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**A STUDY OF A THIRD-GRADE CHARACTER EDUCATION CURRICULUM
BASED ON FEMINIST, MULTICULTURAL, AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES**

A Thesis in

Curriculum and Instruction

by

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I have narrated my experience of teaching character education as a separate course to the 18 students in my third-grade classroom as mandated by my school district in Pennsylvania. The district character education task force provided a basic character education curriculum, which was mainly comprised of teaching 16 universal values to the children, a few model character education lessons, and some recommended library books. However, I chose to enhance and develop the curriculum through my own teacher research, especially by using the theories of feminist, critical, and multicultural pedagogies as a framework.

The main research question for my study asked how third-grade students learn the values of caring and justice after discussing issues of social justice in reference to gender, culture, and social class, and when generating certain kinds of artifacts. This question generated 11 sub-questions. My main approach was to discover the values that my third-grade children already knew when they came to school and to relate them to our classroom activities.

In this qualitative study, the main method I used to gather data on my teaching of character education was to keep a reflective journal in which I narrated my experiences of using multicultural materials and creating artifacts with the children in the classroom to explore values. I analyzed this data to find the recurrent themes or categories related to the values that my students understood and used.

This study helped me reflect on my own teaching and to discover the values of my students and how they had learned them, which I found was mainly through their

families and community, as well as at school. I observed that the children in my classroom also developed a sense of caring and justice toward each other. There was some evidence that the course in character education that I had taught my students in third grade may have improved their behavior when they advanced to fourth grade, which was one of the goals of the district in mandating character education, along with a student code of conduct. However, further research could study the direct effects of character education on children's behaviors in the classroom.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background on the history of character education in the United States, the purpose of this study which focused on the teaching of character education in one third-grade classroom in a Pennsylvania school district, and the research questions used in this qualitative study.

Character Education

Character education is an educational movement that stresses the importance of teaching good character through emphasizing the universal values that we all share. According to Lickona (1991) of the Character Education Partnership, character education is as old as education itself. He states that in the earliest days of the Republic the schools provided character education through discipline, the teacher's example, and the daily school curriculum. Lickona explains that the Bible, and later McGuffey's Reader, which contained moral and ethical lessons, were the main texts in the schools in the early nineteenth century. According to Lickona, character education declined in the twentieth century, however, because of these developments:

- 1) Darwinism
- 2) The theory of logical positivism (fact vs. opinion)
- 3) The 1960's personalism, which made the individual prefer rights and freedom over responsibility

- 4) Pluralism (Whose values should we teach?)
- 5) Secularization – the separation of church and state

Lickona (1991) reported that the 1970's saw the return of character education to the schools because of values clarification theories and Kohlberg's moral development studies, whereby students through reasoning chose their values freely. The 1990's saw the return of the Character Education Movement through other efforts. In 1992, the Josephson Institute of Ethics, which aims to improve the ethics of society, hosted a meeting of educators, ethicists, and youth professionals, at which the eight-point Aspen Declaration of Character Education was drawn up and served as the basis for the Character Education Partnership, which was formed in 1993. "The Character Education Partnership is a nonpartisan coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to developing moral character and civic virtue in our nation's youth as one means of creating a more compassionate and responsible society" (www.character.org).

Lickona (1991) noted that character education returned to the schools because of the decline of the family, the trend in troubled youth (including violence in the schools in the 1990's), and a recovery of shared ethical values. Programs such as Values in Action, which promotes positive psychology, are being incorporated into school curriculums and are endorsed by President Bush (World Education, 2001). However, critics see these programs as superficial, having no genuine effects on the students' value systems. Right wing critics see character education as overriding the responsibility of the parents and churches. Left wing critics argue that these programs touch on evangelism and stress obedience to authority figures (Citizens of Upright Moral Character, 2005).

Educator John Dewey held a different view of education (Character Education Partnership, 2005); he saw character education as the central mission of the school. Dewey viewed education in relation to the transmission of values through communication, sharing experiences until they become a common possession. However, intentional and formal education are needed in these times of rapid knowledge growth and technological advance. On the other hand, George Counts, another noted American educator with a similar philosophy to Dewey's, believed that education needs to identify with progressive forces like labor unions, farmers' organizations, and minority groups. Therefore, a program in character education should help students become more assertive in their relationships with others and in their acquisition of knowledge. Students should be critical of their social situation (Hsieh, 2005).

Character education had its formal beginnings in the common schools of the colonial period where common rules, values, and religion were taught authoritatively to students. As time went on, progressive educators such as John Dewey and George Counts changed how society viewed public education. Dewey proposed the vision of public education as a means for communicating in order to form a society that shares aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge—in sum, a common understanding that is not based uniquely on “universal values.” George Counts believed in the progressive kind of education where teachers help to lead society and do not just follow political alliances. He believed that teachers should be concerned with controversial matters of economics, politics, and morality (Hsieh, 2005).

The point of view of the current Character Education Movement is that contemporary social problems like family dysfunction have created the necessity for schools to teach character and to instill values in youth. Leaders of this movement believe that instilling universal values in students minds will automatically improve their behavior and help them to achieve better goals. Today's Character Education Movement has its supporters in radical religious groups, business associations, and the political right. These groups try to protect the rights of White American middle and upper classes. However, some believe that it is a patriarchal and racist movement that aims to protect the national identity by the use of academic standards and universal values in schools (World Ed News, 2005).

Character Education and Goals 2000

During the Clinton Administration, the U.S. Department of Education introduced character education as part of Goals 2000 in order to create schools that foster ethical, responsible, and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character. The primary goals of character education are to help students develop socially, ethically, and academically by infusing character education into every aspect of the school culture and curriculum (Character Education Program, 2005).

In 1997-1998, the Valley Area School District in Pennsylvania established a task force to develop a Character Education Program (CEP). (In this thesis, all names of schools and school personnel are pseudonyms.) Implementation of this program in the kindergarten through eighth grade in the district was the result of a local effort to improve

discipline and the school atmosphere as part of a district-wide Student Code of Conduct that had been established the previous year. The aim of the district's Character Education Program was to teach all the students appropriate behavior. Specifically, the district's goal was to teach the students 16 universal values: friendship, cooperation, kindness, loyalty, respect, responsibility, trust, tolerance, work-ethic, perseverance, honesty, patriotism, empathy, courage, integrity, and patience—in an effort to improve student conduct.

On the mandate of the superintendent of schools, the Valley School District implemented a character education course, and one elementary school principal and one assistant principal co-chaired the district's character education task force, which was called the Character Education Program Design Team. Each school in the district had a representative on the district task force and had a character education task force of its own. The district task force provided a basic, flexible program but also recommended specific materials for the course and school-wide promotion based on a program created by the Character Education Institute, a non-profit organization that maintains multiple resources for character education. Generally however, the Valley District CEP task force felt that each school should develop its own method for teaching the 16 values that the district had outlined in its program.

Every two weeks the schools with kindergarten through eighth grades were expected to teach one of the 16 values, which was the core of the district's Character Education Curriculum. The district in turn developed posters with codes of conduct and posters quoting a famous person to promote the 16 values throughout the schools. The district superintendent mandated that the children in each classroom should receive 60

minutes of values instruction per week as part of the Character Education Program. Each school was also to develop its own task force to implement the program in their school. The district task force provided the teachers a number of lessons and a list of public library books representing each of the 16 values in order to teach character education as a separate course or 60-minute period each week. With positive results from these lessons, the district expected to help the students behave better in school, make the schools safer, and foster a love for learning among the children. It was also hoped that there would be fewer student referrals for disciplinary action as an outcome of this program.

During the same school year, on one of his visits to my school, the district superintendent recruited me to serve on the steering committee for the district Character Education Program task force. It was my first involvement in a district-wide program, and I became my school's representative. Although the main content for the program had already been established before I joined the task force, I served on the district task force committee to continue the Character Education Program's development.

Thus, I became interested in many aspects of character education as I taught the program to my students and learned much about this topic during the school year 1997-1998. Later, after I did my doctoral studies at Penn State University on leave from the district from 1999 to 2001, I began to link the feminist, multicultural, and critical pedagogies that I had studied to my teaching of character education in the classroom and to develop the character education curriculum for my classroom using these pedagogies. When I returned to the classroom in 2002, I decided to do teacher research to see how effective the character education curriculum was in my own third-grade classroom. While

teaching this curriculum, I had begun to realize that my students already possessed specific values that they had acquired from their families and prior school experiences. Therefore, my teacher research inquired as to how my students had learned their values and which values they held, all of which became part of my formal doctoral research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover the values that my students already knew, how they had learned them, and how this knowledge could help me to teach better and teach character education better. I also did this study to contribute to the knowledge in the field of character education.

The Research Questions

For the purposes of this study, my emerging question was: How do third-grade students learn the values of caring and justice after discussing issues of social justice in reference to gender, culture, and social class and when generating certain kinds of artifacts?

The supporting questions included:

1. What is the nature of the teacher/student and student/student interactions that are taking place in the classroom, and what student artifacts/creations are emerging from these?
2. How do the students respond to the use of multicultural artifacts to promote critical discussions in the classroom?

3. How can the teacher/researcher describe these interactions and creations?
4. How can the teacher/researcher describe the climate in the classroom?
5. What effect does the character education curriculum seem to have on the classroom curriculum as a whole?
6. What kinds of interpretations can be inferred from these observations?
7. What interpretations does the teacher/researcher make that exert a daily influence on curriculum choice?
8. What new concepts and themes emerged from the data?
9. Did new themes or topics emerge that were not expected?
10. What insights did the study provide?
11. How can the teacher/researcher report findings back to the students/subjects?

Overview of the Study

Chapter 2 sets the context for this study with a description of Valley School District and the history of its Character Education Program, including how it was developed and for what purposes. Chapter 3 presents a review of the literature, including additional background on character education in the schools, and especially the theories of feminist, multicultural, and critical pedagogy and how I applied them to my teaching of character education and my teacher research. Chapter 4 introduces qualitative research, my research approach, teacher research, and the methods I used to gather data for my

study: my reflective journal, student surveys, student artifacts, audio tapes of class lessons, and my ethnographic interviews of school personnel about the district's Character Education Program. Information from the interviews is included in the history of character education in the district to set the context. Chapter 5 describes my character education curriculum framework and shows how I taught the 16 values in my classroom. Chapter 6 contains the results of my data analysis, according to the three pedagogies and answers the research questions. Chapter 7 includes a discussion of the findings of my study, the implications for my teaching of character education and for the school district, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2
THE HISTORY OF CHARACTER EDUCATION
IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The purpose of this chapter is to give the history of the Character Education Program as it developed in the Valley School District and to present the views of two district principals about the development and outcomes of the program. First, I describe the school district and the community to set the context.

Valley School District

The Valley School District has an enrollment of about 15,000 students, according to the 2005 Technology Plan. The district is located in a mid-size city in Eastern Pennsylvania. Its facilities include two high schools, four middle schools, and 16 elementary schools, a building for a preschool program, and a building for a fifth grade program. The district school population is 27% Hispanic, 6% Black, 2% Asian, 63% White, and 1% self-identified as “Other.” The average percentage of low-income students as determined by the federally-subsidized free and reduced-lunch program is 30.8%. Of the 22 district schools, 11 have low-income levels, ranging from 32% to 74%. Seven schools exceed 50% poverty and are operated as School Wide Projects under Title I guidelines.

The school in which I teach and actually did the study is a low-income, mainly Hispanic-populated school. Its enrollment is approximately 250 students. The building is

new and also houses the Family Center which serves as a mediator between the school and the community. The Center offers social and health services and programs such as ASPIRE (Academic Support Program for Increased Retention in Education), which it directs. Their staff is mainly Latino, bilingual, and professional. The school has an average of three classrooms per grade level from kindergarten to fifth grade. The staff is mainly White and Hispanic with a ratio of one Hispanic teacher to two non-Hispanic teachers.

Implementation of Character Education in the District

Implementation of the Character Education Program in the Valley School District in Pennsylvania began during the 1997–1998 school year. The program was the result of a local effort to improve student discipline and the school atmosphere following the implementation of a district-wide Student Code of Conduct the previous year. According to a local newspaper report, the Character Education Program was the second phase of the district's Code of Conduct.

The first phase of the Student Code of Conduct was intended to improve school discipline by calling for students to be expelled or suspended sooner than they would have been in the past for certain behaviors or violations of school rules. By outlining specific consequences to misbehavior and clear procedures for tracking students' behavior, the district intended to improve students' classroom behavior and the atmosphere in the schools. The penalties for students would become progressively heavier as their misbehavior continued and eventually could result in a student's

expulsion from school. Instituting the Student Code of Conduct was also an attempt to shift the power for correcting the students' behavior from the hands of the teachers to the hands of the school administrators, and ultimately, to the district superintendent.

The second phase of the Code was the implementation of a character education curriculum with which to teach all the students appropriate behavior. The curriculum's stated goal was to teach the students 16 universal values, including friendship, cooperation, kindness, loyalty, respect, responsibility, trust, tolerance, work-ethic, perseverance, honesty, patriotism, empathy, courage, integrity, and patience. The purpose of teaching specific values in the school and classroom was meant to positively influence student behavior.

As one of the elementary school principals, Mr. Smith, said in a newspaper interview:

Fewer and fewer kids are coming to us even knowing the Mother Goose nursery rhymes, which teach these kinds of values. I think it [character education] will be time well spent and I think at the end of the school year, teachers are going to say things like 'my kids fight less and they're less rude.'

However, some of the critics of the district's Character Education Program felt that these values were already being taught at home and that the teachers were already teaching them by virtue of being educators. But Mr. Smith pointed out that Young Jay Mulkey, president of the Character Education Institute that had developed the program

that the district implemented in 1997, had stated that although the home influences the child, not every home gives specific attention to these values. In addition, Mulkey said that children can have a notion of values but still misbehave in the classroom. Therefore, he believes that students should be taught through character education to make good decisions and to consider the consequences of their actions.

The Valley School District budgeted \$100, 000 for the Character Education Program, and the decision to implement it came from the top down. Because Valley District Superintendent Joe Thomas wanted to make sure that character education was taught in every classroom, he issued a directive requiring every teacher from kindergarten through eighth grade in the elementary and middle schools to dedicate 60 minutes a week to teaching one of the 16 values during a two-week period. The district provided posters for displaying rules for actions and consequences of behavior in each classroom, as well as a poster with the 16 values and separate flash cards with the name of each value and a quote from a famous American that placed the value in context or explained it.

The district superintendent clearly saw the school discipline problem as a critical one and was equally convinced that formal character education was the solution. Later, perhaps in response to criticism, he decided to create a district character education task force and gave it a mandate to select the Character Education Program curriculum and to decide how it was to be implemented. After the task force was established, I was asked by the superintendent to serve as a member. It included representatives of the schools in the district, teachers and counselors in the majority, and the public school librarian. The co-chairs of the task force were two administrators, Mr. Smith, the principal of Franklin

Elementary School at the time, and Mr. Rivera, assistant principal of Central Middle School. I had the opportunity to interview them about the development of this study; therefore, much of the information here is taken directly from those interviews.

Survey of the Parents on Character Education

Before the implementation of the Character Education Program, the district distributed a written survey to the parents, asking them about the desirability of teaching character education in the district and which of the 16 values listed should be taught. The response to the surveys was 25%, although Mr. Smith reported that the results were largely positive. The parents who responded to the survey thought that the program should be implemented. The administrators and the president of the Valley Educators Association (VEA), William Steig, attended several informational meetings with parents that were held at several strategic schools on the north and south sides of the town. These meetings were called open houses or open forums.

According to Mr. Rivera, the school parents were well informed about these meetings. However, as a teacher in the district, I never learned about them, nor was I given information to give to the parents of the children in my class. In addition, no numbers were made available as to how many parents attended. It would have been important to know, for instance, what percentage of Hispanic parents were present, since they comprise the largest percentage of the school population. According to both Mr. Smith and Mr. Rivera, the parents' response to these meetings was positive. They reported that the only values the parents considered to be controversial were patriotism

and faith. The value of faith was finally replaced with the value of trust. Patriotism was defined as feelings of loyalty to the United States. However, the administration tried to exclude references to the national origin of migrant or immigrant students, mainly Puerto Ricans or Mexican, or to their patriotism to their native countries. No specific objections were expressed by civic groups or churches, according to Mr. Smith. He said, "If there was any resistance, it was silent and invisible." On the other hand, I remember that in the Northeast Middle School in the district, there were specific conflicts with regard to the explicit, larger issue of expulsion ordinances involving Hispanic students when the Student Code of Conduct was initiated. Organizations like the Hispanic Council began to express concerns and asserted that they represented the interests of the Hispanic community.

District Task Force Development of CEP

Although the superintendent mandated the Character Education Program, with some input from parents and the community, the basic curriculum guidelines were developed by the district task force. Mr. Smith described its role and tasks as follows:

So we put together a committee and it was called the Character Ed Program Design Team. They specifically, purposely, didn't then call it a curriculum; it was going to be a program. So we were the Character Ed Program Design Team. There weren't too many character ed programs out there, so we decided to make the Character Ed Program be elementary-specific and included the middle schools. So

we proceeded to get into the Internet and look around and find what was out there, gathered samples and copies, and gave it to a committee to look through. And to make a long story short, we ended up selecting the program instructed by a non-profit group called the Character Education Institute. What we decided though was that since we were dealing with hundreds of teachers who may have different takes on this character ed thing, we would like to offer them a big sort of selection or choice of how best to teach character education. So we framed it up. In the elementary grades, they had to teach 60 minutes of character ed a week. Either three 20-minute shots or two 30-minute periods.

We also went to the public library, to the children's department of the public library, and Maria, the head children's librarian. She was very cooperative, and we gave her a list of the 16 values, and we said look through your titles of children's books and tell us what books have a moral in the story or a lesson that they teach, which ones go with what values. And you know what she did, she took all 16 values and she took them one by one like 'perseverance' and she put a piece of paper for each one, 16 pieces of paper pasted all over the walls [of the public library] with the values like kindness, patriotism, perseverance—that kind of thing, and any old (or new) book like *The Little Engine That Could* [to represent] perseverance. So that way we could allow our teachers who wanted to, to teach character ed via children's books. So now they have a choice of the Character Education Institute curriculum or the library books. Then, we as a committee developed our own character ed lessons out of good lessons that were submitted

to us by the district people who have been teaching it for years. We solicited them. So now we have a Valley Character Ed Handbook. (Mr. Smith, personal interview, February 8, 2002)

The main task of the steering committee of the Character Education Design Team was to develop a program for character education, specifically for our district. This program would outline the materials and guidelines for its implementation. It consisted mainly of a list of sample books and materials, sample lesson plans, time schedules, and a sample plan of action for each school building to follow in order to organize their own task force that would decide how these 16 character values would in some way be visible in their specific school through the development of posters and/or the teaching of the values through intercom announcements, etc.

Cultural Differences Not Considered

During my participation on the steering committee, I realized that before this committee had even met, the program had already been selected by the two elementary principals, Mr. Smith and Mr. Rivera, with Superintendent Thomas. I also noticed there was a sense that the program to be designed should be flexible enough to include the different realities of the 16 elementary schools and the 4 middle schools represented on the committee, but there was no specific attempt by the committee to address cultural differences. However, as I observed, the committee recognized and addressed the view that each participating school was different and had the right to have its own building committee or task force that would design specific strategies to guide their teaching of the

16 universal values outlined in the program. However, even at the school level, the committee did not take into consideration the differences in the children's race, culture, gender, and class, or other variables when selecting materials. In an effort to provide the teachers with more resources to use in implementing the curriculum, the public school librarian issued a list of books that she determined would offer an opportunity to apply or understand a value. Here again, however, no attempt was made to ensure that the books selected were sensitive to differences related to the student demographics or gender.

In fact, I had the opportunity to visit the school district that had produced the character education program of the Character Education Institute; it was in a small, middle-class, White American school district in New Jersey. The stories and pictures in the program kits were not colorful or culturally oriented. The ethical dilemmas presented in the kit largely described what middle-class, White American students in the suburbs experience. In schools like mine, where many of students come from New York and Philadelphia, and from more rural and significantly different environments such as Puerto Rico (a Caribbean island where Spanish is still the primary language), the students may not identify well with the stories in this kit. But Mr. Rivera claimed in an interview that in his experience, "The program worked well because his students were born and raised in the States and speak English as their first language." However, Mr. Smith asserted, "The teachers had the flexibility of supplementing the materials in the kit . . . teachers are good at providing alternative examples and activities."

