are evaluating them during the high school years.

There are complexities within the middle school and high school subcultures. For example, a negative character trait is telling on somebody, whether they’ve done something wrong or not. In some subcultures, the bigger crime is not someone getting hurt; it's not the victimization. The bigger crime is telling authorities about a student who violates a school rule or policy breaks cultural norms at the high school level.

Subculture of Meanness: Media, Technology, and Peer Interaction

Several teachers hinted that the high school subculture essentially equates to “throwing the lambs to the lions.” Teachers are wary about overstepping their bounds and the students can be tough on each other, according to teachers. The social norms of high school students are influenced by media and technology. Peer interaction has always been of interest, with Dewey (1916) giving it a great deal of importance.

Media can have an influence on students, but the character portrayed on television and in video games is less than admirable, according to teachers. Merchandise is sold by, “Selling with sex and violence. The media are falling down on their responsibility. Money talks.” Television shows are “based on how nasty the cast can be to each other.” Culture clash is extended by teachers viewing themselves as in “almost opposition to what they [the students] bring with them. What they’re being told [by the media] is good character on one hand may be the opposite of what we [the schools] expect.” The teacher continued: “within school, we do it in the classroom, but it is, at least in the high school there is enormous amounts of interaction that teachers have no control over.” Many teachers said, “What we’re fighting right now is media, negative character all the time on TV, with parents, with other people.”

Technology has presented new problems for character development: “Cruelty-going on- technology enables it. There is more opportunity with cyber bullying.” Further, “Websites and the whole anonymous thing, over the computer. You can’t hold me accountable, prove it.” “As the anonymity increases, so does the bad behavior.”

Peer interaction is an important part of the high school experience. Connected to the idea of the comprehensive high school is the belief that diverse student learners will interact and thereby learn about people who are different. Unfortunately, that system also has some negative effects. Exclusion is a part of high schools. Where found, “it’s odd man out.” Groups within the high school “stay together by keeping others out.” A teacher stated:

It's sad to say, but look at Columbine took a disaster like that to bring them together. Why does it take something like that to bring them together? And they were letting little things go, these kids were wearing, the athletes had white hats. Why would they let this go? They were excluding certain people. So schools around the country started banning trenchcoats. No, ban the jock hats. You're not seen the problem. There is no excuse for what they did, but it seems they were going out of their way to the different. There seems to be a reason for that. They were looking for an identity. You had to have some as and have-nots. They did not get the attention.

The students on the outside do whatever they can to be left alone. If bullying occurs, the kids who are being bullied do not say anything because they want to be friends with the kids bullying them. Those kids are usually the popular students, the athletes, the so called “good kids.” In a nutshell, “intolerance and discrimination are not acceptable behaviors, everybody knowing that they are not acceptable does not keep them from happening.” “Until any administration realizes that the main culprits are some of our prized athletes, are our top students, the kids that appear to have everything are the worst offenders” and

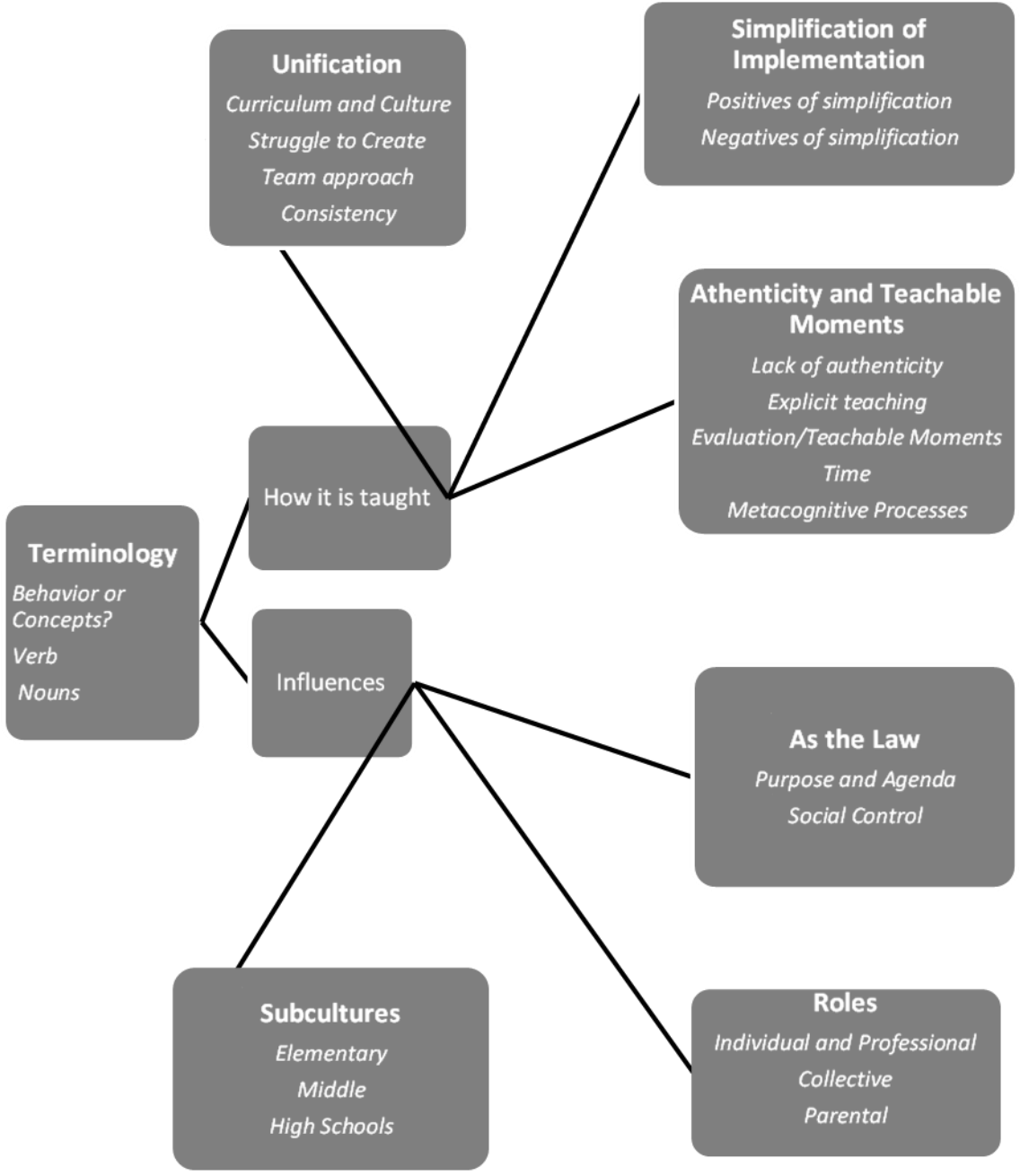
schools themselves perpetuate subcultures by reinforcing different values for different students—in essence reinforcing subcultures.