Limited Teacher Preparation for CEP

Mr. Rivera also acknowledged that no specific training or significant in-service(s) had occurred before the implementation of the Character Education Program in the district. However, at a regular in-service, the teachers were encouraged to look at the Character Education Program. Also, the schools were encouraged to set up character education committees where the teachers could get together and discuss among themselves any thoughts or concerns they had about the program. So the teachers worked cooperatively the first year or so to become comfortable with teaching character education and relied on one another to implement it in the Valley District schools. Some in-service time at the elementary school was devoted to the program because one of the most important aspects of the elementary Character Education Program was a list of books to read on different character virtues. So the teachers had to work together and especially with the administrator to schedule student trips to the public library to sign up for the books selected for the Character Education Program.

Mr. Rivera further explained:

These activities may not represent training per se, but in-service time was made available for character education, and the teachers were encouraged to work as teams within their buildings. Each school was encouraged to have a character education committee so that there was support within the building to implement the program. We didn't want to say, "Ok teachers, here is your kit, go teach it!" We wanted to offer some in-service time, and we wanted to offer support through

either team meetings or via a committee, a building-based committee. (Mr. Rivera, personal interview, January 31, 2002)

Both principals said they encouraged their teachers to look at the kits and other materials available and to offer specific reactions to the curricular materials and the plan of action proposed in the Character Education Program. According to Mr. Rivera, the teachers in Calvin Middle School were cooperative and felt comfortable teaching character education. His school formed a task force that was charged with coordinating the program elements, including scheduling library time, providing support and materials within the building, and working in groups by grade level. According to Mr. Rivera, there was little resistance to teaching character education on the part of the teachers. In my building, some teachers stated that they were already doing these things in their classes, but they felt that the in-service in support of character education was minimal. In the end, each teacher did what they thought was best for his/her classroom.

The CEP task force in my school, Emerald Elementary School, consisted mainly of the counselors in the school. They limited the Character Education Program to going around to the classrooms to give mini-lessons on the value chosen to be taught that week. They also organized a “radio announcement of the value” that was carried across the school intercom every morning. In addition, they decorated walls in the school’s corridors with posters that depicted the values. Each teacher also received a poster with the names of the 16 values, large flashcards with the values and a famous quote that incorporated the value, and a student management plan of action to be posted in each classroom that

outlined the punishment for offenses in the classroom. However, despite all of these efforts by the administration to implement the Character Education Program, it was my observation that the teachers were not motivated to carry it out. I rarely heard the teachers discussing how they were delivering their character education lessons. They limited themselves to following directives but did not show explicit approval or disapproval, or enthusiasm for the program. It was my observation that they implemented what amounted to passive resistance through silence and inattention to the program. In my school, the principal was not very enthusiastic about it either. He did not want the teachers to use the curriculum. Instead, he preferred to use the list of library books for teaching each value. He was interested in using children's literature to develop language skills, particularly for the many second-language learners in our population. This was more consistent with his agenda.

Views of Outcomes for the Students

Nevertheless, Mr. Rivera said, "The Character Education Program had positive effects among the students." He felt that it made the students reflect on their actions, consider other people's rights, and developed a sense of community. He asserted that it "made the students become less selfish, more tolerant, and trustful." However, I believe that if the entire school community is not convinced of the value of implementing a character education program in the schools, it is difficult to develop that "sense of community" among the students and the staff. Many questioned whether the teaching of some specific values was in itself going to develop a sense of community. However, I

believe that a sense of community is achieved when there is a shared sense that some specific tasks are worthy of achievement for the common good. Dewey (1909) asserted:

The principle of the social character of the school as the basic factor of the moral education given may be also applied to the question of methods of instruction—not in their details, but in their general spirit. The emphasis then falls upon construction and giving out, rather than upon absorption or mere learning. We fail to recognize how essentially individualistic the latter methods are, and how unconsciously yet certainly and effective, they react on the child's way of judging and of acting. (p. 21)

Universal values or moral goodness should permeate (if they do not already) the whole being of the student. Ideally, all students should want to be kind, generous, patient, or honest. It is in the process of achieving a higher goal that people can join as a community and demonstrate the existence of these values in everyone's lives.

Schools have an almost unmatched opportunity to engage individuals and groups in this process. It is my personal view that most parents teach their children good values. However, children spend a great deal of time watching television and playing in the community where the values expressed and experienced are often not in keeping with values identified here as positive and constructive. Schools should share the responsibility with the parents. Some believe that parents today do not teach values (for whatever reason). This is not true. While they may not teach them explicitly, they teach

them by their example in their daily shared experiences and relationships with their children (Villenas, 2001).

Since it was assumed that the Character Education Program would provide the basis for the school district's assertion that it was providing instruction on appropriate behaviors that it would later hold students and parents accountable for, it is important to note here the direct relationship drawn by the district between values and conduct.

We intend, via this Student Code of Conduct, to help our school district's children and youth to see what the universal values are, what they look like, what they are in practice, how to better recognize them, and how they work within the context of school rules. Through this Code we intend to give our school specific reference points for acceptable behavior while in our schools. (Valley District Student Code of Conduct, Introduction, 1997, p. 1)

The Character Education Program seemed to be a tangible way for the district to communicate standards of appropriate behavior to the students, and the Code of Conduct was a concrete way to define, communicate, and follow through on the consequences that would follow deviations from those standards of behavior. Clearly, the district was adopting a direct behavioral approach to education. In some educational circles, this approach is considered to be the most repressive kind of behavioral management in educational institutions today (Nelson, Palonsky, & Carlson, 1993).

When I interviewed Mr. Rivera in his school, I sensed a level of repression in his

school's atmosphere. On the walls were written the values, but incorporating these into the students' behavior was a different matter. Mr. Rivera said he conducted several meetings with students, warning them about the consequences of their behavior. I noted occasions when the parents entered the school, a few menacingly, to defend their children's behaviors. Some defended their children's actions as being a kind of self-defense in response to abuse by other children.

For Mr. Rivera, the purposes of the Character Education Program were both social and behavioral but could extend to motivation for academic achievement as well. He said:

Especially for our students, with minority students, understanding that sometimes life isn't fair and that there are people that will judge based on certain differences. We need to teach them to not judge others based on race, religion, culture, whatever, they need to understand that there are people out there that will judge them that way and we try to teach students to be resilient to overcome adversity, to set their goals and to not allow those types of experiences to keep them back. So they are taught how to set goals and continue to pursue those goals. And then to understand that there will be adversity and obstacles that they will have to overcome and to give examples of that we talk about people in history who overcame obstacles and what obstacles they had to overcome. Had they decided to give up when presented with certain obstacles, you know with racism or sexism or any other type of discrimination, that person would not be known today, so we

give them those types of examples and tell them that it is not easy and try to show them any types of tools that these people had to be able to reach their goals.

(Mr. Rivera, personal interview, January 31, 2002)

Mr. Rivera's views reflect some of the contradictions we hear from members of Latino groups. However, Mr. Rivera is a good example of a Latino who has succeeded in life. He is the only Latino male administrator at the level of assistant principal in the school district. As a Latina, I am proud of Mr. Rivera's success. However, from his comments in the previous quote, I think that he considers diversity to be an obstacle rather than an asset—and something to be overcome. Mr. Smith, a middle-class, White American principal who is retired from a mainstream population elementary school, reflected a different view in response to the same question, stating, "In a perfect world, everyone will pay attention to character education lessons, and there will be no need whatsoever for a student Code of Conduct" (Mr. Rivera, personal interview, February 8, 2002).

With this remark, Mr. Smith did not make any reference to the real-life experiences or the environment that challenges today's students. He only mentioned as "the cure to the disease" the good effects of the student Code of Conduct and the character education curriculum. He said that he can prove this by the smaller number of negative student behaviors that have occurred as a result of enforcement of the student Code of Conduct. For Mr. Smith, apparently the environmental context is not a problem, most likely because he belongs to the mainstream. To Mr. Rivera, the issue of being from

a minority group is an obstacle that he believes the students need to overcome to succeed. Being different is conceptualized as a problem by Mr. Smith. His view suggests that just being a minority places a person in some way at an inferior level. But, at least in one sense, the Valley District's School Code of Conduct and character education curriculum do not respect the students' particular identities and circumstances, which Bourdieu (1993) described as the students' cultural capital. It seems that, according to Freire (1985), children's minds are often considered a *tabula rasa* that the teachers need to fill with their understanding of good values. Thus, when a school district stresses the teaching of values too much, its children may come to believe that they and their families in and of themselves do not possess good values and therefore need to be taught them.

For Mr. Rivera, the good effects of the character education curriculum reside in the fact that the teachers are required to teach it—that character education is not an invisible thing for a willing teacher to incorporate into his/her instruction. In other words, the fact that a value is taught explicitly makes it more visible and present. In my opinion, the teaching of these prescribed values has great potential to exacerbate the low self-esteem, depression, and hopelessness felt by many school-age children, especially those considered “different” with respect to race/ethnicity, language, and socio-economic level.

Both Mr. Smith and Mr. Rivera seemed to agree that the teaching of values can help the students live better lives and become good citizens. Yet the question remains: Is the character education curriculum really effective, or is it a form of alienation caused by the limitations that this society puts on minorities? I believe that more than the direct teaching (and preaching of) values is needed. Schools that do not acknowledge the values

that minorities already possess—and thereby demonstrate a lack of respect for children and their families—are not likely to be effective in teaching respect as an isolated value. The students need to be able to reflect on their options and choices in life; in a real and meaningful way, the students need to confront their personal and social realities with honesty and truth. Schools that give only partial information and fail to incorporate information and experiences that help students to negotiate their environment on a daily basis will not succeed in convincing students what is “appropriate” if it is not real to them or applicable to the situations that they face (Dewey, 1909).

I doubt that Mr. Rivera and Mr. Smith ignore these principles altogether, but it seems that they rely on the internalization of these values in other contexts to be sufficient to help the students negotiate or even live better their lives. I agree that it is good to instill in the children the desire to be good persons, but experience has told me that this is not enough. Students face personal crises on a daily basis as they negotiate the differences between their homes and communities and the school. In accomplishing this, their behaviors are often misunderstood and/or misdirected. However, they are children, and for schools to fail to recognize the complexity of these situations is to leave them indefensible. A critical skill needed by these students is the ability to negotiate these differences in order to achieve their goals. They need to appreciate the good qualities of their identities in order to learn how to use them for their own good. In this “negotiation process,” many facts come into play, including the children’s race, their social class, their gender, and many other factors (Nieto, 1999).

In Mr. Rivera’s opinion, the role of the counselors in the Character Education

Program was to develop school-wide programs that would teach the 16 universal values, such as those put on by theater companies and universities. They also developed a “Respect Campaign” in the school. I believe that these activities are good for raising spirits, but they should not ignore the realities of teenage life, such as the choices of using drugs, being sexually active from a very young age, and remaining in school. In other words, the teaching of values is deeply related to these social issues. These issues continually manifest in the children’s lives, contexts, relationships, and families.

For Mr. Smith, the school counselor’s job is to help the teachers teach the values by finding books for the teachers and character education kits/resource materials. For these administrators, the main goal of the program is to “create an environment in the school” that pays attention only to the desirability of good values. I am concerned that this serves to alienate the community from the school. It ignores what is happening “out there.” The schools are the filters for societal structures in and through which our students are living. The schools cannot be enclosed in a crystal box where most values are constantly being preached but not modeled. The schools need to reach out and understand communities, and have an effect on the outside society, town, community, neighborhood, and homes in which the students live (Nieto, 1999). This is why it is important to relate to the parents, to listen to them, to learn from them, and to let them in some way have an influence on the curriculum of the school. When this is not done, we are probably sending the message to the students that what is happening at home is not important, and that the only place where they can find a “good environment” is the school. When isolation is interpreted as disrespect and abuse of power, in one way or another, resistance and

conflict are more likely to emerge instead of cooperation and a sense of community.

For Mr. Rivera and Mr. Smith, the success of the district's Character Education Program is reflected in the fact that the numbers of penalties for misbehavior given to students under the Student Code of Conduct declined. These numbers may be a good indication the program is succeeding. On the other hand, this decrease may be a sign of a system that represses the students by constantly monitoring their behavior. For education to be effective, it has to teach the students the value of education itself in order to liberate them from this same repression. In other words, racism per se cannot be measured as a quantitative phenomenon, but if the majority of the students who are penalized are racial minorities, it is an indication that children misbehave even when they know about the social values imposed by the majority. Certain social structures in our society tend to prefer certain groups to others. Therefore, children need to be empowered to change these structures by having the opportunity to criticize the social structures and consider options that incorporate their realities when negotiating differences.

Apparently for Mr. Smith, the district's Character Education Program does not have to give particular attention to cultural differences because the curriculum deals with universal values: "The only values that we wanted to teach were those that are universal—that are shared by the Islamic, the Chinese, and us, Hispanics, and everything . . . What parent does not want his child to grow honest?" (Mr. Smith, personal interview, February 8, 2002). This is an issue many character educators disagree on. The issue divides educators, between those who believe in universal values and those who believe values are relative and depend on the subject and their environment. Generalizations are

generally bad, especially when dealing with values. In my opinion, a value can take a very different form depending on the historical moment, the context, and the subjectivity of the person. I believe that when dealing with issues of values, we have to leave space for differences. This is what proponents of multicultural education teach—that we cannot view education as separate from the differences of race, class, and gender, among others. The particular interpretations that we give to certain values depend on the time, situation, and the subject involved in the situation (Sleeter, 1991).

An important component of a character education curriculum is the involvement of the community in the program, especially the parents. In the district's Character Education Program, it is stated that the parents are the first teachers of values to their children. Thus, parents should not be ignored. If the schools try to teach values, they should not attempt to teach them as a form of manipulation. Each family teaches its children how to behave according to certain values embedded in the situations that surround the family environment. The school cannot appropriate this role. Mr. Smith mentioned that in the new program, "Learning for Life," the children are encouraged to share the lessons with their parents. This is a very important aspect of the program. Each family is different, and experiences a different reality. Therefore, the schools need to be sufficiently flexible so that they can accommodate the cultural differences across children in the classroom.

Character Education and "The Standards"

The new trend in the Character Education Program is to link it to the national educational standards, such as those imposed by the No Child Left Behind Act. These standards are considered another form of generalization and over-regulation in schools by certain sectors of the educational community. The belief is that these standards are more often than not imposed by political leaders who know little about schools. The question has often become: Up to what level can we rely on generalizations and up to what level can we permit differences? Some moral educators focusing on the value of caring, including Noddings (1984), believe that the main goal of education in a democracy is to permit and give attention to differences. Every student should be regarded as an individual and should be taught according to his/her individual qualities. The efforts to over-generalize instruction by creating universal values and standards of learning can be viewed as a form of political power of controlling the educational goals in public schools. However, given the emergent demographic data, our nation is continuing to become more and more diverse. Therefore, the future of public schools and at least one test of their effectiveness will be their ability to deal with diversity. They will be forced to create the structures that permit each student to develop according to his/her own specific needs.

The materials that have been used for the Character Education Program in my district—mainly the 16 universal values, the Character Education Institute materials, and selected library books—reflect a generalization of the students without considering cultural differences among the students and their relationship to their values. The first Character Education Institute kits that the teachers used were very shallow and reflected the ideology of mainstream, White American middle-class culture. To provide more

resources, the district provided a list of books from the public library that could be used for these lessons, which were classified according to the 16 values being taught in character education. New books or kits from the Boy Scouts seemed to be more colorful and home oriented. But none of the administrators interviewed mentioned any intention to obtain multicultural books for the program.

The question then is: Does the district's Character Education Program really benefit the individual student? Does it really make a difference? According to Mr. Smith and Mr. Rivera, the only way to measure such difference is by observing the lower numbers of penalties among students as a result of the Student Code of Conduct and teaching character education. Here is a related question: Is this program really benefiting the moral growth of the students, or is it only acting as a punitive tool for the Student Code of Conduct? It seems that the Valley District school administrators rely too much on the teachers' expertise and "good intentions" to ensure that this focus on difference and individual needs is really taking place. However, not many structural changes have been made to guarantee that each individual is really benefiting from the program besides organizing school-wide poster-and-announcement activities that broadcast the values. Therefore, more attention is needed to link these values to their representations in art and the media, to political struggles, to historical events, or to religious beliefs, among others (Cortés, 2000). Only in this way can the curriculum be said to be more culturally and student oriented. Discussing with the students the consequences of misbehavior and constantly preaching a list of values will not make a difference in the students' lives. These values need to be linked to the students' realities outside their school realm, the

general society, the arts, the politics, and the historical events of their time (Giroux, 2001).

In my opinion, character education is a kind of lifelong learning experience. The most important part of it is to give our students the tools necessary to become responsible adults. Therefore, character education has to be linked to the real economic and social well-being of the individual in our society. It is only in this way that our students will grow as healthy individuals, capable of maintaining themselves and their families in the economy, and able to develop good social relationships (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997).

Chapter 3 provides further context for this study by reviewing the literature on the three pedagogies that I used in my teaching of character education to my third-grade class.

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review the literature, providing additional background on character education. I also describe how the theories of feminist, multicultural, and critical pedagogy influenced my development of a character education curriculum for my third-grade class beyond the basic outline provided by my school district. I found that these pedagogies are profoundly interrelated and could enhance my curriculum. The multicultural pedagogies have been influenced by the critical pedagogies. Scholars such as Cortés (2000) have taken a critical stance toward the media, which is the focus of critical pedagogy. Proponents of feminist pedagogies have taken ideas from critical pedagogies as well. Feminist scholars such as bell hooks (1994) respect the ideas of critical scholars such as Paulo Freire (1985), and even base their arguments on some of their thinking, for example hook's theory of engaged pedagogy.

Developing My Character Education Curriculum

My study of these pedagogies helped me to reflect on and construct my character education curriculum for my third-grade class. They also influenced my observation of my students and the way I evaluated my character education classes. My use of these theories permeated my teacher research and enabled me to connect what I was doing in my third-grade class with what I had learned during my doctoral studies in education at Penn State University. These theories also allowed me to connect my thinking processes,

my class observations and evaluations, and the curriculum planning that I did during my teacher research in my classroom for my doctoral dissertation. Therefore, in this chapter I connect the theories I used in my research with the actual situations in my classroom, using what Lather (1991) called the phenomena of praxis, the relationship of theory and practice. As I taught the character education curriculum, I learned that I had to adapt what I had learned and knew theoretically to what I was teaching my third-grade class. For example, talking about the abstract concepts and issues of racism, classism, and gender inequity with the younger students was not an easy task. The children seem to experience these issues in their everyday lives but had not had the opportunity to express them and make sense of them intellectually. My role as a teacher was to listen to my students and create lessons that could help them have a voice in these issues.

In this dissertation I also acknowledge the influence of the community on my character education curriculum. The politics of situation or situated learning affected my teaching too. I called this factor the role of the community in my curriculum. As Soto (1997) stated, “Teachers will need to conduct a critical examination of educational programs in order to implement programs that reflect the needs of their own community” (p. 166). Thus, the community can help shape the character education curriculum in the school. For example, Soto asserted that the Latino community of Steel Town felt that it was important for schools to collaborate in preserving language and cultures in schools. By the same token, because my classroom is a mini-society, reflecting what is happening in the larger society, the students need to discuss moral choices in terms of the current historical situation and public issues. For example, events such as the war in Iraq can be

used to initiate discussions on the values of tolerance, courage, empathy, etc. Our students need to be involved in a critical analysis of our social system and develop a sense of respect for diverse students' voices and cultural differences. According to Bauman (1989), morality cannot exist if there is not a kind of responsibility for the Other and in being this Other of any culture and respecting differences. To achieve a knowledge of the Other, a kind of dialogue is required in the public domain (Giroux, 2001). For the purposes of this dissertation study, the public domain was my classroom, which in itself is dependent on other factors such as the school, the community, the city, the state, the nation, and the world. Further, teachers need to create democratic classrooms in order to help create democratic societies. We need to give space to the students to voice their opinions of agreement or disagreement and to plan for their expression. In other words, we should become engaged not only with the context, but also with the people in that context.

I position myself in the classroom as a bilingual teacher. I present myself as bilingual because I am a Spanish- and English-speaking person. I also have a master's degree from Penn State University in early childhood bilingual education. Inspired by the words of Ada (1991), I must create an innovative curriculum that empowers me and my students since my very origins cause me to experience discrimination because of my gender, culture, language, and class in this White American society. It is sad that many times even some of my students who share my origin discriminate against me and do not believe that a Latina teacher can provide the same quality education as an Anglo teacher in this country. In some ways, my understanding of theory has helped me to provide a

better education for my students and to overcome some obstacles in the classroom, but not all of them. As Ng and Scane (1995) stated in “Teaching Against the Grain,” I must continue my teaching by considering alternative ways of thinking, writing, learning, and teaching that have transformative potential. If I am critical of the school, however, I know that I will be considered in some way subversive, although time has made me realize that just my living here and teaching in a public school system in Pennsylvania is subversive in itself. But I enact my power as a Puerto Rican woman by my interactions in the classroom and in the world.

The Origins of Character Education

The roots of character education can be traced to the common schools that were founded in the colonies when education was first being established in what would become the United States. The central belief at that time was the need to teach specific moral values using a direct teaching approach (Lickona, 1991). These colonial educators believed in the direct teaching of moral values much as a preacher would preach the truths of the Gospel, according to Lickona. They believed that reiterating a value in the minds of youth would make a difference in their behavior. The current character education movement is especially concerned with the effects of dysfunctional families in our society who do not instill “correct” values in their children. Like their colonial predecessors, today’s character educators believe in teaching a value as a given truth in itself, as an abstract entity that has a value and a concrete meaning. The major goal of a character educator is to instill in their students a loyalty to these values.

Critics of character education, like those who subscribe to the system of values clarification, believe that teaching these values in and of themselves is difficult because they are very abstract in nature and depend on the specific circumstances in which they are embedded. Therefore, for values clarification theorists such as Simon and Desherbinin (1975), a lesson on character education needs to be context-specific. This means that it should be framed in a specific paradigm, in the form of a dilemma in which the student has to make a decision under a specific circumstance. The value itself may also be embedded in the context of a story, a song, a play, a work of art, etc.

The recent movement of character education has also been critiqued by multiculturalists like Sleeter (1991) who sees it as defending the interests of the White middle class. In other words, it is the values of White middle-class society that are being taught and held up as the “correct values.” Sleeter believes that character education follows the ideals of patriarchy, which considers knowledge to be static and permanent.

Most of the literature in character education also seems to be addressed to a White middle-class audience. Most of the programs on character education use contexts that the mainstream can relate to. One example would be suburban neighborhoods, where schools are neat, new, and in vogue. In stories used for character education, students seem to have everything they need to be successful in life. They only need to choose the “correct” values to achieve their dreams. On most occasions, minorities are represented as minorities, or are not represented at all. Multicultural literature does not seem to be used in these character education programs, or if used at all, only the multi-ethnic meaning of the term is considered.

The psychologists Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) and Carol Gilligan (1988) have influenced the movement of character education by describing how the person develops morally into a mature human being (Winston, 1998). Kohlberg represents the values clarification groups that stress the importance of rationality and logic in the field of moral learning. According to his theory, by showing students certain moral dilemmas, they can acquire knowledge that progresses from being regulated by authority to being regulated by the individual him/herself in what he calls a principled system of values. Gilligan added to this view the notion that morality is not only a rational endeavor but is also learned through relational experiences. By relating to others, we need to care for them, achieving a moral maturity like that of a parent to his/her child or a teacher to his/her student. Gilligan's approach is more practical and life-oriented since it deals with the willful decisions we make as we interact with others and gives place to examining the societal context in which these interactions occur.

Pedagogies to Enhance Character Education

In the course of my study, I used several pedagogies (feminist, critical, and multicultural) to enhance my character education curriculum. These approaches enabled my students and myself to more fully explore the values outlined in the district's Character Education Program and to incorporate diversity into our learning and expression of values.

Feminist Pedagogies

An examination of the feminist pedagogies helped me to reflect on women's roles in our society, more specifically my role as a female teacher in the classroom. My classroom, according to these theorists, must be democratic and should reflect the dynamisms between theory and practice (Lather, 1991). Feminists have influenced education by making it more critical and humane at the same time. One of the characteristics of feminist pedagogy is that it is in essence self-critical. Reflection on feminist theories helps feminist educators to take action in their classrooms. This is especially important because the classroom is like a mini-society that reflects the idiosyncrasies of our present society. But at the same time, feminist teachers aim to produce better future alternatives for their students in terms of feminine roles and social interactions. In this way, educators are philosophers at work, always bringing into their classrooms new challenges for their students and society at large.

The pedagogy of care of Gilligan (1988) and Noddings (1992) helped me to reflect on the importance of maintaining relationships of care in the classroom. They believe that it is important to create atmospheres in which the students feel they are loved and cared for, and that they are important. It is also important to help the students learn that they should care for others. Gilligan and Noddings have created a theory in which justice and care are mutually supportive. This theory can be related to a definition of morality that takes into consideration issues of principles in relation to issues of relationships or interactions among people. In this theory, the body counts as well as the mind. Feminists favor combining these two approaches, namely, the rational and the

relational ways of conceiving moral education, rather than building opposition between them. Therefore, in the feminist classroom, the issues of morality are not only seen as rational or relational quests, but as both. Teachers in feminist classrooms are trying to break these molds and communicate that both females and males mature morally through both processes: the rational and the relational. In “The Politics of Nurture,” Margo, Diamond, Edwards, Lennox, and Portuges (1985) stated:

In one real sense, the feminist classroom may become the place where the cultural conflict between mother and father may be healed. The feminist intellectual appropriates the word for herself and its power to name the manifestations of patriarchy. It may be that as women academics we have become the fathers, entered into the realm of history which men have always controlled. Yet in a more profound sense feminism repudiates the law and order of the father and transforms history by bringing to it what we know of being mothers and being mothered. (p. 18)

Not only did I need to consider my role as a teacher in the context of feminist pedagogy, but I also needed to consider the various parental relationships of my students in regard to character education and who shapes their values outside the classroom. To illustrate, an idea occurred to me in the classroom one day near Father’s Day: I proposed making an art craft with the children for their fathers, a suggestion to which the majority said, “No!!!” I wondered why they disagreed so strongly but knew that many of them do

not live with their fathers, rather with their stepfathers, grandfathers, or alone with their mothers. Then I suggested that the gift could be given to any masculine figure in their lives who acted like a father and some said, yes, but when I said, “or maybe even to your mothers,” a big group said, “Yes.”

This incident made me realize that the traditional scheme of a family with two parents present is not always the norm, especially for many of my students. In fact, this is becoming a rare case, especially for children in low-income neighborhoods. Therefore, the character education curriculum must include families who are different from the traditional context to keep up with the evolution of present society and to defend the rights of the less powerful. I need to understand as an educator that the families with whom I am dealing differ in context and that I should respect that difference. I need to learn the context of each family to better understand my students. According to patriarchal ideology, only the traditional kind of family is a healthy family. This thinking may not be a good point of reference for my students, however. In some way, I am involved in teaching my students how to become caring and powerful at the same time within their family contexts, whether traditional or non-traditional.

Hughes (1995) explained that our identities are not fixed but are fluid and acquire different forms and status as we interact with people in different contexts. Different combinations of the variables of race, gender, and class interact in different settings to create different degrees of power that the individual may negotiate. Voice is the way by which the individual denounces the injustices that they encounter. Feminists believe that the understanding of our identities as fluid, context-specific, and always in relation to

power should motivate us to analyze and create social structures that take into account these differences and the individual's need to receive just care in society. Therefore, the classroom can be seen as a mini-society in which the students learn to care for each other, by understanding each other's identity, and to act justly.

Ropers-Huilman (1999) suggests that feminism offers new ways of thinking about the student-teacher dichotomy and considers the complexities of moving from one side to the other. Who really has the power in the classroom? Who should care? Ropers-Huilman states that caring and power are not different but that they give strength to each other. For example, in the classroom, students who have knowledge seem to have more power. In one of my classes I had a gifted student. When groups were being formed to complete their projects, all of the students wanted to be with her or other "smart" students because they had the "right" answers. Therefore, their help was considered, in a sense, as a way to help others and in another sense as a way to have power. To reduce the effect of only acknowledging the students who learned more, I designed some special strategies. One of the most interesting was to give "prizes" to the students who completed homework and class work. When they completed 30 assignments, they could go to the "treasure box" and get a "prize." Thus, their efforts in class and at home were both rewarded. In my opinion the school district designed some good strategies, too. They designed a portfolio in which all the students had to have their work completed with or without the help of the teacher. For example, the students had three opportunities to complete the math tests with prompts from the teacher. They also had to complete three written pieces, two with the help of the teacher and one by themselves. This kind of work gave the students the

assurance that they would receive some support in school. Therefore, the power of knowledge and care was better distributed. It is important to recognize these relationships of power and care in the classroom in order to create environments that benefit all students, which is the feminist approach.

Foucault (1994) stated that power is not stable or consistent—it is fluid and always moving. The classroom may be seen as a dance of power in which each person's talents, limitations, and desires are constantly taking place. The teacher has the power to care just as the students care about the teaching. Therefore, negotiation in the classroom between teachers and students is always taking place. I attempted to care about others through my flexibility in the use of my “teacher power.” In my attempt to empower my students, I recognized that my agency has limits and that I can be wrong. Ropers-Huilman (1999) indicated that feminist educators should model what they value and how values should take place in educational environments. As the teacher, I have to consider myself vulnerable, too, and allow the students to see me in this way as well.

Lather (1991) developed the idea of praxis in education to mean the dialogical relationship between theory and practice. Feminist educators realize that teaching can provide the opportunity to turn theory into practice, creating structures that prove to be more humane, caring, and just. In my situation, I had to interpret for the students the meanings of these theories or at least find an artifact at their level that could help us discuss them. For example, my students and I read *The Rainbow Fish* by Pfeifer. It is a story about a fish that has many shiny scales, but doesn't have friends. One day the fish decided to give each of his scales to different fish and then he had friends. We did a

related activity in the classroom. Each student got a picture of a fish and some shiny beads. They were to give each of their classmates a bead and tell them what gift it represented, such as a toy, a pet, etc. The children enjoyed the activity and at the end all of them had shiny fish. This became a lesson in the value of generosity. This is an example of how an abstract concept can be understood after more concrete relational actions.

Orner (1992) states that teachers need to struggle to democratize their classrooms. For her, the first step is to let teachers and students work together to achieve learning:

[We as] educators concerned with changing unjust power relations must continually examine our assumptions about our own positions, those of our students, the meaning and uses of student voice, our power to call for students to speak, and our often unexamined power to legitimate and perpetuate unjust relations in the name of student empowerment. (p. 152)

These are important considerations for my classroom with its mostly minority students. It is important that I frequently examine my relationship with my students to empower them in their struggle to achieve a better life. As a teacher I must not judge my students according to their race, culture, class, or gender alone, but must help them by analyzing, deconstructing, and reconstructing the structures in society that may permit a full realization of their potential.

This argument points to the fact that teachers cannot view their students as focusing only on the individual and the psychological in relation to pedagogy, but as students who are framed and molded by the outside world with its socio-structural realities. Therefore, it is important to look at the individual and the context as always interacting. As a teacher I know that what happens in my classroom has a direct relationship to what is happening in the school, district, city, state, nation, and the world.

When I analyzed the written narratives of my students, I also learned how they came to be who they are. Hesford (1999), in *Framing Identities*, discusses the power of autobiography as testimony:

The implications for this reframing for autobiography studies, auto ethnography and pedagogical scholarship in particular, are that biographical acts cannot be read “off the surface.” They must not be seen in isolation from the locale (place), the local time, and the pedagogies and politics of location (methods of enframing). (p. 154)

From this assertion, I can see that when my students write stories or narratives, they are not telling me only things about themselves, but also about the places or situations in which they live that create their joys, sorrows, and fears. By connecting my students to these structures, I can better help them develop their values. For example, Gilligan (1993) wrote about the importance of getting our students to museums in order to confront them with their inside and outside worlds. She found that the presentation of

historical objects confronted the students with what they are inside in relation to what has happened historically in the outer world. Gilligan referred to the realities in which girls live:

And the deeply knotted dilemma that lies at the center of [Virginia] Woolf's vision of women's psychological development is how girls enter and stay outside of, be educated in and then change, what has for centuries been a man's world.

(Gilligan, p. 147)

The gender issue may be conceptualized as an historical issue relating to who has the power, beyond the mere description of our physical differences. The issue of power is related to issues of knowledge, career goals, and possessions. The teacher as a worker should not be objectified as the only knowledge source, but should be seen as being in a one-to-one dialogue with students.

Britzman (1992) pointed to the importance of diffusing the attention of the students from the teacher to the subject matter (context). This is even more important when dealing with issues of race, gender, and class, and their relationship with issues of morality. Ellsworth (1997) opposes teaching lecturing (preaching) methods whereby the teacher is the know-it-all and the main focus of attention. She prefers to use the media as an object of critical thinking in the classroom. In my research I used a variety of artifacts to guide the reflection and dialogue on values in my classroom. Teachers need to show their students their vulnerability without compromising their own authority. Only by

objectifying the subject matter are teachers able to analyze, deconstruct, and reconstruct it with their students. When the students read their stories or showed their products in my classes, I may not have completely agreed with the ideas they expressed in them. For example, when making paper statues, a student chose as his representation of loyalty a man holding the American flag; other students showed friends sharing. I personally connected more easily with the artifact illustrating loyalty in friendship, but I can understand somebody who has deep patriotic feelings and would use the flag to represent this value. But my students' opinions counted as much as mine. I can also teach that loyalty is not always a good choice if what a person is loyal to is not worth the price of that loyalty. My responsibility is to give the students instructions that ensure that they all have an opportunity to participate and express their opinions equally in class.

Boler (1999) believed that we should use emotions pedagogically to ensure the wellness of our students. The process of learning can cause discomfort. But this is a pedagogy that recognizes that we inhabit an ambiguous world and that the process of learning and producing learning can produce discomfort:

Expressions of anger and resistance to change may well be justified—students may be angry at me for suggesting they take a risk that I don't share; they may be angry at me if they feel I am implying that they are being 'hypocritical.' (p. 196)

Therefore, for Boler (1999), a class in character education may be discomforting. It may be discomforting for the students to talk about issues of racism, classism, and

gender inequities. These issues may be regarded as “adult issues.” However, it is my view and understanding that every new generation has the responsibility for creating a better world, fair and equitable, more respectful of differences, and in a sense more just—in short, a better world to live in. Our children should be motivated from the early grades on to become change agents to transform our world into a happier and more just place. This is a pedagogy in which the students are active participants, which bell hooks (1994) described as an “engaged” pedagogy. For a pedagogy to be engaging, it has to take into account the knowledge, experiences, and culture, including language, of the students. Many efforts have been made by the proponents of feminist pedagogies to achieve these goals.

During my research in the classroom, I thought that it was going to be easier to teach the children about race, class, and gender issues. But I learned that the only way to do so is indirectly, not by preaching, but by engaging the students in activities that may help them grasp the terms and concepts experientially. For these reasons, I selected child-appropriate materials like the Walt Disney movie *Ruby* to help us talk about racism and the civil rights movement, three different cultural versions of *Cinderella* to talk about issues of class and culture, and stories like *Amazing Grace*, which portrays African American girls as courageous, in order to discuss gender issues in my younger students’ lives. Only through the use of children’s literature that represents the students’ cultures, races, and classes, and through special activities where the students can act and reflect, can they grasp issues of justice and care.

Multicultural Pedagogies

Multicultural education has multiple definitions. Critical multicultural educators such as Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) believe in paying attention to the importance of what brings about race, class, and gender inequality. They define multiculturalism according to several kinds: conservative multiculturalism/monoculturalism that accepts White supremacy; liberal multiculturalism that searches for a common human race without differences; pluralist multiculturalism that celebrates human diversity, and critical multiculturalism that is concerned with what gives rise to race, class, and gender inequality. Critical multicultural pedagogies assign importance to outlining the way power shapes consciousness. The critical multiculturalism espoused by Sleeter (1991), Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), and others points to the importance of asking educators to focus their attention on how power is defined and distributed in society. Kincheloe and Steinberg defined critical multiculturalism as a pedagogy concerned with what gives rise to inequalities in society based on the issues of race, gender, and class.

Multicultural pedagogy aims to answer the question of how power hierarchies affect children, families, schools, etc. It deals with the ways that power shapes consciousness and the ways that gender, class, and race are represented in different social spheres. It tries to answer the questions regarding which culture is dominant and what the effects of cultural reproduction are. It deals with how resources are allocated and how we as subjects can change the world as it is represented or constructed in society. For example, it deals with how different cultures are represented in textbooks, the media (including the Internet), Web sites, cartoons, etc. In order to be critical, we

have to question the structures of power, such as the producers of texts, their position, the views represented within the text, the illustrations, etc. Through the act of criticism, children can be empowered. Critical analysis is important. Those who engage in it have to start with how the text relates to the experiences of the students. This provides room for critical reflection. In my classroom, the students, after reading a text, have to criticize it in some way. We thus engage in discussions of the quality of a lesson, a book, a video, etc. This helps the students to become not only consumers of information but also evaluators of what is given to them.

The advocates of critical multicultural pedagogies would create a curriculum that focuses on the ways that cultural patterns create situations of injustice in the classroom and society as a whole. The multiculturalism of Sleeter (1991), Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), and others emphasizes the importance of having educators focus their attention on how power is distributed in the classroom as well as in society. Multicultural education proponents are also interested in language use—in how people resist other languages, how other languages are imposed on people; how the dynamics play out in the use of any language; and how power is sometimes taken for granted, immune to criticism.

Among the books my class and I read during the year of this study was *La Mariposa* by Francisco Jimenez. It is a book about the struggles of an immigrant in a non-bilingual classroom. My students could reflect on and identify themselves with the character and can talk about issues of social injustice related to language.

Foucault (1994) described how knowledge is controlled by the groups in power that control important societal structures such as the media, the government, and the judicial spheres. These powerful groups create their own hegemony as defined by Gramsci (1988), who described how powerful groups control and manipulate ideologies in order to convince people to believe in the status quo. This ideological form of discrimination raises in people the need to show resistance through the creation of subjugated knowledge or knowledge that is not accepted by the majority of the people (Foucault). This subjugated knowledge can take the form of, for example, indigenous knowledge (Semali, 1999). Our class developed a series of artifacts that represent the evolving culture and knowledge of my students.

Bourdieu (1993) created the concept of cultural capital which suggests that every culture has a number of artifacts that represent that particular culture, such as paintings, monuments, books, religions, technologies, etc. The question then is, are we as educators respecting the cultures represented in our class, not just in terms of static representations, but as cultures in formation that have a history and a struggle that affects the whole of society, or are we just accepting the hegemony of the dominant culture as it presents itself through the media, laws, and judgments? Different scholars take different approaches to, or give different definitions of, multiculturalism. My classroom context was an interesting multicultural mix. I had one White American girl, one African American girl, a boy with a Mexican father, and the rest were Hispanic students whose families had lived in the United States for one or more generations. I dealt with the issue of race by including in the curriculum representatives of these groups. I included stories

about Mexican immigrants, stories about the civil rights movement, stories of English origin, and bilingual stories. These selections made everybody happy because everybody in the classroom was represented in some way.

When learning about my students, I realized that I needed to look not just at their IQ level but also at their social context. Their family life, their economic resources, and their family history are also important for my understanding of my students. In my character education class, the students made stories about things that happen in their neighborhood, among their families. These stories helped me to understand my students better, which is one of the goals of the multicultural education movement.