Schools develop character by having a diverse group of learners and types of learning: “a lot of good things going on in our high school that we did not want to give up to fraction off the students into smaller groups.” The comprehensive value of the larger school is not as personal in interaction, but is valued for the many activities or the variety of interactions. Character is also taught in the comprehensive high school through the “hidden curriculum” where it is “taught within curriculum,” “in novels for English class,” “novels that teach morals, values, etc.”

Summary

The results are organized by: (1) influences “on” or “of” character education, and (2) how character education is taught. Refer to Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Conceptual Framework of Character Education Themes



Terminology relates to character structures influences on character education and its teaching. Character is defined as a behavior and a concept. Influences “on” character education refer to legislation on character education and roles that various adults play in the development of students’ character. The influences “of” character education cite subcultures, especially at the high school, that have their own norms or test the norms established by authority. After the influences “on” and “of” character education were described, how character is taught in school was examined based on the themes of coordination, simplification of implementation, and authenticity and teachable moments. The interrelationships of these themes are explored in the discussion.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

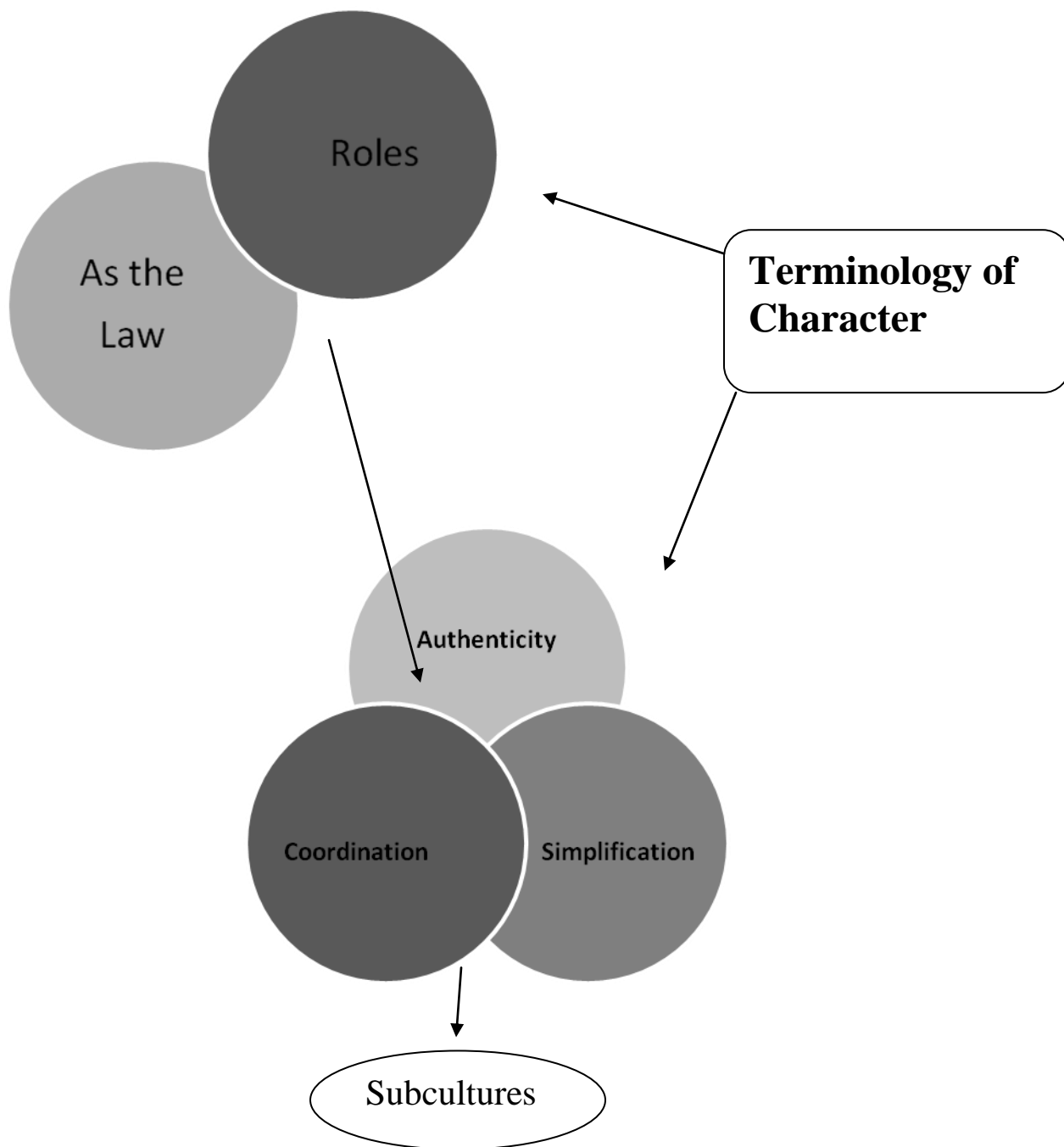
This final chapter revisits the purpose of this study, which was: (1) to examine the beliefs and attitudes of teachers toward approaches to character education, and (2) to establish, qualitatively, the components that teachers identify as necessary elements for character development and character education programs to be effective. These two purposes are discussed within the summary of findings, where the review of the literature is interwoven with the themes to create a better understanding. The following themes encapsulate teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward approaches to character education as expressed during the interviews: terminology, as the law, roles, coordination, simplification of implementation, authenticity and teachable moments, and subcultures. Embedded within and between the themes are relationships that teachers identified as necessary components for character development and character education programs to be effective.