Birkel (2001) stated that multicultural education is first of all education and concerns mainly the processes of teaching and learning in the classroom. Multiculturalism is a movement that aims to diversify curricula, teaching methods, and scholarship based on the students' make-up. The goals of the movement are to democratize knowledge and education by validating the experiences and perspectives of all those groups personally marginalized or culturally and socially marginal to society. The multicultural approach aims to recover history and family cultural background. It also intends to positively affect the context of multicultural interactions by becoming socially active in the movement towards equity that began during the civil rights movement of the sixties. The process of affecting context involves giving a voice to the powerless. The general goals of multiculturalism are to learn to understand people better, to reduce prejudice, to fulfill the democratic ideal of equality, and to develop diversity. Hall (1997) pointed out the negative ways that minorities are represented in the media by

not giving them the sense of agency for which to strive in the future, but by limiting them to the stereotypical roles of maids, bandits, burglars, violent gangsters, etc. These representations do not contribute to the self-esteem of our culturally diverse students. Critical multicultural pedagogues have written extensively on how to teach students to be critical of the messages of the media. Cortés (2000) has written extensively about the pre-judgments that the media inculcates in children from the time they are very young. According to Cortés (1992), the media are saturated with negative messages, stereotypes, and prejudgments that discriminate against disadvantaged groups:

Through their interactions with the mass media, as well as through other reflections of the societal curriculum, young people learn language, acquire culture, obtain cross cultural knowledge, develop beliefs, hone perceptions, internalize attitudes, and observe patterns of behavior. (p. 18)

Some multiculturalists like Dilg (1999) believe that multiculturalism is mainly concerned with education. According to Dilg, the curriculum needs to be representative of the lives of our students. Educators need to choose the curriculum that recognizes positive qualities in our students' lives, their struggles, their faith, their love for their families, their courage, labor, etc. This year, I presented literature to my third-grade class that shows how minorities are portrayed in movies about the civil rights movement, stories about handicapped people who with much effort have succeeded, stories of families who love each other, etc. Dilg believes in the importance of using multicultural

books to permit the students to identify with stories about people of their culture, gender, or social class as characters. Multicultural literature can be very beneficial to my culturally diverse students, so I have incorporated it into my character education curriculum.

Dyson (1997) conducted studies on how to analyze issues of gender discrimination in elementary classrooms by analyzing superheroes through drama. Dyson showed students a way to be critical of the media. In her research, she gave the children the chance to create their own dramas. She found that girls wanted to be superheroes who are regarded as strong and courageous. Thus, Dyson gave a voice to her students, permitting them to express their resentment for the same culture that limits them. In this lesson, Dyson empowered her students to somehow change the world by the act of writing their own dramas with their own ideas and insights, after critically stepping outside of what was offered and creating their own context and constructs.

Something similar happened in my classroom. I divided the class into four groups to devise a short drama about any value they wished to portray. As it generally happens, the groups divided into girls' groups and boys' groups with two exceptions. One girl was selected to participate in a drama with the boys as the girlfriend of the Scorpion King. She did not like the part, so she asked me if she could help me with the scenery as a technical assistant, and I agreed. This may be an example of how girls get tired of being subordinated by boys and want to take leadership positions in alternative ways. Teachers can help their students understand that they can change their world by changing the way

they themselves are represented. Classrooms can become sites of reconstruction, of remaking, of reinventing the world, especially for culturally diverse students.

In the classroom, almost all of my students agreed that the best lesson was the one in which they had to design their own drama and put it in place. The children loved it. We made a video of the experience. The dramas were “The Mall Girls” (about friendship), “The Beach Kids” (about friendship), “The Mummy Returns” (about courage), and “The Scorpion King” (about courage). In this activity, the students had a chance to interact with each other and to make decisions about their work. The noise level in the classroom was louder, but in these interactions with their peers, the children probably learned more about how to behave morally and what friendship and courage meant for them than they might have in other activities. The dramas were like a scapegoat for my students’ feelings in the classroom and society. They related to a highly consumerist society that still represents women as weak and unimportant, and men as courageous and strong. The stereotypes used in the dramas helped me understand the position that my students were assuming through this class. They reflected the fruits of patriarchal and middle-class ideals. I was responsible for questioning these constructs without offending the spontaneous creations of my students.

Critical Pedagogies

The critical pedagogues point to the importance of taking a critical stance on the daily issues of society. Critical pedagogues such as Macedo (2000) critiqued the formation of educators only in methods, not in a reflective teaching practice that includes

a knowledge of educational theory and the politics of society in relation to the students. Freire (1985) denounced a society that does not take into consideration the cultural capital of its students, including language and culture. Giroux (2001) pointed out how education can help students become agents of social change. All of these authors stress the importance of being critical of the media. They have also denounced the negative representations of some groups in the media and have urged educators to make their students aware of and able to criticize these representations.

The theory of critical pedagogy is to teach children how to transform their world for the good of all. For Freire (1985), a major exponent of critical pedagogy, power in the classroom should be shared by the teacher and the students, which is what he called a dialogical approach to education. Students need to learn how to “read the world” by developing a critical stance about what is happening around them. How is this related to morality and character education? If we really care and fight for justice, we are moral beings. Our responsibility to the Other is to change the world to create a more just and caring society. This means that in the classroom the teacher needs to respect the rights of her/his students and recognize the values that they already have. In this sense, the teacher becomes a moral learner too. The values that the children bring to the class are their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993).

I was impressed by how much my third graders knew about values. They already knew about respect, responsibility, honesty, friendship, etc. I just needed to sit with them and talk about these things. They had a sense of the importance of the family, friendship, and cleanliness. They were also aware that they were poorer than many people, but richer

than others. They had hope and eagerness to achieve in life, and they fought for their rights. A simple example of the latter is that when my grade-level colleagues were doing a project on butterflies with their students, and the students in my classroom were not invited to participate. When my children asked me why we were not doing butterflies, or why they were excluded, I told them that I didn't know anything about the project because I hadn't been informed. To compensate for their exclusion, I promised to do a project with them and so we decided to do a project on fish. This is one of the many examples that show that children recognize the impact of the outside world on them.

Our society is permeated with moral messages embedded in historical sites of remembrance and in the current media. Museums and monuments send messages to our children about the effects that history has had on our public conscience. For example, the monuments to the victims of the Holocaust in Germany, such as the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere, send the message to our youth that the Holocaust was morally wrong and that such an event should never be allowed to happen again (Young, 2000). The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., is a healing site for the families of the war victims, which helps to reconcile them to the tragedy of the death of their loved ones by allowing them to leave actual artifacts that the victims possessed (Sturken, 1997). Museums that display photographs of historic events like the World War II bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are testimonies to the dangers of a nuclear war (McLear, 1999). These sites of remembrance prompt us to effect a change in attitudes, values, and actions toward others so that history won't repeat itself.

We can incorporate notions of human rights, peace, and justice into the character education curriculum. For example, we as a class created a monument to the families of the victims of 9/11 because the year I did the teacher research in my classroom was the year following the tragedy. Each student wrote a positive feeling on a card, such as “hope” or “pride” and glued it to a box. At the end, we had a “building” made up of positive feelings. The students also did paper-covered cardboard statues that portrayed any person representing the 16 universal values prescribed in the district’s character education curriculum. Later, I photographed the kids with their statues, some of which were exhibited in the school.

This reality of being inside and outside of the world was viewed by Freire (1985) as the need for human beings to step outside their own experience to reflect on it. One of the goals of critical pedagogy is to facilitate reflection. Beyond this, Giroux (1999) saw critical pedagogy in relation to representation as a way to give our youth a sense of agency in their lives and to guide them in finding new possibilities in their future lives. Representations in museums, galleries, theatres, and schools can be pedagogically important because of their highly moral content and their potential for further reflection.

As part of my third-grade character education curriculum, I designed writing prompts for my students to help them reflect on their own lives, which made writing easier and more fun for the children. The use of posters, books, and videos helped us reflect on our own values. It was interesting how I got my students to write longer moral stories during the year of my study. I went to a workshop on balanced literacy, where the trainer taught us a good strategy. First, she showed a picture that had to do with a topic,

and the students discussed the picture and told stories that connected to the picture. Then they asked each other questions that helped to clarify their stories. After they answered all the clarifying questions, they had more ideas about how to write their stories. After the workshop, we actually used this story-writing technique in my classroom. For example, I would present a poster on a value and the children would discuss the value. Then they talked to their partner about an occasion when they had been courageous, honest, kind, etc. After they told their stories, their partners asked them questions. After answering the questions, they had more ideas to add to their stories. This is an example of the creative power of listening. By listening to each other, the students could write longer and more understandable stories. They could learn more about who they are by writing their own stories and achieve self-dominion.

The Role of the Community in Character Education

The goal of a community should be to achieve a collective morality that is not regulated by the imposed values of the dominant class, or what Gramsci (1988) classified as hegemony. But rather the community should develop its own values according to people's experiences. However, our low-income communities are often voiceless because they are regulated by the values of the majority (Villenas, 2001). They seem to be complying with the notion of moral maturity, but they are really dependent on what others decide for them, or what Boler (1999) called a kind of "pastoral value." It is therefore imperative to accept the notion that we live in multicultural communities that are defined by different factors such as class, gender, culture, language, and race. It is

important to understand the effects of discrimination in race and language on the well-being of the whole community. Individual students are usually judged according to their race, gender, and even language.

In the action of building a community of learners, the members learn to see each other as part of a specific context that they can make better. A sense of solidarity builds up the self-esteem of its members. If the community is well directed, a sense of self-awareness in the group makes people more reflective of their own reality and able to compare it to their outside world. For example, in a study conducted by Villenas (2001), Latina mothers voiced their opinion of what “educated” meant. Their views differed from those of the Anglo teachers of their children. In specific groups in the community, individuals negotiate their identities within and outside the group, creating a sense of opening to the world and maintaining a sense of dialogue in the group about what the objectives of the community should be according to the times. I could see this sense of opening to the outside world among the students in my classroom. The students knew what the other classes were doing, and they liked to go to the Internet to communicate with other people. They liked to visit their previous teachers. They especially enjoyed when, at the end of the year, all of the third graders together had three field trips and the May Fair directed by the PTO. In other words, they liked feeling interconnected.

Giroux (2001) denounced the devastating effects of neo-liberalism on our society’s moral formation. In its deification of the market sphere and individualism, and its deification of the private market, he believes that neo-liberalism deifies individualism in detriment to the conscience and civic and moral responsibility of the common people,

especially by eliminating the public spaces that make debate and dialogue possible. It is my belief that in the construction of a community of learners, we create a public space for dialogue. This is especially true in the classroom where dialogue is always enacted.

Sleeter (1991) paid more attention to the way social structures impact the learning of our students. My students were mostly poor. They had, however, the hope that they could live a better life here than in their countries of origin. The school had special ways to help these students. The Family Center in the building provided them with health care, including dental health and vaccines. Some corporations provided the students with book bags full of school-related materials. The Parent Teacher Organization put in place a May Fair with prizes and games, and food for the kids. The district provided field trips to historical and recreational sites for the students. Volunteers helped to find appropriate winter clothing for students in need. Family visitors helped the families of the students get support from different social agencies. Besides, the school building is new, beautiful, and equipped with computers.

These local contributions to the school community are an example of morality as related to culture, which is well delineated by Nieto (1999). She stressed the importance of maintaining communication between homes and schools in order to create a community of learners:

When socio-cultural and socio-political frames of reference, rather than just a psychological one, are used to explain and understand learning, unequal outcomes among students of diverse backgrounds can be better understood. (p. 166)

Latina pedagogues such as Nieto (1999) believe in the importance of creating multicultural communities that respect differences and motivate them to improve. Creating communities is a difficult task, but it is crucial to the students' growth. Villenas (2001) wrote about the forms of resistance that Latina mothers have undertaken because they do not feel they are really heard and taken into account in the schools. It is important to understand that the main source of morality for the students comes from their homes. If educators do not take into account the home culture, there will always be a gap between the school and the home that may confuse the students and contribute to their failure.

The involvement of the community in the school is crucial, according to Nieto (1999). In a community everybody is a learner—the teacher, the students, the parents, and other stakeholders. The dynamics of relatedness in a community of learners create public spaces that promote moral values such as cooperation, trust, work-ethic, tolerance, etc. As Bauman (1989) stated,

. . . the factors responsible for the presence of moral capacity must be sought in the social, but not societal sphere. Moral behavior is conceivable only in the context of coexistence, of “being with others,” that is, a social context; but it does not owe its appearance to the presence of supra-individual agencies of training and enforcement, that is of a societal context. (p. 179)

Rogers (2000) stated the importance of listening to each other: “It is a moral time, a time of non-indifference to one person to another, of obligation and responsibility to and for the other” (p. 19).

Empathy and care have enormous effects on our moral conscience, as stated by Ortega and Minguéz (1999):

It is through empathy that the individual develops his[/her] self and understands his[/her] context in life. To put oneself in the place of the other and share his[/her] feelings is not the result of an exclusively intellectual exercise, but also of the will, which involves emotions and passion, that is feeling. (p. 4)

However, this “listening to the Other” is more than just a way to create empathy; it is a way to connect my reality to the realities of others. We come to understand that we are mutually interrelated and in some ways the same. In my school’s Family Center, language was a real key. There the students could speak Spanish or English, and see adults of their own culture working to help them and their families .

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown multiple ways to integrate morality and pedagogy. New fields in pedagogy such as the critical, feminist, and multicultural have contributed to the development of morality and character in our schools. Critical pedagogy stresses the importance of learning to be critical of media representations and social structures in

order to transform them. Multicultural pedagogy reinterprets our socio-cultural contexts, focusing on issues of race, class, and gender inequalities. The feminist pedagogues have developed theory in an attempt to democratize our classrooms, paying more attention to gender issues and the construction of learning environments that promote sincere dialogue and reflection. By democratizing our classrooms, reinterpreting the social and the historical spheres in view of our students' realities and needs in relation to gender, class, and race in order to transform these same structures, and by teaching students to be critical observers of the media and the world, we can model and teach values. We can integrate values education in relation to our students' needs in our curriculum, using the contributions of feminist, multicultural, and critical pedagogies, which are mutually related. We, as teachers, can help our students to act according to the principles of justice and care in view of their present manifestations and interpretations in our society, and therefore in our classrooms.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the methods I used to conduct this qualitative teacher research.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology that I used to conduct a study of character education that I taught in my third-grade classroom in a Pennsylvania public elementary school in 2002-2003. There were two characteristics to my research, which I designed and conducted mainly in my classroom: it was both teacher research and qualitative research. Generally, “teacher research” has been defined by Hubbard and Power (1999) as research that is initiated and carried out by teachers in their classrooms. It can focus on problems that teachers are trying to solve in their classrooms. This kind of research helps teachers to become better teachers. As to the qualitative nature of the research, my aim was to understand the process by which my students learned values, from their perspective, and through data I collected in my reflective journal. My research was based partly on close observation of my students at work in my classroom. This kind of qualitative teacher research is most often motivated by a teacher’s personal question or problem in the classroom. Within the framework of qualitative research, I chose to reflect on my own teaching of character education, especially to answer the question of how children learn values that they bring to the classroom.

Qualitative research therefore seemed appropriate for this study for several reasons. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) ascribe the following attributes to qualitative research in educational settings: it is naturalistic, descriptive, process-oriented, inductive, and meaningful. Qualitative research is naturalistic because it is concerned with the context in

which it takes place. The research that I conducted and report on here meets all of these qualitative characteristics as delineated by Bogdan and Biklen. This research took place in the naturalistic setting of my third-grade classroom where I was teaching character education, the topic of this study. Therefore, I sought to gain insights into my own efforts to develop a positive classroom environment that supported relationships characterized by two values: care and justice.

My research was process-oriented because it was concerned with how the children's values were affected by incorporating my students' voices into the development and implementation of a character education curriculum that I was using in my classroom. The research was descriptive because I gathered data in the form of field notes, audio tape recordings, journal reflections, and my students' artifacts. The research was inductive because I analyzed the data from the specific to the general; from observations of specific behaviors and feedback of individual students to their general application to the whole class. And finally, this research was meaningful because I was concerned with how children make sense of their lives and acquire values. This research study was also meaningful because it had the potential for improving my teaching and for providing insights into similar situations of students and teachers who are engaged in character education.

In summary, in this qualitative teacher inquiry, I did not try to reach a "traditional objective truth" but rather to report a reflective process in which I was deeply involved as a classroom teacher. My objective was to increase the insights and understanding of the process of teaching values in the classroom.

My Research Approach

I employed critical ethnography techniques that are often used in qualitative research as reported by Thomas (1993). He stated that critical ethnography asks, “What could be happening?”—often with a political purpose. I applied this question to this study by asking what was happening in my students’ lives and by giving authority to their voices in order to learn the values that they brought to the classroom in order to further develop and implement my character education curriculum. I view this approach as an important component of my research design because, much as Thomas warns, things are not always what they seem, since people are often able to dominate others in culturally acceptable ways. I recorded what my students told me as objectively as possible. However, simply describing the words used by my students would not be enough. Their words would also need my interpretation because critical ethnographers seek to connect the meanings of the meanings, according to Thomas.

Therefore, in this study, as a teacher researcher I listened to and observed my students and tried to give them a voice as well as interpreted their words. This was particularly important during the first phase of the research because, as I discovered, the students did not like me in certain ways because I represented authority. I did not expect this attitude because I had perceived that I had an excellent relationship with my students. But had I not given them a voice during my study, I would not have gained this insight. In this process, the children became comfortable with using direct and indirect criticism of me as a teacher and with my use of authority in the classroom.

I also gave my students power to effect change under specific circumstances and in appropriate situations. Feminist theorists assert that teachers have the power to give power. This was a major interest for me as I asked myself: How much power can I give my students? However, I continually sought to obtain different levels of meaning from my research in an effort to do justice to my students by giving them a voice. Therefore, I was guided by many feminist studies (Gilligan, 1993; McLeod, Yates, & Halasa, 1994; Ruiz, 1991; Tierney, 1993) that had not only recorded student responses to teachers in traditional formats but had also included other interactions with students and observations of their behaviors aside from verbal communication. By giving my students a voice, my intention was to share with them the power to report their perceptions and an opportunity to express their views and their knowledge of the values that make up their character development.

To achieve these purposes, I followed Wolcott's (1994) suggestion to divide my qualitative research into three phases: description, analysis, and interpretation. For the description, I used the observations I had recorded in my reflective journal to describe my students' artifacts. In the analysis of this data, I discussed the topics that my students mentioned more often in their artifacts. In the last phase, as suggested by Wolcott, I interpreted my observations in light of my original research questions, and more specifically, in light of my work as a teacher and as a researcher, and I discussed how my findings and any new knowledge derived from this study could potentially contribute to the field of education and future research in character education.

Research Context: Values Education

I have always felt that the teaching of values is an important goal of public education and that it should be a positive and important part of the curriculum, a view supported by Lickona (1991). However, during my 12 years of teaching, I have found that, in most school districts, values education is poorly articulated and, at best, hidden in the curriculum. Furthermore, because of the limited direct attention given to the teaching of values, there are limited materials for teachers and administrators interested in teaching this topic. Therefore, I felt that it would be an important contribution to the field of practice if I could develop and test a values-centered character education curriculum. Further, I felt that any contribution that I could make would depend substantially on the effectiveness of the methodologies and the substance of the curriculum I developed as a result of my research.

Recognizing that values are learned not only in school but also in other key social contexts, including social interaction with peers, family, and community members, it would be important to include these contexts in the study as well. Therefore, I incorporated opportunities to learn the values that my students were learning in their daily lives with their families, friends, and acquaintances. I assumed that understanding the values they were learning and how they were learning them in those environments would help me to teach them more effectively in the classroom setting.

I believe that character education should be at the heart of the role that the schools have as agents of socialization in our society. Therefore, we need to be more clear as educators as to how values permeate our lives and as to how they are currently only a

hidden part of our curriculum, meaning that they are implied but not directly taught as they were in the character education program in my district. Furthermore, I believe that values should be taught as a distinct component of the curriculum. For this reason, I wanted to know what my students value, how they have learned those values, and how I could help them learn values in the classroom.