The final sections of chapter five include the conclusion, recommendations for future research, and implications for practice and policy. The conclusion presents and explains the theoretical framework of teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward approaches to character education as it emerged in this study. Recommendations for future research on character education addresses questions that arose during and from this study. Finally, the implications for practice and policy section extends how the theory can be used in regards to contemporary educational issues.

Summary of Findings

The responses from participants fell into seven themes related to character and character education: terminology, as the law, roles, coordination, simplification of implementation, authenticity and teachable moments, and subcultures. Terminology affected all other themes depending on participants' views of what character is and who was responsible for teaching it. The themes as the law and roles investigated how character education is at times imposed on schools and how teachers view their roles, parents' roles, and a collective role of all who interact with students. Coordination, simplification, and authenticity explore how character education is infused into schools and curriculum. Subcultures respond differently to the infusion of the various approaches to character education. See Figure 5.1 for a visual representation of the relationships of the themes.

Figure 5.1. Conditional Matrix of Teachers' Beliefs about Character Education



Terminology

Participants used different terminology to discuss character education and character development. Most teachers perceived themselves teaching character intentionally. Some had contrasting views about the explicit teaching of character, while all seemed to agree that within the context of their day-to-day classroom management, developing positive character is acceptable. All participants referenced the idea that they are roles models for their students. Some outright stated that students “see them doing things” and therefore teachers teach both positive and negative character, although the hope is that most of what they emulate or teach is positive. Teachers involved in this study were opposed to teaching school district or legislatively directed character traits and programs. Without ownership in the development of a character program, teachers became skeptical of it. Concerns about the plurality of defining character relates to Blackwell’s (1956) assertion that the values of diverse people were too varied to fit a commonality of important character traits. Several teachers were very hesitant to elaborate on what character traits should be taught, linking character traits with religion and values. Schools cannot use religion in the current educational curriculum and culture to teach values. Most participants preferred values that support community building over citizenship or religion. Terminology relating to character will continue to create difficulties when creating programs meant to teach character. Clearly defined terminology is best, but causes concerns since it is value-based.

As the Law

According to teachers, character education should not be mandated by legislation. Issues related to character development “As the Law” were many. In a democracy, there are powerful concepts of individuality and freedom. They constantly leave room for identifying the values that are the most important and influence which behaviors are considered unacceptable and acceptable; laws are based on a level of behavior that crosses into intolerable. The more society, local communities, or the federal government control those concepts, the fewer freedoms individuals will have. The legislative influence becomes problematic when it leads to canned programs, which are viewed by teachers as unauthentic. When legislation is created by people of a certain social class (middle or upper-middle class), the character traits promoted may not reflect the ideals of all people; no one has established that all people have the same values.

A problem with legislating subcultures of high school and middle school students is the difficulty in dictating who the “haves” and the “have nots” are in that group. Students included or excluded from groups are in control of the student subculture; legislation cannot change that. The legislation of character is a sign of a process that recurs over and over; public education is used to attempt to change society, especially adolescents, and solve other issues that society has created. In line with the social control theory designed to acclimate immigrants to democratic life and keep the youth off the streets, character education is meant to dictate what is “right” and “wrong” according to the norms of the adult world.

Roles

Definitions and terminology of character education are connected to teachers' perceptions of roles and their ownership of character education, which relates to developmental level/age to teach character. Using concepts and stories to describe different character traits is a way to develop character at the elementary school level. Bennett's (1997) concept of using stories to teach overarching concepts about behavior is a common approach in elementary school. Direct discussion of the meaning of character traits occurs through examples and stories in line with Bennett's (1997) and Kohlberg's (1986) thoughts about cognitive development and character development.

Various subgroups of teachers held different beliefs about character education. Veteran teachers in this study struggled more with describing whose responsibility character development should be. This may represent a change in community and national norms since they first started teaching. Also, there is a contrast in the perception of roles between high school teachers and elementary school teachers. High school teachers are more comfortable with "exploring" character, while elementary school teachers believe their role is to "develop" character. An example to support this difference can be found in the concept of "fairness." Teacher fairness is an expectation of schools as noted by one teacher. This was also directly mentioned in the research of Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (1993). Teachers are aware of only some of their approaches to character education. Many felt that formal character is developed through: curricula, discipline, and routines. Informally, teachers direct students' behavior and send messages about their thoughts on character by explaining plagiarism and exploring issues throughout subject content.

Knowing individual teachers' beliefs about character education in the abstract and in concrete educational practice connects with Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen's (1993) notions about reflection on expressiveness. Just acknowledging where teachers individually stand helps them know what they do and don't do so they can develop "subtle depth," where they engage students in simple activities or routines that stretch character development and learning to its furthest point.

Teachers at the high school level are more comfortable with the role of facilitator of character rather than teacher. For example Kohlberg (1986) described the teacher's role as Socratic facilitator and teachers in high schools confirmed that role. Participants expressed the idea that schools controlled students rather than developing character in them. According to teachers, the high school subculture resists programs that promote character traits as students are struggling with what they believe is important character-wise. Teachers in this study didn't feel loyalty to all school guidelines and many seemed to argue that they were hired to negotiate when the rules will be enforced while the expectation from district administrators was that teachers would follow policy stringently. A fine line emerges between teachers having autonomy to make educated decisions on the application of policy and the coordination of school rules and policies; some teachers disagreed with the goals of administration and teachers did not agree among themselves on curriculum and its implementation in regard to character education.

A tension exists about the definition of a professional teacher. For some teachers, a professional teacher is someone who can and does incorporate all curricula, instruction, and school policies desired by a district or an administrator. For other teachers, a professional teacher has the background and education to incorporate those ideas by

using curricular materials as a resource. Perceptions of the teacher's professional role in regard to character education varied. Some teachers wanted to be very involved and believed all teachers should be just as involved, while other teachers were really not interested, at least not formally and explicitly. Dewey (1916) and Narvaez, Gleason, Mitchell, and Bentley (1999) also noted what teachers talked about in regard to taking personal ownership of learning how to develop character.

Coordination

Coordination was a term used in the Cardinal Principles (1918) and describes what many teachers advocated as a way to create a school culture of character. Similar to the use of coordination outlined in the comprehensive high school, coordination of staff, curriculum, culture, routines, and discipline was advocated by teachers. Unless teachers are hired with expectations, school organizations supporting programs are explicit, and the teachers agree to participate, the democratic schools described in the Cardinal Principles will also prohibit complete coordination. Even if teachers know and agree to explicit expectations, guidelines, and curricula, coordination will only occur to a certain degree because of interpretations based on personal values and beliefs. Hays (1994) noted that developing character has to be at the greater core of a school's mission and hold the same message as coordination.

The coordination of curriculum designed to teach character education does not guarantee implementation. Canned or homegrown programs can lead to a better understanding of a school's goals towards creating character. Also, programs that deal with issues such as anti-bullying empower students to change the situation through language. Schools become unified through language.

Training and implementation are important elements of any curriculum. As Narvaez, Gleason, Mitchell, and Bentley (1999) discussed, teachers learn by using scaffolding. For some people this is the easy answer while for others it is a multifaceted approach to tackling the enormously complicated problem of developing character in children. A spectrum of beliefs and attitudes on character development occurs depending on individual perspectives on education, society, and personal interest, which is another reason why Lickona (1991) advocates for using multiple approaches to character education. One approach might work for one teacher or one student while another one might not.

Simplification of Implementation

Simplification of implementation is rooted between the two themes of authenticity/teachable moments and coordination. Simplifying curriculum is meant to make it easier for teachers to implement, but can distract from authenticity. Attitudes about simplicity and teacher autonomy/ownership differ depending on beliefs and values about education, students/children, and social interaction. Simplicity of implementation addresses how many teachers teach character and morals, which is through metacognition. Metacognition in character education utilizes Socrates' and Kohlberg's (1986) ideas of using questioning to create a better conceptualization and application of character, behavior, and decision making.

Some teachers don't want simplicity of curriculum or content because they disagree with the prepackaged conceptions of a character trait or its implementation. However, other teachers want the simplicity of curriculum and content depending on the subject they are teaching (especially some teachers at the elementary school level). Most

participants hinted that with character education in particular, they want simplicity in the implementation process. As with Character Counts! (n.d.) and other programs, scripted curriculum has been developed with the idea that simplified lesson planning and delivery helps implementation for teacher. But not all teachers want simplicity of curriculum or content, they want simplicity in the implementation of the areas of the curriculum they believe are necessary to develop.

Within a school where the curriculum is designed by faculty, discussed in the review of literature as homegrown programs, some teachers perceive a curriculum positively while others see it negatively. The designers of the curriculum thought that the scripts made the curriculum easier to implement, but other teachers believed scripts and activities meant to develop character trivializes character traits and character education. Even within a school where the curriculum is designed internally, some teachers may perceive a curriculum as the spring board into integration and daily activities while others may see a stand alone program with little impact.

Curriculum of character education that supports the functioning of the school and classroom is integrated the easiest, however, it may look different from teacher to teacher depending on their beliefs and values about education, students/children, and social interaction. Integrating character into other content is important as an alternative to “canned programs.” A major concern is that with the dumping of responsibilities and testable subject content on teachers, when is there time to teach character?

Authenticity and Teachable Moments

Authenticity and teachable moments are the most individualistic sides of education. They relate very closely with Dewey’s idea that teachers and students learn

through the interactions and situation of the school day. Character specific programs at the high school are viewed by some people positively and others negatively. Teacher “buy in” makes a great deal of difference when it comes to authenticity especially at the high school and middle school levels.

How can coordination occur while keeping teacher autonomy and identity as an educator? A personal and philosophical orientation contrasts at times with a pedagogical or professional identity. Simplification of curriculum, meant to make instruction easier, was described as “walking a fine line” between being helpful versus a hindrance. The simplification of a subject has many problems in regards to creating unauthentic curricula including vignettes, assemblies, and positive rewards systems that most teachers felt were ineffective. Although there was no intention in this study to compare veteran teachers and novice teachers the idea that teachers develop and grasp the depth of the educational process seems evident from the interviews.

Based on participant perceptions, evaluation, authenticity, and teachable moments are interconnected especially with very little formal assessment. Dewey (1916) and Hays (1994) advocate for the learning of positive character incorporated into the daily events of the day including routines, instruction, and interaction that occurs throughout the day. Depending on the teacher’s perception of their role, they make the time for character education or not. A major implication was that time was found rather than created in response to teachable moments which are where Dewey (1916) and Hays (1994) advocate for teaching character. Veteran teachers seem to be able to find time easier than novice teachers probably because of learning how to balance curriculum, philosophy, and personal values.

Authenticity does not eliminate explicit teaching of character, but places it within a context in which the character being taught makes sense and applies to what is happening-course work, plagiarism, cheating, group work and collaboration, daily functioning. There also needs to be a sense of teacher ownership for character education to be taught authentically; however, this may distract from character being taught in unity. Between coordination and authenticity of teachers' actions and words exists a fine line. School districts navigate that fine line differently, some with a "heavy handed" approach and others with a great deal of teacher autonomy. This fine line may also contribute to the multiple approaches being implemented explicitly alongside the implicit and subconscious effort to develop character. Teacher ownership leads to authenticity of content and pedagogy according to participants. Teachers' perceptions of what they are interested in teaching and the curriculum affects how much ownership they want of a specific subject and character education is no different. Individuality causes a conflict between coordination and authenticity.