In seeking to make a meaningful link between school and other socializing institutions like the family and community, I have been guided by research from the past three decades that has sought to increase our understanding of the schools as socialization agents in a multicultural and socio-economically diverse society (Nieto, 1999; Perry & Fraser, 1993; Soto, 1997). The literature suggests that we need to learn more about issues of social justice and care, and how the variables of race, culture, gender, and language affect our students, individually and collectively. Most directly, we need to know how teacher/student interaction and student/student interaction can both model and generate behaviors that are predictable and humane because they are based on shared values.

The multicultural/multiracial setting of my classroom presented additional special challenges and opportunities because numerous cultures and value systems interact. Throughout our public schools, particularly in large urban areas, this is increasingly the reality. Therefore, this study also sought to use the knowledge it generated about culturally and racially diverse students, the values they came to the school with, the conflicts (implicit and explicit) that they faced, their preferred learning styles, and their own perspectives on values in order to create a more comprehensive values curriculum.

Other Research Considerations

Many researchers in education (Creswell, 1994) believe that teacher research is most productive when it is motivated by a teacher's personal question or a problem that they have encountered in the classroom. This was the case in this study. I focused on a problem I faced as a teacher, i.e., how to teach character education, and felt strongly that in the process of conducting the study I would have the opportunity to solve my problem or at least to increase my own knowledge about teaching, my students' lives, and classroom life, which the literature in the field had failed to provide. I sought to understand how students learn values, from their perspective.

Since teachers continually define the parameters and the process of the research, teacher bias is a factor that must constantly be considered. However, the effects of this bias are minimized when the researcher continuously checks for openness and objectivity among other control measures. This potential for bias required that I closely observe my students at work and systematically pay attention to the details I reported during my observation as well as thoroughly document my students' behaviors. Thus, my research techniques were guided by other researchers who are experts in this qualitative methodology (Creswell, 1994; Hubbard & Power, 1999; Thomas, 1993). There is a large body of qualitative research by teachers that has greatly contributed to improving classroom instruction and curriculum.

The Research Questions for the Study

For the purposes of this study, my emerging question was: How do third-grade students learn the values of caring and justice after discussing issues of social justice in reference to gender, culture, and social class and when generating certain kinds of artifacts? This question emerged while I was teaching character education to my third graders as I wanted to know whether or not I was teaching it well. In order to have a sense of what impacts my instructional practices and what effect this new curriculum had on the students, I needed to learn what constituted the core values that my students brought to the classroom. I was also concerned about my students' behaviors and how these could be interpreted in relation to their expressed values. Ultimately, I hoped to gain insights that would assist me in teaching character education more effectively.

Some of the sub-questions that arose as I was preparing for my research included:

12. What is the nature of the teacher/student and student/student interactions that are taking place in the classroom, and what student artifacts/creations are emerging from these?
13. How do the students respond to the use of multicultural artifacts to promote critical discussions in the classroom?
14. How can the teacher/researcher describe these interactions and creations?
15. How can the teacher/researcher describe the climate in the classroom?
16. What effect does the character education curriculum seem to have on the classroom curriculum as a whole?

17. What kinds of interpretations can be inferred from these observations?
18. What interpretations does the teacher/researcher make that exert a daily influence on curriculum choice?
19. What new concepts and themes emerged from the data?
20. Did new themes or topics emerge that were not expected?
21. What insights did the study provide?
22. How can the teacher/researcher report findings back to the students/subjects?

Teacher Research

Burnafor, Fischer, and Hobson (2001) explained that teacher research needs to be presented in a way that can be useful for teachers. Teachers take action and make things happen in the classroom. Reflection is a process of making sense of one's actions or experience, and of telling the story of one's journey. Teacher research bridges the gap between teaching and researching. Therefore, my teaching was reflected in my actions, and by reflecting on my actions, I believe I became a better teacher through this process. This practice expanded my capacity to know my students and myself. During my research as a teacher, I learned to understand my students by gaining insight into what their values were and how these gradually changed in response to the methods I used and the substance of the curriculum materials. Through their artifacts, I was able to get a measure of the impact of the character education curriculum in my classroom.

Subsequently, I constructed the curriculum through reflective study and action based on my findings.

Research Methods

My qualitative research methods consisted of my observations of my class, directed class discussions, and samples of artifacts and other kinds of school work by the 18 third-grade students in my class at Valley Elementary School in an eastern city in Pennsylvania. The cultural composition of the class was one White American girl, one African American girl, and 16 Hispanic American boys and girls. The Hispanic children came from first- to fifth-generation immigrant families. I conducted the character education class every week for 12 weeks for 40 minutes with these third graders. I also observed my students' behaviors during other classes in the school. I taught my third-grade class in a self-contained classroom. I taught all their subjects except those taught by specialists, including art, physical education, and library. I had the opportunity, therefore, to observe these 18 students in contexts other than in the character education classes that I gave and to observe the same students with other teachers.

During this research, using an analysis of my reflective journal and my observations in my third-grade classroom, I enhanced the very basic character education program originally outlined by the district task force, developing a character education curriculum specifically for my third-grade classroom from what I was observing and learning about my students' values. I decided to modify the existing curriculum because I was required to meet minimum educational requirements for my students yet teach the

district's existing character education curriculum. I viewed my research as a valid process of curriculum revision and enhancement of the original character education program developed by the district task force. I derived part of my enhanced character education curriculum from the school district's fifth-grade curriculum, which included a character education program called Character Education Curriculum: Developing Responsible Citizens, which had been developed and distributed by the Character Education Institute in San Antonio, Texas. My school district also provided a list of public library books that were classified according to the value that each book addressed. I adapted these materials, using ideas from feminist, multicultural, and critical pedagogies and the themes that emerged from a review of my reflective journal.

However, I found the character education curriculum from the Character Education Institute, which the district had recommended, to be somewhat limited in the context of its stories, which were oriented to a White, suburban, middle-class reader, and therefore not appropriate for my culturally diverse class. I tried to use more meaningful literature that was not necessarily in the public library, especially multicultural books. I also added some other materials to the curriculum, including posters that depicted the values that I sought to develop in my students, which I purchased at the school store. I used these materials as starters for classroom discussions on values. I also used ready-made books of values for children from the Modern Curriculum Press. I tried to use some lessons from the district's original character education curriculum packet, but they were limited, not because the package was unsatisfactory in itself, but because it targeted a White, middle-class audience as well.

Time Frame for the Study

My research plan called for conducting the study during a six-month period. This meant two months for preparation and four months for the classroom observation segment. Studies of this nature are best conducted during a designated period because the quantity of data collected can be quite substantial, and in the end, can be more difficult to analyze and reach conclusions about. After two months' preparation, I began my research study in my classroom in February 2003 and ended it in May 2003.

Data Collection

I gathered my data primarily in five ways: (a) field notes in the form of a reflective journal, (b) informal student surveys, (c) student artifacts, including samples of work created by the children, (d) audio taped discussions in class, and (e) personal ethnographic interviews.

The reflective journal. I took field notes while I observed the children during the day and during the class as they responded to the character education curriculum. I recorded these notes in my reflective journal. This was my primary research for the study. I was careful to record extensive notes and wrote in my reflective journal on a daily basis. I recorded my classroom observations systematically, using two columns: one for a description of what I observed and one for my interpretation of what I observed. I repeatedly reviewed the journal to ensure that I was as comprehensive and systematic in recording the students' voices as possible. In writing my journal entries, I focused on how the children were learning about values. I reflected on my teaching methodologies,

materials, and the cognitive and affective aspects of how my students liked to learn about values. I described the learning and application strategies they engaged in while acquiring their values. In recording my observations of the children's behaviors, I also reflected on how values can be observed, characterized, or measured by the observer/researcher. This was an area in which very limited research has been conducted. As a consequence, I had little to guide my work.

Informal student surveys. I conducted oral student surveys in order to obtain background information, their perceptions, and reactions (e.g., what their favorite lesson was and why). Specifically, the surveys were short-answer questions I asked of the children in the classroom (see Appendix A).

Student artifacts. For the purposes of this study, "artifacts" refer to the students' products that emerged from each lesson. These included things that the students created, such as their stories and dramas, and artworks. The students created things individually and collectively.

Audio tapes of class lessons and discussions. I audio taped two lessons and listened to them. I incorporated insights I obtained from them into my curriculum planning. More specifically, I listened to the reactions of the students to their skits.

Ethnographic interviews. I conducted ethnographic interviews with two leaders of the Character Education Program Design Committee in the Valley Area School District. I conducted these interviews in order to gain insight into why and how the character education curriculum was implemented in the district. I used pseudonyms for the interviewees and the school district and my elementary school.

Based on the insights and understandings that emerged from my review of the literature and my reflective journal, and other data collection measures, I developed the character education curriculum for my classroom. I took elements from my teacher research and elements from critical ethnography as outlined by Thomas (1993). During my teaching of character education, I summarized and analyzed my experience by using what Thomas differentiated as note-taking (actual observations) and note-making (interpretations) on the data that I collected from pictures, posters, photos of the students' cardboard and paper statues, and video and audio tape recordings.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was an ongoing process during this study, as is typical in qualitative research studies of this nature. The different data collection techniques described here, though similar, required different processes. This approach allowed me as a researcher to incorporate the understandings I gained from each step in the research into my teaching/learning process throughout the research study. The following is a description of my data analysis, primarily using the data from my reflective journal and the students' artifacts.

I began by systematically rereading my reflective journal entries. As I did this, I also began analyzing the students' artifacts systematically. It became apparent that many words were recurring in the artifacts. I highlighted all the repeated terms in their artifacts, such as their favorite value terms, and so on. These were the codes that I used during my research. Then I developed categories for these codes from the most frequently recurring

terms or topics mentioned by the students. Out of these categories I developed themes that helped me describe my students' values. After developing these categories and the themes that emerged, I was better prepared to respond to my initial research questions.

Then I returned to my reflective journal and the original artifacts to ensure that I had not missed any words or language patterns. This was to ensure that I had taken all my reflections into consideration. From the themes that emerged, coupled with my classroom observations, I reached certain conclusions that assisted me in developing the character education curriculum, which played a central role in this study. This research helped me to learn what my students valued and how they might best learn the values that I was to focus on in this study.

According to Hubbard and Power (1999), data analysis is conducted to see “what is like what. There appear patterns in your work, patterns appear—pieces of data that fit unexpectedly next to each other, leading to a flash of insight” (p. 120).

Finally, I analyzed my data following the example of the tree diagram in the Nudist software program for qualitative research.

Ethical Principles

Before I started the study, I obtained written permission from the parents of my third-grade children to allow their participation, as required by the Office of Human Resources Institutional Research Board at The Pennsylvania State University. The students returned envelopes with the consent forms signed by their parents to a cooperating teacher. I explained to the parents that all the information was confidential as

was the identity of their children. I understood that I could not indoctrinate my students into any specific theory or ideology. I just presented classroom activities in character education and analyzed my students' reactions. For instance, the students wrote their own definitions of character traits without any advice or criticism on my part. In this way, the curriculum followed the district's guideline for the protection of human subjects and did not influence the students' consciences in any way. I also received permission from my school principal and the central administrator of the school district to conduct the study.

Limitations of the Study

One consequence of using a qualitative methodology is that the study's findings are specific to the study participants and their context, which limits its replicability and generalizability to other school settings. Nonetheless, as my findings show, the study was meaningful to me as a teacher because it helped me to better understand my students' values and to improve my teaching, while developing a more useful and meaningful character education curriculum. In addition, the outcome of this study has the potential to offer other teachers interested in character education certain insights that might inform their own teaching and research.

Chapter 5 describes and presents an outline of my character education curriculum framework, which I developed during my teacher research for this study.

Chapter 5

MY CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents an outline of the character education curriculum that I developed and used with my third-grade class in my elementary school in the Valley School District. The excerpts from my reflective journal briefly describe how I implemented the curriculum during the weekly 60-minute periods when I taught character education to my students. I also illustrate how I used data I gathered during my teaching of this curriculum.

Description of My Curriculum Framework

My character education curriculum consisted of lesson plans/units related to the 16 universal values that were part of the district curriculum for its Character Education Program. However, I enhanced the district curriculum to match the multicultural make-up of my third-grade class and to help identify and work with the values they already possessed.

I used each lesson to teach what a particular value means and to develop an individual understanding or internalization of that value within my third-grade students. Since the central part of the lesson was to provide the students with an understanding of the meaning of the value, I began by asking them what they thought the value meant, thereby soliciting their prior knowledge of the value. The next step was to problematize the value in the form of a question or questions, asking why it would be hard to achieve

that value. The objective of this questioning was to give the children time to dialogue about their life experiences in relation to the value. The next step was to present to the students an artifact as the point of reference for further discussion. The artifact was a multicultural book, a video, a Web site, a poem, an artwork, etc. The objective of this step was to analyze the artifact critically in light of social constructions like gender, race, class, age, etc. This was one of the most important parts of the lesson and one that required the most delicacy and posed the most difficulty. Because third-grade students are still children, it is very important that a topic be treated in a very sensitive manner. The last step was to offer the students time to produce an artifact of their own. This would allow the imagination of the children to roam and allow the children to internalize the value according to their needs through engagement in the expression of it. This was then followed by a group session in which the children had an opportunity to share and discuss their individual products. The final or concluding activity was to construct a sentence collectively as a class that contained the value word and that explained its meaning in a context.

The following is an outline of this curriculum which I implemented in my third-grade classroom during my teacher research on character education:

I. Presentation of the value (e.g., respect)

- a. Elicit prior knowledge
- b. Problematize the value

II. Presentation of the artifact

a. Critical analysis according to

1) Gender

2) Class

3) Race

4) Age

III. Production of an artifact by each student

a. Production of artifact independently

b. Sharing time as a class

c. Publishing the products as a class

IV. Class collective construction of a sentence that contains the value word and that explains its meaning in context

My Daily Experiences With the Curriculum

As ethnographic researchers have often learned, the plan for a study and how it actually unfolds are often quite different. In this study, the curriculum framework that I planned and the actual way the class developed were very different. I narrate here what actually happened in the class and provide further analysis and interpretation of the data before illustrating how I specifically used this curriculum framework in a lesson. Most of these narrations are taken from my reflective journal where I recorded briefly on a daily basis what I did in each lesson. The following is a brief sample of these field notes.

9/6/02

I began the year yesterday. I have decided to focus my attention on the issue of identity because I think that only in the process of knowing themselves do children feel motivated to learn about others. I have chosen the chapter from *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez, the author of *La Mariposa*. It is a book about the hazards that Mexican migrant children suffer when immigrating to the United States illegally. I chose this book because I think my children can identify with children who frequently change the places they live. The only problem with this chapter/book is that it doesn't have big colorful pictures with which children can identify themselves such as picture books have. In the first lesson I asked them to draw their own picture according to what they read and also write about a time when they also had to change places. I read the book *La Mariposa* [*The Butterfly*] to them, which is a picture book, and we talked about the strategies that Jimenez uses as a writer. I acquainted them with the author, his style and the context of the book. Francisco Jimenez was himself a migrant student. I was amazed when the children applauded after I read the book. In the story, Juanito has problems learning in school. At the end, the teacher to some extent makes peace with this misunderstood bilingual immigrant Mexican student. At the end of the year, in the story, the butterfly flies out of the jar symbolizing the freedom experienced when we come out of our limited circumstances. For me, the message of this story is about our quest for liberty and how when the purpose of schooling is well understood and practiced, it can become a liberating experience. I realized that for

the next class I was going to present pictures of migrant students from a Web site on the computer. I will also relate the migrant experience with the students to “camping” or anything related like sleepovers, family visits, etc.

9/10/02

We had the “Open House” today. I reflected on the importance of “active participation” of parents in school.

12/29/02

I have been reading the book *The Critical Ethnography*. I’ve decided to include in my character education class the following elements:

- 1) Individual, small, and whole groups
- 2) Storybook Weaver and Internet report
- 3) Dramatization with video recorder

I have given considerable thought to the process of note-taking and note-making. The difference between interpreting and observing, even the process of observation, involves interpretation to some extent. I also realized I can use the Martin L. King video on the holiday celebrating his birthday to introduce the concept of race and discrimination to the students. I can focus my observation on how the students are learning about values. The culture of the classroom is very important. Daily reflection for a teacher is a matter of great importance. Reflection helps assessment to be a day-to-day labor.

1/9/03

Today the actual research started. I gave each student a book from the series Character Education of Modern Curriculum Press. These books are picture books, colorful and contain children of all races in school settings doing common things that students do. The children liked them. Each one sat on the teacher's chair and said what the book was about, if they liked it and why and what the value meant to them. I believe that the students liked the books because they were easy to read, had nice pictures, and they could relate to them. Most of the students had the knowledge of what the values were. Some said they chose that book because they knew what it meant and wanted to learn more about it. These facts corroborate the idea of cultural capital and its relationship to teaching. We should start teaching from what the students know.

The topics that the students mostly mentioned were: family relationships, respecting and caring for families, friends' relationships, being cooperative, working together, altruistic actions, the Golden Rule, not doing to others what others won't do to you, having quality time with our family, baby sitting, etc. The students also mentioned the value of order, cleanness, and neatness—relating it to responsibility. They also mentioned the desire to have altruistic attitudes.

I reflected on my own perception that some of these values are self contained in others like generosity and compassion, friendliness and cooperation. The children showed a fair understanding of the values and wanted to learn more about them. The children's sitting in a u-shape helped me guide the discussion

while creating a physical sense of “community.”

1/23/03

We already have discussed issues of race by seeing the video on Martin L. King. We discussed how racial discrimination might not let us be kind, generous, etc. We discussed issues of social class by reading the book *The Rainbow Fish*, about how people of different classes don't share and appreciate each other.

We did an activity in which the children gave each other a shiny scale that meant a gift. They had to think of a gift and create it—or create an imaginary gift. Children seemed to like the activity. Mostly the gifts were material things. Children don't have a clear notion that a gift can be an abstract feeling or virtue. They prefer to give concrete things like toys, pets, etc.

1/27/03

I am planning to get the children ready to do a graphic organizer on the meaning of their character value. I would like to see what they think is important about a value.

1/28/03

We did a search on the Internet of each value. The children received a printed paper and I asked them to highlight what they considered important. I gave them a graphic organizer to organize their thoughts. This activity was too hard for the kids. They couldn't understand very well the explanations of the values and could not translate them into the graphic organizer. The abstract

content of the lesson was hard for them to grasp.

1/30/03

Today I presented to the students the issue of gender. Why can't girls do things that boys do? I developed two lists and a question. The children reacted in a strange and unexpected way; they seemed not to be impressed, and sometimes smiled. Then they saw the movie *Mulan* about a Chinese girl warrior. Again the use of concrete references like a movie is more effective in introducing the discussion as Ellsworth (1997) has noted.

Some of the things the children mentioned that boys do are: go to war, be doctors, ministers, bus drivers, farmers, garbage men, play games, play sports, teachers, plumbers, fix houses, fool around, fix cars, etc. Some of the things mentioned that girls did were: nurses, principals, news reporters, play "Barbies," play basketball, house cleaning, teachers, mothers, clean clothes, make up, war, work, cook, paint, pay rent, buy clothes, shop.

For boys the answer selected most often was play sports; for girls, being mothers and paying rent. I think these are the things these children mostly see and mostly value.

The children follow the line of seeing parenting as a mother's role as well as taking care of the house and the boys being out playing sports, working, or fooling around.

2/14/03

Today was Valentine's Day and I presented a movie of the real Christian martyr St. Valentine. The children enjoyed it. They seemed to have a great respect and preference for altruistic deeds and their relationship to love

2/16/03

I read four different versions of Cinderella to the children—each from a different culture. They liked the differences in culture and preferred the story of Adelita, a Mexican Cinderella. Perhaps this was because it connects to their culture and has some words in Spanish that they speak or hear at home. I think the issue here is one of identity. Children prefer stories they can identify with. They also liked the idea of turning from poor to rich, from servitude to empowerment, especially when it can happen in any culture, setting and/or place. These responses suggest that these children have high expectations for their futures.

3/1/03

It seems the children are not very clear about what prejudice is—racial, social, or cultural. I acknowledge that these are difficult things to understand and to talk about. It is hard for them to understand what multiculturalism is. I plan to do the research inductively. Ask the children what they know about values by putting up some posters around the class and asking them to write their own meaning.