Subcultures

Subcultures focus more on social control theory (Ross, 1896) and address the notion one teacher expressed that there are, "no major social changes to our society when we find out things that work better." Kohlberg's (1986) moral development theory elaborates how older students establish their own values and are evaluating them starting in middle school and going into full drive in the high school years. Norms of positive and negative character traits in middle school and high school may not coincide with school and parental norms. Cruelty and bullying continually happens in these subcultures, which lets us know that certain behaviors may be part of the human condition. Teachers

expressed that parts of the high school subculture are unchangeable by schools as organizations. Societal character is questionable based on “negative character all the time on TV,” “we elect political leaders who are dishonest and have no integrity, and our celebrities are dishonest and have little integrity.”

Character education is not just about minutes spent on a lesson and structure within the day, but years and developmental levels: elementary, middle school, high schools as Kohlberg (1986) suggested in regards to levels of moral development. Many teachers believed that because of the amount of time students spend at school, they have a role in developing character in their students. Character education as the law and the subculture of teaching character suggest that at best student behavior and interaction can be controlled, not influenced, at the high school level. Elementary school teachers believe they have an obligation, at least professionally, to teach character. With evaluation it is difficult to gage whether character education has been effective or if events lead to a long term effect. This changes as does the idea of right and wrong as students get older and develop personal values and morals related to Kohlberg’s moral theory.

Some teachers are really into teaching character, just as some teachers are into certain subjects at the elementary level even though they teach all subjects. There is a spectrum of how involved teachers feel they should be and what their role should be in character education.

A critical distinction for attempting to teach character to students involves student attitudes toward character education. Young children in the elementary years allow their behaviors and attitudes to develop by adults. The desire for adult approval and adult praise is important. The elementary teachers were much more optimistic about the

teaching and molding of character. Adult approval of behaviors and attitudes are described to be more important than peers. The teachers often have the same group of kids most of the day, every day, all year long. The teachers then view their class of students more often than not in the sense of “*parens patriae*,” the legal term for schools acting like parents during the school hours. While at school the teachers will fill in as best as he or she can as the parent of each child and this notion impacts attitudes and beliefs about character development.

As the students get older, public schools put more students together forming middle schools. These schools start this sense of students having their own separate culture from the adult culture of faculty, staff, and parents. There is a greater sense of balance between the cultures at this age. Students are still young enough to be influenced by adults. In attempting from having the school become an entity so large that children get lost between teachers and classes, an effort is quite often made to create smaller communities called “houses” or “teams” for example. The teachers work together and share common students for academic classes. Students are talked about academically and holistically. Some teachers express being a bit resistant towards character education and the possibility of having to listen to value judgments that are being made by schools and teachers. Overall there still seems to be a sense that the students are very much children who need a lot of guidance in decision making and value placement.

At the high school, the student body has become very large in order to accommodate efficiency of classes and resources. There is less and less monitored time in which the students interact with each other. The buildings are larger, meaning more space for the students to interact in and not be supervised by teachers. Greater independence

was afforded to students in high school as compared to other school levels. They also have developed a student culture with its own norms and values sometimes in parallel with community norms and sometimes clashing with them. Student culture makes a judgment about whether certain behaviors are okay or not based on media outlets and peer norms. At the high school this culture tends to be more powerful than the adult culture.

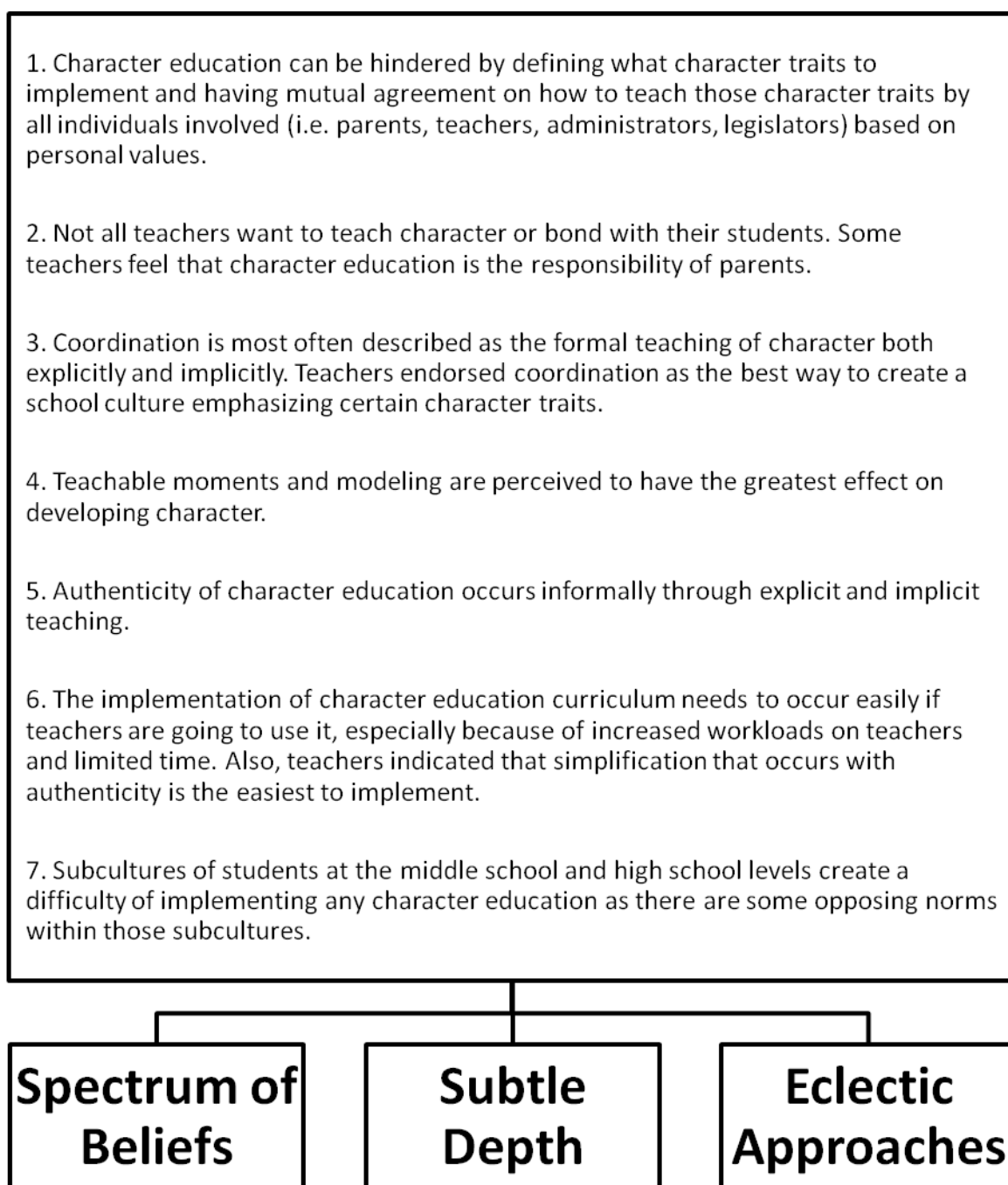
For the culture of the high school, the students aren't developed as much as controlled according to what the high school and some of the middle school teachers explained. That's what happens in the social culture of a high school and tends to note the power of the student culture. The point to be made is that for high schools teaching character occurs by having some caring teachers, who make a point to develop character in various ways (i.e. rules, consequences, democratic situations, social situations, etc.). If secondary schools do want certain character traits or behaviors from their students, they need to specifically define those traits according to teachers.