3/5/03

We read the story “So Much” about a family, a big family that loves the baby of the family. The children made connections to the text. All of them talked about surprise parties with their families. One student during independent reading mentioned to me that her father is an alcoholic and sometimes fights with her mother. This points out that family life is not always a happy experience. One of the goals of character education should be to help heal these wounds by helping children increase their understandings about the stresses all family members are under and helping them to cope with them and their consequences through character education.

3/11/03

The art teacher is going to have the children create paper statues to give the students an opportunity to create something concrete that incorporates a value. I talked to the children about doing dramas and videotaping them. I believe they liked these ideas. These activities tend to empower students because they let them express their feelings and this assists the development of their self-esteem and identity construction.

4/12/03

I observe that there is a deep sense of rebelliousness in my students, especially with regard to authority. Authority is seen as a threat, especially when the students are pressed over their limits in learning and behaving. I have to negotiate with them. when to give them more power and when to assume power

myself. For example, I said to the students that I was going to tape them while they were playing. One of the students was asking me daily about the plays. He saw in this action of videotaping and creating drama a kind of liberation. I noticed that the students needed a lot of help in making the skits. I gave each group feedback with the rest of the students.

Up to this point, my research has tended to be very descriptive. I want to increase my understanding of how my students learn/internalize and also know about values. I've come to realize the importance of what they know when they come to the classroom and that changing this, or learning new values is very difficult—but we must begin with what they know.

5/8/03

My reflection has to do with the kind of ambiance in the school. There is a lot of testing taking place. This has had an effect on my character education class. From being very socially and culturally oriented to being more of a descriptive or information exchange. I have stopped the practice of asking the children to find values in all the stories we read. Instead, the students have practiced writing concrete stories out of abstract values. I have discovered this year that the students like to write stories out of an abstract value. This means that they have a general knowledge of the value and that they like to write about their own experiences. This may entail a search for identity. A continuous search for an identity that is always in formation. It is not fixed or defined definitely by anybody, but it is

constructed through life experiences and linked to feelings of self-worth and mutual acceptance. This process of identity formation is in an on-going struggle with issues of class, gender, and race. The children are struggling for a life with dignity. They construct their identity as they struggle for their safety, cultural recognition, health, and educational goals. Care is experienced in the context of these struggles. Children, in my opinion, tend to seek justice and care. They seem to naturally care for the most needy. We are reading a story about a dwarf and how she struggles with her life at home and at school. In this story's discussion the students have talked about the meaning of respect, tolerance, compassion, care, and family life. Care is equated with justice when our conscience denounces an unjust act or celebrates justice. In some way, caring for the unfortunate becomes a way to express the need for justice. This happens naturally in the classroom when the students defend a student who, in their view, is being treated unjustly. These issues always emerge and we, as educators, can make of these "teachable moments" that teach values and character education.

Multiculturalism in the media was seen through the war with Iraq. It is difficult to talk about peace and justice when war is going on, but it is in a critical sense that we can denounce the injustice of war. We built a monument to the 9/11 victims by covering a box with cards that had good feelings written on them. The teachers were not allowed to show their classes actual tapes of the war, but they were required to discuss these topics. We used the *Weekly Reader* magazine and the *Times for Kids* magazine to begin our discussions. Teachers need to be

mentally and emotionally prepared to direct these discussions. In one way or another, the educational system is stressing too much the hiring of effective teachers, methodologically speaking, and giving less priority to the need for a special sensitivity for students and the content matter. A balance is required.

5/9/03

As they construct their own dramas, the students enjoy learning, reflecting on their own words, and emotions. The dramas reflect the students' love for adventure, altruistic actions; their value of the role of consumerism in their lives, and their love for nature. As I was doing these dramas with the students, I remembered how Vygotsky (1978) liked to teach drama or use it in his research.

5/29/03

Today I read to the students the story "Radio Rescue" about a boy who learns the Morse Code and through this knowledge had the chance to save other people's lives. The students connected the story with:

- 1) A time when they had the chance to help somebody
- 2) A time in which they used walkie talkies
- 3) A time in which they persevered to do well on a test and passed it.

This story is about an American boy. These students could make connections with some parts of the story, although they are not very familiar with the Morse Code. It was a good time to reflect on the White American race. America is a nation of

immigrants. It is important to love and respect everyone.

5/30/03

Today we read a story about a cat that spoke Spanish. Most of my children don't know how to read and write in Spanish. Some of them are not very sure if it would be good to learn Spanish. It seems they may equate speaking Spanish with having a lower status. We need to teach our children to value themselves and their culture if they are to learn to value others.

6/4/03

Today, finally, the skits were video taped. The kids enjoyed the experience. One of the girls decided to work behind the curtains "setting the scenery." The skits mainly touched on the values of courage and friendship. In the skits about courage all the players were boys. In the scripts of friendship all the actors were girls except for one boy. This shows that in the common view issues of justice are more for males and issues of care for females. This may define the idiosyncrasies of the children and their families and outlines a pattern that feminists want to criticize. The social constructs in the media tend to support these ideas. The skits were:

Mall girls - consumerism and friendship

Beach kids - friendship and recreation

The Mummy Returns - courage and violence

The Scorpion King - courage and violence

For the students, courage always involves some kind of violence. For the girls friendship involves a positive relationship with the social context.

In summary, my daily notes in my journal offer a basis on which to interpret the results of other activities and tasks that I engaged the students in during my character education class. As I reviewed my notes, for my data analysis, I realize that the process was a critical one in ensuring that I gained insights into the students' total experience and, more importantly, my perceptions and reactions to them as I continually made decisions to revise my own instructional approaches. Without this reflection process, the changes I made in response to the children's needs would have been less visible, less purposeful, and the overall experience most likely less effective.

An Example of Implementing the Curriculum

Near the end of the year I placed posters in certain parts of the classroom with the name of a value at the top of each. The children had to write their own personal meaning of the value. After everybody wrote their meaning of the value, we constructed a sentence as a class that included most of the meanings we wrote. For example, the following words were used to construct a sentence. The number after each word indicates the frequency with which the students used the word in their writings:

- 1) Friendship
 - a) Help - 2
 - b) Get - 1
 - c) Have - 4
 - d) Care - 2

- e) Be - 4
- f) Forever - 3
- g) Do - 1

Sentence: Friendship is when you have a friend forever and you help and care for your friend.

“Have” and “be” were the words most frequently used. These suggest a balance between a state of being and a state of having on the part of children.

Appendix B contains the results of the data that I collected during the implementation of my character education curriculum. The appendix summarizes my students’ responses to a variety of tasks that they were asked to perform related to a set of values that were part of the curriculum I had developed for my class. Included are the results as well as the generalizations/inferences I drew from the data I collected during the tasks that my third-grade students performed and my observations of the children during these activities. Chapter 6 presents further results of my data analysis based on the three pedagogies that served as the framework for this qualitative study.

Chapter 6

THE DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter I summarize the insights I gained from my observations of the 18 students in my third-grade classroom over a six-month period while teaching character education in a Pennsylvania school district in 2003. During this research project, I studied my students' interactions, artifacts, and writings, and assessed their overall experience with the district's character education curriculum, which I broadened and developed from the original curriculum.

The Research Questions

For the purposes of this study, my main research question was: How do third-grade students learn the values of caring and justice after discussing issues of social justice in reference to gender, culture, and social class, and when generating certain kinds of artifacts? In order to have a sense of the impact that my instructional practices and my modification of the district's character education program was having on them, I needed to learn the values that my students had already brought to my classroom. I was also concerned about my students' behaviors and how these could be interpreted in relation to their expressed values. Ultimately, I sought insights that would assist me in teaching character education more effectively.

Some of the sub-questions that arose as I was preparing for my research included:

23. What is the nature of the teacher/student and student/student interactions that are taking place in the classroom, and what student artifacts/creations are emerging from these?
24. How do the students respond to the use of multicultural artifacts to promote critical discussions in the classroom?
25. How can the teacher/researcher describe these interactions and creations?
26. How can the teacher/researcher describe the climate in the classroom?
27. What effect does the character education curriculum seem to have on the classroom curriculum as a whole?
28. What kinds of interpretations can be inferred from these observations?
29. What interpretations does the teacher/researcher make that exert a daily influence on curriculum choice?
30. What new concepts and themes emerged from the data?
31. Did new themes or topics emerge that were not expected?
32. What insights did the study provide?
33. How can the teacher/researcher report findings back to the students/subjects?

Analyzing the Data

My analysis of the data was guided by these research questions as well as by my review of the literature that provided the research background and theoretical context for this study. In this chapter I present the results of my data analysis that emerged from this study in the context of the three pedagogies that I discussed in the literature review

(feminist, multicultural, and critical), along with answers that emerged from the data related to my research questions.

In response to sub-question #1 (What is the nature of the student/teacher and student/student interactions that are taking place in the classroom, and what student artifacts/creations are emerging from these?), I used dialogue as a “group think” technique designed to help children engage in the writing process more successfully as well. My students talked about their stories before writing them. If the value being discussed was honesty, for example, the students shared their story with a partner. Their partner, in turn, asked him/her questions about the story. This served to make the story more understandable in the mind of the writer. In summary, the classroom was filled with opportunities for meaningful dialogue. As the results of this study show, the students were comfortable with and gave many indications, including improved writing samples, that they liked this approach.

Feminist Pedagogies

From my review of the literature on feminist pedagogies emerged the notion that morality can be learned in a relational way (Gilligan, 1988). In response to sub-question #2 (How do the students respond to the use of multicultural artifacts to promote critical discussions in the classroom?), I found that in my students’ narratives and other artifacts, they repeatedly depicted themselves multiculturally in relation to other people, particularly their parents, siblings, and friends. One of the projects that the students enjoyed most was to prepare their own dramas to illustrate particular values. Since

dramas typically involve a meaningful relational experience, they gave the children an opportunity to create and express their experiences both abstractly and concretely as they moved from the creation of these dramas to their presentation. Since values are highly abstract concepts, I incorporated drama into my character education curriculum because it served as a pedagogical experience that provided the children the opportunity for both levels of cognitive functioning. The following is an excerpt from my reflection journal that shows how my students incorporated gender and various realities related to the broader social context into their dramas:

6/4/03

Today, finally, the skits were audio taped. The kids enjoyed the experience. One of the girls decided to work behind the curtains “setting the scenery.” The skits mainly touched on the values of courage and friendship. In the skits about courage all the players were boys. In the scripts on friendship all the actors were girls except for one boy. This shows that in the media [the kids used popular media figures], issues of justice related to courage and violence are more for males and issues of care are more for females. This may define the idiosyncrasies of the children and their families and outlines a pattern that feminists criticize. The social constructs in the media tend to support these ideas. The titles of the skits and their topics were:

The Mall Girls – on consumerism and friendship

The Beach Kids - friendship and recreation

The Mummy Returns - courage and violence

The Scorpion King - courage and violence

For the students, courage nearly always involves some kind of violence. For the girls, friendship involves a positive relationship with the social context.

Issues of care and justice were reflected in the children's artifacts and during our class interactions. In their narratives, the children demonstrated relationships of caring such as taking care of the sick, caressing a relative, and taking care of babies and pets. They also showed concern for students in the class who were in trouble. I observed that they consoled them, protected them, and even defended them. Thus, the students built a kind of solidarity throughout the year among themselves.

Teachers should be the first models of care and justice in the classroom according to Noddings (1988). She indicates that their role, besides that of showing and giving power, should be one of caring; teachers should show that they care for their students while maintaining their authority. The sharing and giving of power is one of the most important roles of the teacher, but it should be juxtaposed with caring (Noddings). In my classroom, I used various opportunities to make my students feel comfortable with me (e.g., having a dialogue with them while sitting in a u-shaped arrangement.)

From my review of the literature on feminism, I also concluded that the schools still teach children that there are certain professions and occupations for boys and certain ones for girls. In order to get a sense of whether this dynamic/perception was shared by the students participating in this study, I asked them to take time to answer a short survey

about “what girls do” and “what boys do.” The results of this oral survey do not completely support this traditional dichotomy (see Table 1).

Table 1

Results of the Oral Survey of the Third-Grade Students on What Boys and Girls Do

Boys		Girls		Answer to question
Fix things -	9	Work -	24	yes - 3
Work -	20	Take care of house -	6	no - 1
Play sports -	14	Take care of kids -	2	
Play games -	14	Read books	1	
Leisure -	10	Play games -	9	
School -	1	Play sports -	2	
		Leisure –	12	

The results of the survey suggest that for the children in this social context at least, the realities are more complex, and that the family and community realities that they experience play an important role in the generalizations they draw about gender roles. My students seemed to generally agree that both girls and boys can basically have the same occupations, but the issue of responsibility weighed more heavily on the girls because they thought they would have to work outside the home and take care of the house and the children when they grew up.

My students perceived this imbalance of gender roles as an unjust situation, but

one that they had experienced in their own lives, especially when their mothers had to do both the mother's and the father's job. Boys were portrayed in my students' artifacts as fooling around or working. Girls were depicted as paying the rent and taking care of the kids. The actual jobs that they assumed were more clearly consistent with the assertions of feminist pedagogies regarding gender-defined roles. My journal entry portrays this gender discussion in my classroom:

1/30/03

Today I presented to the students the issue of gender. Why can't girls do things that boys do? I developed two lists and a question. The children reacted in a strange and unexpected way; they seemed not to be impressed, and sometimes smiled. Then they saw the movie *Mulan* about a Chinese girl warrior. Again the use of concrete references as in a movie are more effective in introducing the discussion as Ellsworth (1997) has noted.

Some of the things the children mentioned that boys do are: go to war, become doctors, ministers, bus drivers, farmers, garbage men, teachers, plumbers, play games, play sports, fix houses, fool around, fix cars, etc. Some of the things mentioned that girls did were: become nurses, principals, teachers, mothers, news reporters, play "Barbies," play basketball, clean house, clean clothes, use make-up, go to war, work, cook, paint, pay rent, buy clothes, shop.

For boys, the answer selected most often was play sports; for girls, being mothers and paying the rent. I think these are the things these children mostly see

and mostly value.

The children seemed to have the view that parenting is a mother's role as in taking care of the house; alternatively, boys are expected to be playing sports, working, or fooling around.

Additional evidence in response to sub-question #2 (How do the students respond to the use of multicultural artifacts to promote critical discussions in the classroom?) can be seen in the following excerpt from my field notes on how a specific artifact was used and how identity emerged as an important issue in the children's learning of moral values:

9/6/02

I began the [school] year yesterday. I have decided to focus my attention on the issue of identity because I think that only in the process of knowing themselves do the children feel motivated to learn about others. I have chosen the chapter "The Circuit" by Francisco Jimenez, the author of *La Mariposa*, which is one of the chapters of *The Circuit*. It is a book about the hazards that Mexican migrant children suffer when immigrating to the United States illegally. I chose this book because I think my children can identify with children who frequently change the places they live. The only problem with this chapter/ book is that it doesn't have big colorful pictures with which children can identify themselves like picture books have. In the first lesson I asked them to draw their own picture

according to what they read and also write about a time when they also had to change places. I read the book *La Mariposa* to them, which is a picture book, and we talked about the strategies that Jimenez uses as a writer. I acquainted them with the author, his style, and the context of the book. Francisco Jimenez was himself a migrant student. I was amazed when the children applauded after I read the book. In the story, Juanito has problems learning in school. At the end the teacher to some extent makes peace with the misunderstood bilingual immigrant Mexican student. At the end of the year, the butterfly flies out of the jar. For me the message of this story is about our quest for liberty and how when the purpose of schooling is well understood and practiced, it can become a liberating practice. I realize that for the next class I was going to present pictures of migrant students from a web site on the computer. I will also relate the experience with the students to “camping” or anything related like sleepovers, family visits, etc.

I also taught a story about a scale-rich fish that gives away his scales to other fish. We then discussed issues of class and the value of generosity, compassion, and kindness. The lesson corroborated my belief that children prefer to give concrete things like pets, toys, games, etc.

Again, regarding research sub-question #2, I designed a number of teaching methodologies, including the presentation of specific lessons to address values (my revised character education curriculum) and materials as well as teaching methodologies designed to give students opportunities to dialogue about values.

The following is an excerpt from my journal on how I incorporated these curriculum materials and methodologies into our classroom life:

1/9/03

Today the actual research started. I gave each student a book from the series Character Education from the Modern Curriculum Press. These books are picture books, colorful and contain images of children of all races in school settings doing common things that students do. The children liked them. Each one sat on the “teacher’s chair” and said what the book was about, if they liked it, and also why and what the value meant to them. I believe that the students liked the books because they were easy to read, had nice pictures, and they could relate them to themselves. Most of the students had the knowledge of what the values were. Some said they chose that book because they knew what the value meant and wanted to learn about it more. These facts corroborate the idea of cultural capital and its relationship to teaching. We should start teaching from what the students know.

The topics that the students mostly mentioned were family relationships, respecting and caring for families, friends’ relationships, being cooperative, working together, altruistic actions, the Golden Rule, not doing to others what others won’t do to you, having quality time with your family, baby sitting, etc.

The students also mentioned the value of order, cleanliness, neatness and related these to responsibility. They also mentioned the desire to have altruistic

attitudes.

I reflected on my own perception that some of these values are self-contained or are an intrinsic part of other more complex values or higher order values, for instance, generosity and compassion, and friendliness and cooperation. The children showed some understanding of the values and wanted to learn more about them. The children's sitting in a u-shape helped me guide the discussion while creating a physical sense of "community."

Another aspect of Freire's teachings (1985), which I drew from when designing the curriculum and my classroom methods, was that education should be dialogical in nature. It is the dialogue between the students and the teacher, and among the students that enhances their understanding. I used this strategy in my lessons, in my interaction with my students individually, and in groups, giving the children optimum opportunities to verbalize their thoughts and feelings. In addition, I gave my students opportunities to dialogue with one another about what they were going to write about. As the study's findings have demonstrated, the dialogue that emerged was a rich source of information for enhancing the character education curriculum. It is also interesting that I also found dialogues in their narratives, which at this age is a more advanced form of writing. Furthermore, when dialogue takes place in a multicultural setting, other benefits occur. When we are in contact with people from other cultures and races, we have the opportunity to learn their values.

In response to question #3 (How can the teacher/researcher describe these

interactions/artifacts?), I tried to collect data from the artifacts by analyzing the categories that were most mentioned by the students, and from there developed themes and principles. This is a methodology used in qualitative research to analyze data. In terms of the interactions, I used a journal that helped me reflect on what was happening in the classroom through my note-taking and note-making.

The context of sub-question #4 (How can the teacher describe the climate in the classroom?) was an opportunity to report how my journal logs were a vehicle for me to gauge the classroom climate on an ongoing basis in a meaningful way:

5/8/03

My reflection has to do with the kind of ambiance in the school. There is a lot of testing taking place. This has had an effect on my character education class—from being very socially and culturally oriented to being more of a descriptive or information exchange. I have stopped the practice of asking the children to find values in all the stories we read. Instead, the students have practiced writing concrete stories out of abstract values. I have discovered this year that the students like to write stories out of an abstract value. This means that they have a general knowledge of the value and that they like to write about their own experiences. This may entail a search for identity. A continuous search for an identity that is always in formation. It is not fixed or defined definitely by anybody, but it is constructed through life experiences and linked to feelings of self-worth and mutual acceptance.

This process of identity formation is in an ongoing struggle with issues of class, gender, and race. The children are struggling for a life with dignity. They construct their identity as they struggle for their safety, cultural recognition, health, and educational goals. Care is experienced in the context of these struggles. Children, in my opinion, tend to seek justice and care. They seem to naturally care for the most needy. We are reading a story about a dwarf and how she struggles with her life at home and at school. In this story's discussion the students have talked about the meaning of respect, tolerance, compassion, care, and family life. Care is equated to justice when our conscience denounces an unjust act or celebrates justice. In some way, caring for the unfortunate becomes a way to express the need for justice. This happens naturally in the classroom when the students defend a student who, in their view, is being treated unjustly. These issues always emerge and we, as educators, can make of these "teachable moments" that teach values and character education.