Summary

Terminology of character influenced all other themes as this was the base of personal values about character and whose responsibility it was to teach character to students. Legislation of character impacted coordination and simplification of implementation the greatest. Authenticity was teachers' response, in part, to legislation. Authenticity allowed for teachers to successfully teach character in a way that made sense to them which connected mostly with teacher roles and ownership. Coordination eventually came to an end when a teacher developed their own authenticity either using a curriculum or school culture. Authenticity also could be influenced only so far until it

clashed with coordination. Although coordination and authenticity are not opposites, they provide the two ends of the spectrum of implementing character education. Simplification of implementation attempts to connect the two. The seven themes and their relationships provide the base for the theoretical framework developed in the conclusion as demonstrated in figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2. Conditional Matrix of Character Education with Propositions



Conclusion

The grounded theory developed in this research that explains the meanings of themes and their relationships may guide policy makers, curriculum designers, and practitioners. It is comparable to the substantive-level theory defined by Creswell (1998) as “a low-level theory that is applicable to immediate situations” (pp. 242–243). Wolcott (2001) explained that:

Interpretation, in contrast [to content analysis] is not derived from rigorous, agreed-upon, carefully specified procedures, but from our efforts at sense-making, a human activity that includes intuition, past experience, emotion-personal attributes of human researchers that can be argued endlessly but neither proved nor disproved to the satisfaction of all (p. 33).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) stated, “If theory building is indeed the research, then findings should be presented as a set of interrelated concepts, not just a listing of themes” (p. 104). In accordance with Wolcott’s (2001) suggestion to, “keep your theorizing modest and relevant” (p. 77), seven major assertions emanated from the data. These are provided below:

1. Character education can be hindered by defining which character traits to implement and by formulating mutual agreements about how to teach those character traits to all individuals (i.e., parents, teachers, administrators, legislators) based on personal values.
2. Not all teachers want to teach character nor do they bond with their students.

3. Coordination is most often described as the formal teaching of character, both explicitly and implicitly. Teachers endorsed coordination as the best way to create a school culture that emphasizes certain character traits.
4. Teachable moments and modeling are perceived to have the greatest effect on character development.
5. The authenticity of character education occurs informally through explicit and implicit teaching.
6. The implementation of the character education curriculum needs to occur easily if teachers are going to use it, especially due to increased workloads and limited time. Teachers stated that the simplification that occurs with authenticity is the easiest to implement.
7. Subcultures of students at the middle and high school levels dissolve some of the effects of character education due to the opposing norms within those subcultures.

The seven assertions lead to three propositions: (1) teachers have a spectrum of beliefs and attitudes about the definition of character and how to implement character education; (2) as veteran teachers instill character education via classroom routine, subject content, and interaction, there is a commensurate demand on their time due to testing; and (3) eclectic approaches to character education are the best way to develop character because they allow for a spectrum of student, teacher, and administrative emphases on character education from the teachers' perspective.

Study participants—teachers—held a range of beliefs and attitudes toward character education. The spectrum of teacher attitudes toward their roles, methods of teaching character, and the degree of their influence on subcultures of students based on

personal interest in character education and personal values fits well with constructivist theory. According to Woolfolk (2001), constructivist “perspectives are grounded in the research of Piaget, Vygotsky, the Gestalt psychologists, Bartlett, Bruner as well as the educational philosophy of John Dewey” (p. 329). In line with psychological and individual constructivism, where what is important is individuals, “knowledge, beliefs, self-concepts, or identity,” most teachers were interested in teaching character in their own way with a curriculum provided or developed on their own (Woolfolk, 2001, p. 330). Participants who were provided with a curriculum chose character traits and activities they felt were most worthwhile according to their own personal values.

Teachers’ perceptions of approaches to character education and its curriculum were implemented to the extent that teachers decided to use them and were influenced by teachers’ attitudes toward coordination, simplification of implementation, and authenticity. According to sociological constructivism, teachers construct meaning from the norms of the school culture and subcultures and react to those ideas (Woolfolk, 2001). For example, teachers who believe that a unified approach to character education is best will most likely attempt to incorporate a curriculum presented to them, while teachers who cherish their autonomy will be more likely to pick and choose from a packaged curriculum. Teachers expect school rules and policies to be consistently enforced to by school administration, while individually teachers believe they should be able to apply the rules and policies they agree with based on their roles in and beliefs about implementing character education. Teachers who do not believe as strongly in a unified approach integrate character education into content, classroom management, and teachable moments in a manner with which they are most comfortable.

The spectrum of beliefs contributes to eclectic approaches to character education because the topic is so subjective and is based on individual perceptions and societal norms and laws. Since coordination, implementation, and authenticity are viewed in various ways by teachers, an eclectic approach to character education is best suited to teachers and will reach students on multiple levels, again placing this with constructivist ideology. According to Woolfolk (2001), constructivism as a world view looks at how, “both external and internal factors direct knowledge” (p. 332). Eclectic approaches to constructivism relate to multiple representations of content by utilizing, “different analogies, examples, and metaphors” to create meaning (Woolfolk, 2001, p. 335).

Character, especially positive character, is very subjective, if not by definition than most certainly via the process of character development. Schools are used to solve problems created by certain elements of society (media, local, state, and federal politics, poverty and unequal education, segregation, and urban education). Due to all of the factors influencing how and why teachers develop character in their students, different levels of implementation have been created, instilling character education with the idea of subtle depth. Values are neither explicitly chosen and pushed nor are they ignored; rather they are addressed much more implicitly.

Subtle depth is the degree to which teachers are able to take their own personal and educational values and ideas and combine them with a curriculum, whether canned, district-purchased, or teacher-designed. Vygotsky’s social constructivism, “gives us a way to consider both the psychological and the social” components of making meaning and connects with subtle depth (Woolfolk, 2001, p. 331). Subtle depth is the balance between coordination, implementation, and simplification, such that experienced teachers

balance time, routines, and classroom management along with curricula and school culture. This notion directly relates to Woolfolk's (2001) explanation of Vygotsky's theory: "Culture creates cognition when the adult uses tools and practices from the culture (language, maps, computers, looms, or music) to steer the child toward goals the culture values (reading, writing, weaving, dance" (p. 331).

Veteran teachers talked about character education in a manner that shows neither intensity nor disregard. The teachers understood their attitude toward character education and integrated it into the curriculum and programs to the extent that they chose to do so. They also did not become concerned about any topic in education, including character education, because veteran teachers have seen so many programs and curriculum come and go.

Components identified by teachers as necessary for success began with the hiring process. Administrators need to hire teachers who are already interested in developing character in students if teachers and administrators wish to engage in character education and the parents and community support it. Canned or homegrown programs are implemented to the extent that a teacher chooses to do so. The creation of a curriculum that can be utilized in a practical manner is important for teachers. Clearly established goals for character education allow teachers to understand what they are teaching, although there may be some resistance to teaching it if they do not have a similar personal value base. Providing time and support for teachable moments, interactions, and relationship building in relation to character building is essential to the maximum impact of character education.

Final thoughts on this research are three-fold. First, teachers' own personal values create a spectrum of beliefs about character education. Veteran teachers talked about the implementation of character education in a manner that was described by this researcher as "subtle depth"—that is, teachers provide instruction on character formally and informally, explicitly and implicitly, depending on who they are, but in a way that is authentic for the teacher. Whether eclectic approaches to character education are accomplished with the intention of accommodating all teachers' beliefs about character education, doing so is the best way to approach character education. Since belief systems are fluid, teachers must engage in subtle depth in relation to character education, while districts need to recognize the various complexities of character education and enable implementation of an eclectic approach that looks at different grade levels and takes into account differences among teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies are needed to understand a concept that is, "as complicated as ever all could be." In this study, several directions for future research evolved from both the methodology and the results. One would involve looking at a case study of several public schools that develop character both through curricula and in using other informal approaches. This study would include observations of informal and formal approaches to character development that occur throughout the day.

A vital next step in this research is to identify student perspectives on character education, including canned programs and direct instruction of character traits, attitudes toward informal and implicit teaching of character, and influences within subcultures that impact character and behavior. High school students especially seem to have a powerful

subculture and have a greater understanding of their attitudes and beliefs toward character development. This information is essential to validating what is being done in education to influence their subculture. How do students identify good teachers? How do students see good teachers affecting their character?

The assessment and evaluation of character needs further study. The complexity of character education and the attitudes and beliefs of teachers, students, administrators, and parents make assessment and evaluation difficult. Unquestionably, character education assessment and evaluation will not be without evaluator subjectivity. Most teachers, but not all, believe character cannot be assessed formally and via instruments, while all teachers described informal daily evaluation of student character. Research on daily documentation and informal assessment of teachers' desire for curricula, materials, and assessment is needed.

Implications for Practice and Policy

This research was meant to better inform instructors and policy makers about how to teach character education. What this researcher realized coincides with much of what Jackson (1993) talked about in *The Moral Life of Schools*—the many definitions of what character is and how it is developed makes character education complex. Providing a more specific definition of character development or character education might have left some aspect of character education behind. As it is, that might have already happened due to the complexity of this issue. The realization of the complexity of character education was informed by this research. Additionally, this research adds to understanding of approaches in character education.

With this study based in grounded theory, some cautions need to be addressed before implications of practice and policy are discussed. Strauss and Corbin (2008) explained that:

The world is very complex. There are no simple explanations for things. Rather, events are the result of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often unanticipated ways. Therefore any methodology that attempts to understand experience and explain situations will have to be complex (p. 8).

Maxwell (2005) addressed the “generalizability” of research and theory as internal, meaning that it applies to the case or phenomena researched, and external, meaning that it can be applied to many cases or situations outside the context of the study. Finally, Corbin and Strauss (2008) made the point that researchers attempt to make sense at an abstract level of complicated phenomena and in the end interpretation and “credibility” is left in the hands of the reader (p. 301).

The teachers most satisfied with character education were the ones who took ownership of it, expressed their thoughts about what character is to their classes, and simplified it to fit their style of teaching. Although the legislation of character education was viewed negatively by most teachers—they believed it was already happening. When character education is mandated, it takes a second seat to content knowledge of academic subjects because accountability is only applied to academics. Also, if evaluation and assessment were mandated, a mistrust of the character traits (Republicans, Democrats, religions, etc.) being developed by teachers would be expressed. Curriculum designers, legislators, and administrators should be aware that teachers implement curricula to varying degrees based on individual thoughts combined with professional attitudes.