Multiculturalism in the media was seen by my students in the reporting on the war in Iraq. It is difficult to talk about peace and justice when war is going on, yet in a critical sense we could denounce the injustice of war itself. We built a monument to 9/11 the victims by covering a box with cards that had good feelings written on them. Our teachers were not allowed to show their classes actual tapes of the war but were required to discuss these topics. We used the *Weekly Reader* and the *Times for Kids* to begin our discussions. Teachers need to be mentally and emotionally prepared to direct these kinds of discussions. In one way or another,

the educational system is stressing too much the hiring of effective teachers, methodologically speaking, and disregarding the need for a special sensitivity for students and the content matter. A balance is required (Macedo, 2000).

Critical Pedagogies

One of the central precepts that emerged from my review of the literature on critical pedagogies is that students come to the classroom already equipped with a source of knowledge that the teachers need to draw from if they are to be effective. This study has confirmed this view. My study revealed that the students came to my classroom with a set of values that they had learned mainly from experiences in their families, their community, the school, and through the media. As reported in the previous chapter, the stories that the students wrote related to values that dealt mainly with their relationships with their families, friends, and the media. For example, in their stories about responsibility, they all take place at home and in school. In a good number of the children's stories, the older sibling has to take care of the younger sibling or siblings; they have to do chores at home; they are involved in their relationships with and care of their parents and pets. In their stories about the value of perseverance, their friends and family members were frequently present. In the stories about respect, most of the children referred to older adults such as their mothers, fathers, and elderly family members or friends. In their stories about courage, most of the children referred to friends and mothers who are courageous. In the stories about kindness, most of the children expressed kindness towards their families, especially their mothers. The dramas they

chose to present depicted topics taken from the popular media like *The Scorpion King*, “The Mall Girls,” and “The Beach Kids,” which showed their relationships at home and with friends.

In summary, the children consistently related to their family and community when asked to express their values. At no time—or rarely—did they relate to experiences in school or in the classroom, or to a real or fictional character that they had read about in a book. In summary, the study’s answer to the central question (How do students learn values?) is that my children learned them from their families, community, and the mass media; the school also contributes to this learning but to a less significant degree.

These findings are consistent with Freire’s belief that educators need to respect the students’ cultural capital and learn to draw from it (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire was opposed to viewing the learner as a *tabula rasa* and believed that planning lessons should begin with what the students know or their prior knowledge. This view is also consistent with Bourdieu’s (1993) theory of cultural capital. My research also made me think about the validity of the theory of situated learning which asserts the importance of taking the students’ experience—particularly the context of any learning experience—into consideration.

The first lesson in my revised character education curriculum served as more than just an introduction to the specific values that the curriculum was designed to address. It was designed to give me an opportunity to establish a baseline view of what my students’ prior knowledge was of the values that the curriculum sought to teach, and to observe whether the students were capable of verbalizing these values since they are complex

abstract concepts. To accomplish this, I chose a series of character education books published by the Modern Curriculum Press. Each depicts a certain moral value. The students not only showed an ability to relate to these abstract concepts, but even demonstrated an enthusiasm for discussing the topics. As the results of my data analysis show, my students demonstrated that they had a conceptual grasp of the dynamics of many of the 16 values that the district character education curriculum was designed to address, including respect, honesty, courage, responsibility, and so on. In fact, as the data revealed, the students told me that these values are taught at home by their parents, in school, and on television.

In response to question #5 (What effect does the character education curriculum seem to have on the classroom curriculum as a whole?), I found that the character education curriculum in my school district was integrated with other subjects such as reading, writing, and social studies—even science. The stories discussed in some of these subjects made the students see themselves in relation to the world. This seemed to enhance their self-esteem through self-knowledge. At the same time that they were producing their artifacts, they were improving their writing and reading skills.

However, these outcomes should be placed in the context of the response to sub-question # 6 (What kinds of interpretation can be inferred from these observations [related to the students' perceptions/understandings of values]?). The study gauged these by involving the students in a variety of activities, samples of which are presented in Appendix B.

In response to sub-question #7 (What interpretations does the teacher/researcher

make that exert a daily influence on curriculum choice?), I learned that to be effective in carrying out curriculum, teachers must make decisions that incorporate an understanding of both the cognitive and the affective. During the study I realized that while my students were capable of abstract thought and a general understanding of values, it is difficult for children at this age to go from the simple abstract to the more complex. At the third-grade level, the students are still at a concrete stage of intellectual development. I tried to teach them how to prepare a graphic organizer of each value, but it was too difficult for them to grasp the abstract at the time. The lesson required that they write the meaning of the value, the books that depict the value, a famous quotation about the value, and additional higher-order tasks. This lesson was hard for them, so it was difficult to retain their interest. It seemed that concrete activities appealed to them more. They enjoyed more and learned more from the activities that included interaction, such as dramas and narratives with dialogue. Based on the results of my study, it would seem, therefore, that the assertions of feminists regarding moral learning as relational learning (Noddings, 1984; Gilligan, 1993) are applicable to my pedagogical methods as well. As I discussed earlier in relation to sub-question #7, character education classes that build from the concrete to the abstract and vice versa are more effective.

1/23/03

We already have discussed issues of race by seeing the video on Martin L. King. We discussed how racial discrimination might not let us be kind, generous, etc. We discussed issues of social class by reading the book *The Rainbow Fish*,

how people of different classes don't share and appreciate each other.

We did an activity in which the children gave each other a shiny scale that meant a gift. They had to think of a gift and create it—or create an imaginary gift. The children seemed to like the activity. Mostly the gifts were material things. The children don't have a clear notion that a gift can be an abstract feeling or virtue. They prefer to give concrete things like toys, pets, etc.

It seems the children are not very clear about what prejudice is—racial, social, or cultural. I acknowledge that these are difficult things to understand and to talk about. It is hard for them to understand what multiculturalism is.

When I showed the videotapes *Martin L. King* and *Ruby*, I did not expect them to have such a strong impact on the children at the end. My observation was that the students were not clear about what racism is. They had a notion that Whites tend to dominate people of color. They reported that they learned this from the media and society. I felt that seeing and hearing the speech of Martin Luther King impressed them. They were able to apply the concept of courage to King. Learning about the courage and perseverance that Ruby personified in going to school also impressed them.

Patriotism was a value that the students articulated with frequency in different contexts in the classroom. The children liked to recite the pledge of allegiance and respected the American flag. However, they expressed the feeling that they also liked to see the flag of their nation of origin somewhere or sometime during the year as in the Puerto Rican parade.

Multicultural Pedagogies

Multiculturalists believe that multiculturalism not only encompasses differences in ethnography but also includes issues of justice related to gender, class, and race. They seek to improve society by analyzing all levels and components of the social structure. Their analysis begins, however, with an understanding of the individual and his/her relationship to others and the social structures that result from these relationships. It begins with self-concept.

I taught a lesson on Cinderella using the stories from different countries and cultures: China, the United States, the Bahamas, and Mexico. The story the children in my class preferred was “Adelita,” a Mexican Cinderella, probably because they could identify themselves more with her culture. The issue of identity has been extensively discussed by scholars such as Cortés (2000) and Hall (1997). Identity has a relationship to representation. According to the degree of positive representation of minorities in the media, government, jobs, and so forth, we can feel more at home in the United States.

In response to sub-question #8 (What new concepts and themes emerged from the data?), the discussion of values as “objects” of study provided a source for dialogue and stimulated the creation of my children’s narratives. Vygotsky (1978) explained that learning is first interpersonal and then intrapersonal. In this teacher research, I discovered the opposite, the process by which the children constructed a narrative with characters out of their own internalization of a value. The concrete character education experiences that I provided helped my students express their values by means of narratives and/or artifacts, which in turn gave them a voice that helped them to continue their schooling

with a more positive attitude due perhaps to a better or clearer self-concept. In this sense, the character education class activities helped the students to be creators of their own histories, giving them the power to create their own artifacts. These experiences helped them with the formation of their identity and at the same time with their literacy process.

In response to sub-question #9 (Did new themes or concepts emerge that were not expected?), I was surprised to learn how important pets are in the lives of my children, which the literature on values rarely indicates. My study found that when the children were asked a number of questions, instead of talking about human beings, they referred to their pets or to the pets of others. This was also a theme that emerged in the regular classroom.

Another sub-question that emerged as I analyzed the data was: Is there any evidence that the children were affected by their increased understanding of values? Since learning values is very subjective and personal, the intervention or experience with the curriculum very short term, and the opportunities for follow-up extremely limited, it is almost impossible to report on the behavioral impact of my students' limited experience and better understanding of values. However, their class remained largely intact when the children went to the next grade, and my discussions with their new teacher the following year suggested that the children were behaving better and that, overall, their interaction in the classroom had improved. While there is no basis from which to suggest that this was the direct result of their experience of my character education curriculum, it may well have played a role, and it is my view that there is a basis here for future research on the relationship between teaching character education

and its influence on children's behavior.

In partial response to question #10 (What insights did the study provide?), I concluded that future curriculum initiatives should give consistent attention to the cognitive appropriateness of methodologies for certain age levels, not just to the materials designed to teach abstract concepts such as values. The following excerpt from my journal cites the specific experience that gave me this insight:

1/28/03

We did a search on the Internet of each value. The children received a printed paper and I asked them to highlight what they considered important. I gave them a graphic organizer to organize their thoughts. This activity was too hard for the kids. They couldn't understand very well the explanations of the values and could not translate them into the graphic organizer. The abstract content of the lesson was hard for them to grasp.

Many of the at-risk students in my class come from broken families where relationships are sometimes hard to maintain. These children and their families often experience problems and other serious effects of poverty, including alcoholism, drug use, and delinquency. The character education class can be a good place to heal the children's wounds because it gives them a voice to express their feelings and thoughts, a chance to increase their understanding of others who share these experiences, understand the problems emerging from these realities, and to process their interactions with them.

3/5/03

We read the story “So Much, ” which is about a family, a big family that loves the baby of the family. The children made connections to the text. All of them talked about surprise parties with their families. One student during independent reading mentioned to me that her father is an alcoholic and sometimes fights with her mother. This points out that family life is not always a happy experience. One of the goals of character education should be to help heal these wounds by helping children increase their understandings about the stresses all family members are under and by helping them to cope with them and their consequences through character education.

This excerpt from my analysis also responds to sub-question #10 (What new insights did this study produce?). Many multicultural materials treat all members of a group such as Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians as though they are in one group. My students demonstrated this when they commented on their participation in Puerto Rican social clubs and activities at church, etc. The flag of their nation may be a symbol of their identity. I observed that the children liked to write concrete relational stories after learning about a value. When patriotism is involved, it can also help their identity process. However, there is potential for children to feel conflicted when they want to express their patriotism to the United States while maintaining a love for their native country.

Regarding question #11 (How can the teacher/researcher report findings back to

the students/subjects?), I plan to make available the results of this study for the subjects and their parents to read.

Conclusions

Did the children increase their understanding of values? Based on the study's findings, I would say "yes." Their exposure to different artifacts, and, more importantly, the opportunity to verbalize and create artifacts required a personal/individual application of what they had learned about certain values. The evidence that these were meaningful experiences that produced a higher quality artifact at the end of the project supports this positive finding, as did the improved quality of my students' writing samples.

In addition, there were collaborative products that suggest that the children had collectively reached a synthesis of understanding of a value or values. For example, the posters done at the end of the semester reflected what the students had learned about values. Each student needed to write on the poster what the value meant for him or her. Thus, the students were making connections between the value and themselves. We tried to summarize all the meanings in a sentence as a wrap-up activity to a project. In this way the products of the individual and the class as a collective were respected. The following is a list of sentences that the class constructed after the lessons, which related a higher level of understanding that values require a level of ordering, qualifying, and quantifying. For instance, the students included words such as forever, always, and especially:

1. Friendship is when you have a friend forever and you help and care for your friend.

2. Loyalty is to always be there for your friends, family, and anybody who needs you.
3. Respect is to acknowledge the qualities of others.
4. Kindness means being nice to others, having good manners, especially with your friends and family.
5. Self-discipline means to follow directions, to do my chores, to behave well, and to blame myself if I don't do well.
6. Tolerance is getting along with my friends and family and accepting people as they are.
7. Honesty is to tell the truth, especially to my parents.
8. Responsibility is taking care of my things, sick people, children, and the elderly.
9. Cooperation is paying attention and listening to the teacher and parents.
10. Perseverance is to try my best always and never to give up.
11. Courage means being brave.

In summary, the results of this study support the findings of critical pedagogies, specifically the dialogical nature of learning and the importance of drawing from the students' prior experiences in relation to what and how to teach in character education.

Chapter 7 concludes this dissertation by presenting the findings and conclusions from the study, implications for teachers and the school district, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 7

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I discuss my findings, the implications of the study for my own teaching, my district, and for character education in general, and offer recommendations for future research.

When I started teaching character education to my third-grade students in 1997-1998, my school district's program mainly consisted of teaching 16 universal values. According to the superintendent's mandate, a different value was to be taught for two weeks for about one hour or more a week in each of the 16 elementary schools and 4 middle schools in the district. As a model, the district recommended and made available to the teachers a character education program developed by the non-profit Character Education Institute. This program was already in place in a suburban middle class school district in New Jersey, where I personally observed it. Our district also produced posters, each of which showed a value that was being taught and contained a quotation from a famous person whose picture was on the poster. These posters were part of a school-wide promotion to focus the students' attention on one particular value every two weeks, along with information about it that was announced over the school's public address system each morning. In addition, the public librarian made available to the district a list of books that she had categorized according to the 16 prescribed values; the students accessed these books through visits to the town library. A number of model character education lessons were also distributed to the teachers in the district. However, the

teachers were mostly given the freedom to teach these values as they saw fit, with minimal guidance and no specific in-service education on how to teach character education. But I began to get interested in character education while I was teaching it and to do independent research on it, looking for the best way to teach the our district program's prescribed list of values to my students.

I taught character education to my third-grade students for two years in an elementary school in my district before taking a sabbatical and a leave of absence from teaching to finish my doctoral studies at Penn State University. After learning about three different schools of pedagogy (feminist, multicultural, and critical) during my university studies, I decided to develop my own character education curriculum based on these pedagogies, that is, to enhance the basic program on character education that my school district's task force had developed. My intent was to modify the curriculum to fit my students' understanding of the selected values and their diverse backgrounds. The following is an outline of the character education curriculum that I developed and used to teach values to my third-grade students when I returned to the classroom after two years at the university:

I. Presentation of the value (e.g., respect)

- a. Elicit students' prior knowledge
- b. Problematize the value

II. Presentation of the artifact

- a. Critical analysis according to
 - 1) Gender

2) Class

3) Race

4) Age

III. Production of the artifact by each student

- a. Production of artifact independently
- b. Sharing time as a class
- c. Publishing the products as a class

IV. Class collectively constructs a sentence that contains the value word and that explains its meaning in context

However, after my return to the classroom in 2002, I began to make changes to this curriculum framework. Specifically, I became interested in how my students could share their experiences and knowledge of these values. I also began to use multicultural literature and media in the classroom. My diverse class of students tended to identify more readily with stories from their cultural point of view, such as a Mexican Cinderella story and the video *Ruby* about an African American elementary school student during the civil rights movement. My application of feminist pedagogies helped me to understand the different ways in which my students learned values by relating to others inside and outside the classroom. It also helped me to understand my own emotions in the process and a way to conduct the class fairly and carefully at the same time. Dealing with issues of race, class, and gender is not an easy task, and even more difficult in a third-grade classroom. I discovered that my students learn abstract moral concepts from concrete examples and vice versa. The abstract and the concrete were always in use in my

classroom. It was harder to go from the abstract to the concrete. For example, understanding racism as a moral concept was a difficult task for my students, and at the same time difficult for me to teach, but by using concrete examples from books, the media, or the children's own experiences, this concept became more meaningful to them. Knowing that my students already were "educated" in these values, my research became focused on the values my students knew and how they had learned them. (These values are illustrated in Appendix B.)

On my return to teaching in the district after two years, I was surprised to find that the character education curriculum was no longer being taught formally as a separate subject; rather it was being integrated into the regular curriculum by the other teachers. But I continued to teach character education separately, especially because I had decided to do a qualitative teacher research for my doctoral study on my experience of teaching character education in my third-grade classroom.

The Findings of the Study

I believe that I achieved the purpose of my study which was to discover the values that my students already knew, how they had learned them, and how this knowledge could help me to teach better and teach character education better. The findings of this study are related to the initial questions of the study. The first question asked about the nature of the interactions in the classroom and the artifacts that were used and created to teach values. I tried to foster in my classroom whole group discussions about artifacts that I thought might contribute to the student's knowledge and appreciation. First, I tried

to elicit from the students their reaction to the artifact. These discussions were effective to introduce the artifact and to motivate the students to construct their own artifacts in relation to their previous experiences and this new knowledge. Dialogue was an incentive for creativity. Dialogue fosters creation as well as appreciation and reflection. The students had the opportunity to appreciate and create or re-create their inner and outer worlds.

One of the major discoveries of my teacher research on character education was that my third-grade students were already “educated” to many of the 16 values prescribed by the district’s Character Education Program. I discovered the values of my students through my interaction with them and their artifacts to a certain extent. The values that the children in my class showed the strongest preference for included respect and care for family members; cooperation, courage, and responsibility in relation to schoolwork and cleanliness. They also mentioned the value of altruistic deeds, and cited compassion, generosity, friendliness, and cooperation as their preferred topics for discussion.

These values seem to have been formed by their family upbringing, the influence of the church and their schooling, their interaction with other children, and the effects of the popular media. From the first day of this study, my students expressed their interest in and preference for certain values that they were already familiar with, which I discovered as they selected certain books from the Celebration Press Series. In my study, I found that it is through the mutual interrelationship of the students with their families, the community, the school, and the media that they had learned the values that we explored. My classroom thus became a site in which to recreate these values and to help my

students clarify them, and in a sense construct and deconstruct them. The classroom was a place for individual and group expression of these values through art, drama, singing, writing, reading, etc. The teacher of values serves mainly as a facilitator of the discussion of a particular artifact that she may or may not intentionally select to guide the discussions. This is the role I often assumed. Thus, the formation of teachers is very important due to the exceptional responsibility that is in their hands.

In relation to question #2 (How do the students respond to the use of multicultural artifacts to promote critical discussions in the classroom?), I found that the students responded positively to the use of multicultural artifacts. They seemed to connect more to artifacts that contained their own ethnic origin or social position. It seemed the students liked to reconnect to their cultural roots when discussing values. They also liked to learn more about their actual culture origins and about other cultures. The students liked to have a global perspective of the world.

The character education materials the district provided were helpful to some extent, but indeed were not representative of my students' diversity, which included Hispanic, African American, and White children. I found that including multicultural materials, giving the students the opportunity to express their knowledge, and creating democratic conditions in the classroom could considerably enhance the character education curriculum that was outlined by the district.

Therefore, in my character education curriculum, I used books that were inclusive of minority groups and their realities, both cultural and socio-economic. This challenged my students to think about the social realities that affect them and that are related to

gender, race, class, and culture. McLaren (1996) stated that the teacher's role in the classroom should be to change the constructs of societal conventions in the minds of students. My third-grade students were expected to role-play social situations and offer alternative solutions and behavioral choices. This led to a constructivist curriculum that helped the children develop their moral meanings and values in a self-regulated process that arose through dialogue, reflection, and concrete experiences. By writing about their own dilemmas in their stories, the children were expected to develop their socio-moral skills.

My teaching was guided in part by Dyson (1997), who in her ethnography *Writing Super Heroes* analyzed the plays written and performed by children in their classroom during second and third grade that had some relation to super heroes in the media. Through further dialogue and reflection on the plays, the children discussed the dynamics of gender and racial prejudice in the popular media. They also discussed the power of authorship. Dyson used the writing workshop and critical pedagogy to guide her students to gain moral insight into the value of courage as related to gender in the popular media. I used some of Dyson's techniques to allow my students to express their feelings and values through narratives. Narratives in children's literature, plays, and artwork also provide sources for understanding and discussing moral dilemmas. Moral dilemmas written about by the children offer exceptionally good opportunities for discussion of values for many of the reasons already discussed. Narrative in my children's written stories and creative dramas became important means for affirming and enhancing the values they had already learned.