Coordination and authenticity can lead to a contrast in educational philosophy. The balance between the two is at the school and individual teacher levels. Schools can try to implement curricula and develop character, but school culture, including students and teachers, prevents coordination. Individually, teachers conveyed a spectrum of beliefs and attitudes about character education. Even those teachers who designed the curriculum had various ideas about how to implement it.

Summary

All of the teachers interviewed felt that developing character in students is part of the school experience. Many of the teachers felt that character development and character education are as important, if not more important, than academic learning. Some participants noted that character traits are better predictors of student success than grades. Teachers have a major impact on students' development of character, so finding ways that allow them to achieve the greatest success is important.

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Appendix A

Character Education Interview Protocol

1. How would you define character traits?
2. How are positive character traits best developed in students?
3. Should teachers be responsible for developing positive character traits in their students? Please explain why or why not.
4. How are curricula, including “canned programs” and direct instruction, used for teaching character education? How is the curricula developed?
5. How do schools create a culture, vision/mission statement, school rules, or home room discussions for example, that fosters character development?
6. When and where does character get developed in students during a school day?
7. How does character get developed in students during a school day?
8. How are performance objectives of character education curricula assessed?
9. How do you know if character development is effective?
10. What allows character development/education to be implemented?
11. What prevents character development/education from being implemented?
12. What professional development, like workshops, teacher education coursework, or personal reading for example, have you had related to character education?

Appendix B*Email to Participants*

Mr. or Mrs. Name,

Hello, my name is Christopher Meidl and I am a graduate student in Curriculum and Instruction at The Pennsylvania State University working on my dissertation. As a graduate student I am currently researching teachers' perceptions of approaches to character development in schools. I am seeking research volunteers. The interviews will be audio recorded with the participants' permission. If participating in this research project with you is a possibility please let me know.

Christopher Meidl

Ph.D. Student: Early Childhood Education

Pennsylvania State University

(814) 862-0595

cjm384@psu.edu

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research: The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Teachers' Perceptions of Approaches to Character Education and Their Effectiveness

Principal Investigator: *Christopher Meidl, 103 LoveJoy Hall, Weston Community Center University Park, PA 16802, cjm384@psu.edu (814)862-0595*

Advisor: *Dr. Thomas D. Yawkey, 204 Chambers Building University Park, Pa 16802, tdy1@psu.edu (814) 863-2937*

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purposes of this study are to: (1) examine beliefs and attitudes of teachers toward approaches to character education, and (2) validate, qualitatively, the criteria that teachers identify as necessary elements for character development and character education programs to be effective.

This research examines teacher's perspectives of approaches to character education within children who are enrolled. Discovering what teachers think about character education is vital to understanding approaches of differentiated methods of teaching character. From teachers' perspectives determining what character education is and how it develops throughout the school adds valuable information to the development of character.

2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to be interviewed on your beliefs and attitudes toward approaches to character education and development. The interviews will be digitally recorded for the investigator to use statements for analyses and write up of the research. The investigator will be the only one to listen to the recordings.
3. **Duration/Time:** The interviews will take about half an hour each.
4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured at 103 LoveJoy Hall, University Park, Pa. in a locked file. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. Pseudonyms will be used for teachers' names. Recordings of the interview will be destroyed in 3 years, 2011(mandatory time to keep them).
5. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Christopher Meidl at (814) 862-0595 with questions or concerns about this study. You can also call this number if you have complaints or concerns about this research.
6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

_____ I **do give** permission to be audio/digitally taped.

_____ I **do not give** permission to be audio/digitally taped.

In relation to quotes from the interviews:

_____ I **do give** my permission for portions of this interview to be directly quoted in publications/presentations.

_____ I **do not give** my permission for portions of this interview to be directly quoted in publications/presentations.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Participant Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Curriculum Vitae of Christopher Meidl

Education

- 2006-present** **The Pennsylvania State University**, University Park, PA
Doctorate of Philosophy
Curriculum and Instruction:Early Childhood Education
- 2001** **University of New Orleans**, New Orleans, Louisiana
Master of Education/Teacher Certification
Curriculum and Instruction:Early Childhood Education
Certification from Louisiana Department of Education
- 1996** **Saint John's University**, Collegeville, Minnesota
Bachelor of Arts: Psychology

Professional Experience

- 2007-present** **Supplemental Instruction Supervisor**
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
- 2007-present** **Researcher:** Classrooms For the Future and 21st Century Skills
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
- 2006** **Lecturer:** Curriculum & Instruction: Early Childhood Education
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
- 2004-2005** **Adjunct Professor:** Alternative Certification
University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX
- 2002-2004** **Prekindergarten/Kindergarten Teacher**
Tabasco Elementary School
La Joya Independent School District, La Joya, TX
- 2002** **Corps Member Advisor**
Teach For America, Summer Institute, Houston, TX
- 2001** **Character Building Teacher**
Cops for Kids
New Orleans Police Department, New Orleans, LA
- 1998-2001** **English/Creative Writing Teacher**
Marion Abramson High School
Orleans Parish School District, New Orleans, LA

Workshops and Presentations

- January 2007** **Presenter** "Higher Order Thinking in the Early Childhood Years"
Hawaii International Conference on Education, Honolulu, HI
- October 2006** **Presenter** "A Multi-Case Study of How Schools Develop Character"
Mid-Western Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH
- October 2004** **Presenter** "Patterns in Numbers and Kinesthetic Phonics"
Fall Conference, Teach For America, South Padre Island, TX
- February 2003** **Presenter** "Creative Story Writing and Enactment"
Texas Conference, Teach For America, S.Padre Island, TX
- June/July 2002** **Presenter** "Journal Writing: A Means for Authentic Assessment"
Summer Institute, Teach For America, Houston, TX
- November 2001** **Presenter** "Project Approach"
Division of Early Childhood for the Council of Exceptional Children Conference, Boston, MA