Leming (2000) stated that it is through the use of stories that cultural values are most often given shape and are made meaningful in the lives of children. For Leming, narratives contain moral content that can affect moral development. They convey a message, awaken a sentiment, and enlarge the universe of the student. Wilson (1994) asserted that morality should be taught around narratives more than around propositions. Propositional thinking, he explained, stresses the importance of convincing the children about the importance of an abstract value. In the confines of the classroom, children need to be convinced of the desirability of an abstract value. Narrative constructs, however, present concrete situations with interpersonal relationships in order to portray a value. For Wilson, children's understanding of moral issues is interpersonal, emotional, imaginary, and story-like. Thus, children should experience morality more through narratives than through propositional arguments. Nieto (1999) stated that learning is contextual and that narratives permit the students to take into consideration the context of the story in order to critique it. For example, after reading a story, the children can analyze its context in terms of gender, race, and class. Through this analysis, the children can critique the story in order to reconstruct or transform it into one that they feel is in keeping with better or different values or social structures.

My selection of texts in the implementation of this project was guided by the work of many researchers, including Freire and Macedo (1987), who reaffirmed the importance of using narratives of immigration, borderlands, life stories, and folk tales to develop true literacy in children. Leland, Harste, Ociepka, Lewison, and Vasquez (1999) offered a bibliography of books that engage children in issues of power and justice. These

books teach the importance of social responsibility. Yeoman (1999) wrote about making disruptive stories with children such as feminist fairy tales or stories where the protagonists are minorities. Vasquez (2000) studied the Beluga whales with her class in order to teach her students about endangered species and motivated her class to take some kind of moral action.

To answer question #3 (How can the teacher-researcher describe these interactions and creations?), I described the nature of my children's interactions and creations through the observation and description in my journal, and used qualitative research methods to analyze these data. I mainly tried to answer the question of what the values of my students were and how they learned them. Through the analysis of repetitive themes I concluded that the students learned these values through their interactions in their families, school, community, and the media. Language and culture played an important part in the understanding of these values. How the students are raised at home and how they interact in their community, including the school, has an affect on the students learning and knowledge of these values. The media also had a paramount effect on the children's values. This analysis tends to reassert that morality is not only learned abstractly or intellectually but also through the children's relationships. The process can be described as cyclical in nature, having as objects the interconnectedness of relational experiences and intellectual knowledge following a never-ending constructivist pattern.

Another finding of this study, which fulfilled another purpose of the study (to better my teaching and my character education teaching), was how using teacher research in my third-grade character education class helped me to develop this curriculum more

fully by applying the three pedagogical approaches that I had learned in my graduate studies: feminist, multicultural, and critical. Through the use of my reflective journal and audio tapes of the character education lessons and discussions, I observed both my students and my own teaching in order to develop later lessons and class activities. This kind of teacher research helped me to expand on the character education curriculum developed by the district task force.

The answers to questions 4 and 5 (How can the teacher-researcher describe the climate in the classroom, and what effect does the character education curriculum seem to have on the classroom curriculum as a whole?) may be that the climate during my character education classes was reflective and that it made other academic subjects like reading and math more reflective in nature through the use of dialogue and constructivist approaches. It seemed the students liked to have an extra time to reflect about their inner worlds. This points to the need for academic subjects to provide a place for personal reflection

My goal in creating this character education curriculum was to raise my students' awareness about social justice and to help them to become caring individuals who can take action to create a better world. The use of narratives may clarify ways that the teacher and the students understand and interpret those values in order to reconstruct them. A class in morality should respect both the students' collective thinking and the student's individuality in order to enhance democratic values. For Maughn (2000), democracy should stand for the values of care and tolerance. Care is viewed as the importance of human relations and tolerance as related to the importance and respect for

individuality and the search for human rights and common grounds. Classrooms should provide opportunities for the expression of both care and tolerance. When students write their own stories, we give space for individuality, creativity, and constructive moral development. When students publish their creations, they make them public and available to be criticized. The teacher should be a facilitator of the critique. If a story is critiqued in terms of its use of gender, class, race, culture, age, etc., the students can gain knowledge of the values of justice, care, fairness, empathy, etc., through the discussion. Combining critical literacy, caring relationships, and the construction of meaningful artifacts may not only teach the students about the universal dimension of values but also about the diversity of our opinions and the importance of respecting differences. This was the goal of the character education curriculum that I modified and enhanced for the purposes of this research project.

Each of the theories used in this study has something to contribute to the field of character education as well as to my own teaching, especially when used in combination. Implementing these theories in my classroom enabled me to become a better teacher and to teach character education better. I found that the feminist approach with its ethics of care could help me to remember to show a caring attitude in the classroom that could in turn help my students to become caring. A multicultural critical approach could help me as a teacher to focus on the social realities that have an effect on my students' lives in order to teach them how to overcome these obstacles. The combination of an attitude of empathy and a concern for developing my students' critical abilities with regard to their own lives (as they are connected to the lives of others) could help me to experience

teaching as a liberatory practice. Using critical pedagogy, the process of constructing and deconstructing narratives that at first glance we may perceive as real and unchanging could help empower my students to transform the world in order to make it more just and humane. An ethic of care could also help me understand that my students are individuals with different views and experiences and that I should respect each child's values.

Through these lenses, I would be able to engage my students in a more profound way.

Bhatia's (2000) research on the relationship of language, discourse, and morality was needed. He suggested that it would be wise to explore how everyday language socialization practices facilitate the production of moral meanings. I think classrooms should replicate to some extent, even if in a small way, the daily life experiences that children must negotiate. Thus, if a teacher combines the three methods of Freire (1985), Noddings (1984), and Piaget (1997), the students can be exposed to morality naturally through the use of narratives, dialogue, reflections, plays, etc. If you were to ask me what I wanted to teach in this curriculum: morality or critical literacy, I would say both because they are closely related.

Character education programs while teaching values can help children critique social structures such as the popular media that affect them, and through the use and creation of narratives based on their experiences, can foster their creativity and writing skills. This is because morality and culture are closely related and can be expressed through the use of narratives. The children can be empowered through the production of artifacts to create new and better ways of conceiving reality according to their values. The act of writing and action are deeply intertwined in the sense that children can feel

that they can have some control in their life relationships and context. This control can make children be less afraid to contribute to the recreation of the world, which is a requisite for living a civic life. Children need to understand that their actions affect other people and other people's actions affect them. Therefore, the collective and the individual are related in the sense that children should feel that they are part of a collective and that they can make a difference in the world. Writing may be a good way to predispose children to action.

It can be concluded in answer to question #6 (What kinds of interpretations can be inferred from these observations?) that students like to learn more based on these universal values, but the process should not be one of imposing these values on them since they already know them. Rather we need to give them the power to recreate their inner and outer world. The use of appropriate material fostered this process in this study.

One of the major discoveries of my inquiry was to recognize the values my students already knew and how they had learned them in their families, prior school experience, and through the media. In this sense, I can categorically state that my students were "educated" in these values prior to my teaching of them, or at least had some sense of them. The community also had had an effect on the formation of their values. I also became interested in the use of multicultural literature and the media in the class. I could understand that the students could identify themselves more easily when they could see themselves as represented in the text in some way. The feminist pedagogies helped me to understand issues of emotions and power in the classroom as well as the relational nature of morality. It is through the mutual interrelationship of the

media, the family, the community, and the school that the students formed themselves into moral beings. Acquiring a sense of what is just in the action of caring for others, the students come to know who they are and what they should do in different instances.

As a teacher, I have the power to help my students grow in their moral knowledge of values by letting them express their own knowledge and exposing them to artifacts that could have a significant meaning in their lives. This demands of me a knowledge of my students and what is best for them. In order to teach my students well, I need to have a knowledge of politics, philosophy, and methods, but overall, I should let my students express themselves.

In regard to question #7 (What interpretations does the teacher-researcher make that exert a daily influence in curriculum choice?), the teacher is the person who could understand the students through a more critical and mature self. That is why teachers need to be well prepared in different disciplines, not only in methods of teaching.

My views of education have changed over time, especially through the knowledge I gained about pedagogy in my graduate studies, which I have integrated into my character education curriculum, along with what I learned about my third-grade students' understanding of values. My teacher research during my study significantly modified my teaching as well.

When I was trained as a teacher in the eighties, the direct method of teaching was the primary method being used. In using this method, the teacher is the creator and deliverer of the curriculum. The students were seen as passive receivers of knowledge. In this process, the teacher and the students were the dominant and the dominated. Freire

(1985) criticized this approach, naming it “the banking system” of education. This method limited the opportunities for the teacher to talk to students spontaneously or to elicit input from them. There was minimal space for spontaneity and creativity. In other words, the teacher assumed authority and imparted knowledge to the students, whereas feminist and critical pedagogy allow the teacher and students to share power and to create knowledge together, which is what I tried to achieve in my character education class.

After teaching for a number of years, I realized the importance of understanding students before trying to teach them. I felt that for teaching to be effective there should be a sincere and caring dialogue between the teacher and the student. The character education class proved to be a good opportunity for my students to talk about things that affect us. We could sit on the carpet, relax, and talk about what happened to each of us that day. We would talk about our experiences and then write stories. The intimacy of the experience created a bond between us and lowered the students’ levels of anxiety that might otherwise limit their ability to express themselves, either verbally or in writing. I encouraged the students’ participation and their interaction with myself and each other, which changed the dynamics of the classroom.

My advanced studies at the university gave me the opportunity to learn about new ways of conceiving reality, about qualitative ways to perceive things, and about the power of words and the imagination. This led to a new way for me to conceive the character education curriculum that I wanted to implement. From my university studies, I had learned that postmodernism has brought different ways of “looking” at pedagogy and knowledge. Postmodernists believe that absolute reality and objective knowledge do not

exist. They claim that what exists is inter-subjective knowledge or a multiplicity of knowledge that may, or may not, come into agreement. In this sense, no individual or collective group may be said to have complete control of reality or a complete knowledge of reality. Therefore, in order to construct knowledge, a continual process of dialogue and interaction must take place between different individuals, schools, and ideologies. In the classroom setting, this means that the teacher allows students to share and express their thoughts and construct their own identities. The teacher acts as a facilitator of the discussion. Therefore, knowledge not only exists to be absorbed but also to be reconstructed in different ways by the students and the class. Thus, I was developing my teaching method based partly on this postmodernist view of students and the teacher constructing knowledge together.

Teacher research helped me to feel like an ethnographer in my own classroom. It helped me to look at my students from a distance in order to solve a problem. I learned to take notes and observe and interpret by knowing the difference in both. The classroom can be a site of experimentation, which can be beneficial if the students can experiment too. As a teacher researcher I learned about my responsibility to be well prepared to teach, not only using good methodologies but also relevant content that reflects the needs of the students that I am serving. The teacher should be a model of the issues of care and justice in the classroom. The classroom can then become a site of construction and reconstruction of new knowledge through a dialogical process for both the students and the teacher.

Question #8 asked for new concepts and themes. The data proved that at this early age the third-grade students have a profound knowledge of values. The source may be an intense period of time of learning only about human behaviors and interactions, but the students have an enormous capacity for learning and caring about others. This is a fruitful period for making them more knowledgeable about human relationships and the ways we can foster good relationships at home and outside home. The students through the use of artifacts can be motivated to create culture or to recreate their world. As to question #9 (Did new themes or concepts emerge that were not expected?), I did not expect the children to be so eager to learn more about values or to already know so much about them. But it seemed that for them these abstract values were self-evident.

In answer to question #10 (What new insights did this study produce?), the study provided me with insights into these children's understanding of values, and how to teach them constructively and interactively. In this study, I expected the children to be more critical of their environment in a positive manner, not by destructing it, but by constructing and reconstructing it.

Finally, to question #11 (How can the teacher/researcher report findings back to students/subjects?), I would answer that copies of the study should be available for the community to read and discuss.

Conclusions and Implications

This study not only has implications for continued development of my own teaching but for other teachers in my district, and for character educators in general. My

study also has implications for improving student behavior, which was one goal of the superintendent in mandating the teaching of character education in the Valley School District, in support of the Student Code of Conduct.

Through the process of this study, I came to have a clearer view of my students' lives and their values. I did not focus so much on the methods for teaching the prescribed values, but on what my students had to say about these values, the ways they explained them using specific contexts and human relationships. This helped me to create an environment in the classroom that promoted dialogue and understanding of each other, an environment similar to what my students would normally encounter at home and in the community. In some ways, I began to be similar to the parents in their teaching of values, although I maintained my position as a teacher. However, I became a facilitator of the expression of the values that my students already had. I used their input to help me plan future lessons and at the same time, I came to know my students more each day. In this way they could learn more about values without feeling threatened or pushed to talk in a certain way.

At the beginning of my research I was predisposed to teach certain values in a certain way. As my teacher research went on I had to adapt my lessons to the developmental age of my students, their level of comprehension, and their own beliefs. For example, some terms were not appropriate right away to be discussed in class at the specific time of the research. The district Character Education Program offered some general guidelines, but it was the presence of the teacher that made a difference in the classroom and her relationship with the students. My teaching was not very explanatory,

lecture-like, and it did not contain too much questioning or memorizing. Instead my teaching developed into being dialogical and creative. Through the use of specific artifacts as points of reference, a discussion-dialogue-critique, followed by the creation of the students' own artifacts, helped to make the class in character education less prescriptive and more constructive and creative at the same time. Each day I had a new discovery, so this kind of pedagogical approach may be said to be inquiry-discovery. It was very subjective because the students had the power to create their own artifacts that explained or represented their values. The desirability of a value was left to the students' conscience after the discussion and according to their past experiences. The dialogue and activities brought new ideas and approaches to the students' expression of their values. They adapted their knowledge as they learned from other people's experiences in a democratic manner. The process can be said to be "artistic and creative" in nature. It also empowered the students to think and talk about values. I brought examples of people's lives to the class that the students could relate to, but I also enriched the curriculum with new populations and cultures.

On the other hand, the district administrators' view of teaching character education was more prescriptive and general in nature than mine. They saw the program as an opportunity to instill these values in the students more or less through direct instruction and for the purpose of achieving better behavior. But as a classroom teacher, I had to deal more personally with the students and decided to make a more student-centered curriculum with which to elaborate my lessons. We became a community of learners of these values. I could say that in some ways my students and I changed

because of these lessons, but mainly we learned from each other. We viewed each other as individuals with concrete experiences and contributions to make to the class. At their higher grade levels, my former students reportedly exhibited less disruptive behavior, and the atmosphere seemed to have changed in their class, possibly because of my students' experiences in my character education class. I observed that my children developed more respect and care for each other through our sharing of values in our third-grade class.

These outcomes and the findings of this study could possibly encourage other teachers in my district to continue to teach character education at a regular time in the school week, as they had when the district instituted the program, and to develop curriculum using the three pedagogies that I used.

The Character Education Program as a formal course was not in place in the district anymore when I returned to my school in 2002 after my graduate work. And I found it difficult to teach character education in isolation. But now the district is more focused on "The Standards," i.e., preparing elementary students to test and meet federal and state-mandated standards of academic achievement. However, it is still beneficial to include approaches within the curriculum that help to build the character of the students and to teach them values. Nevertheless, a meaningful character education curriculum that builds character into students must take into consideration their prior knowledge and experience, their cultural roots, and their relationships to the community. Imposing the values of the majority is not only a poor approach, it is an erroneous approach in a democratic society that aims to nurture tolerance and respect. Allowing children to share and express the values they already know, and affirming those values, can more readily

motivate them towards the desired behavior in school than a program of prescriptive values and lessons based primarily on White, middle-class culture.

In terms of character education, the classroom can become a site where the students develop themselves into responsible citizens through self-knowledge and the acceptance of goodness in themselves and others. Justice in such a site may be seen as a function of the relationships of care where decisions should be taken for the good of all and in some situations to help the individual.

The classroom cannot be isolated from the community; the school has to reach out to the community, and the community in turn should reach into the classroom. This relationship of school and community is vital to for the students' character development and learning of values. The parents are indeed the first educators of their children, and the schools need to support the parents in this role.

Political Implications/Policymaking

Character education as a movement must take into consideration the contributions of other cultures to American values. In order to do this, educational policies that make sure that multicultural texts are included in character education curriculums may help. Multicultural texts that include issues of cultural, social, and gender bias may prove to be effective. Books that remind us of the contributions of diverse individuals to our society may enhance character education curriculums. Literature that represents every kind of neighborhood may help students see different styles of living situations and how to improve the quality of life in all sectors of society.

Teaching character education using a constructivist approach helps the students develop their own notions of universal values. Letting the students express their own values is an empowering action. The misconception that these values must be imposed on young persons is a limited view of character education. Family values should be taken into account when teaching values, as well as the children's other influences such as community and the popular media. Methodologies for teaching character education should include critical, multicultural, and feminist pedagogies. These methodologies may improve the motivation of teachers to be agents of change in their schools as well as in their students.

While it may be best to teach character education separately, it should permeate the school curriculum, including language arts and mathematics. Distributing power in the classroom is also a way to teach character. Therefore, changes to teacher education that include the pedagogies used in the study are important. After all, it is the teacher who is most influential in modeling and teaching character education to students.

The educational system must be viewed as a whole related to other institutions in society, and character education within that context. Thus, students should learn to “read the world,” as Freire said so beautifully, by acknowledging that institutions are not created to be served, but to serve the well-being of the people—including education. Therefore, character education should relate to society and its public places, including museums, parks, malls, theaters, etc. Using critical pedagogies, students can then develop a more critical view of the social structures and constructs that affect character and how it is learned and expressed through interactions within these structures. Family relations and

early childhood education are also good means to explore the nature of character formation and expression. The study of the media for its role in shaping and influencing character is equally important.

There is currently a trend in U.S. education to homogenize education, especially through the Standards that have come out of the No Child Left Behind Act in order to make the schools more accountable and less diverse. But we should not expect to make the students in the United States learn in the same way and at the same pace; the same should be true of character education, which also needs to reflect student diversity and recognize the values of other cultures. In this study I have tried to include diversity in the character education curriculum I developed. As John Dewey (1909) stated,

Imagine 40 children all engaged in reading the same books, and in preparing and reciting the same lessons day after day. Suppose this process constitutes by far the larger part of their work, and that they are continually judged from the standpoint of what they are able to take in a study hour and reproduce in a recitation hour. p.

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Such homogenization of education limits the development of character education and does not reflect the make-up of society.

Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend that this study be done in other schools that have adopted a character education curriculum. These studies could be compared in terms of the influence of character education on students' learning and behavior. The study could be repeated in other countries as well. Cross-cultural studies in character education may help

to enhance cultural understanding, for example, by conducting a study in Puerto Rico and the U.S. at the same time.

Teacher research is especially effective for character education studies, as it can enable the teacher to customize the curriculum to the students' needs and diversity, and should be encouraged. The creation of narratives of how students learn about values can also help those in the field of character education understand their students' understanding and experience of values. This kind of teacher research can help teachers as well to understand the cultural formation of the students they teach and help them develop their creativity with the use of universal values as starters or motivators for the creation of stories or narratives in the writing class. During reading instruction, especially with multicultural materials, students may recognize or derive values by outlining those present in stories and the relationship between human values and the creation of stories. They can also express their own values through creating their own stories and artifacts. This makes character education more student-centered.

Viewing character education as a school/community endeavor may help schools develop their character education curriculums as they can invite the participation of families and other community resources. And certainly, character education should be seen as the means of fostering values among students, rather than imposing a pre-set list of values and standards on students in order to enforce a code of conduct. No doubt children will naturally improve in their behavior if their own values and the cultural formation of those values are respected. This is the true nature of character education.

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Appendix A
SAMPLES OF STUDENT SURVEY

name- A

Make 2 lists, one of things that boys do and one of things that girls do, then answer the questions.

Things that boys do:

- 1) build houses
- 2) play sports
- 3) lawn mow
- 4) go to work
- 5) trade Yugioh cards
- 6) play X box
- 7) play gamecube
- 8) play Sega Dreamcast
- 9) do the plumbing
- 10) hunt animals

Things that girls do:

- 1) cook
- 2) paint the house
- 3) be a cheerleader
- 4) go to the mall
- 5) pay the rent
- 6) play with barbies
- 7) be an acrobat
- 8) go swimming
- 9) buy cloths
- 10) go to proms

name- B

Make 2 lists, one of things that boys do and one of things that girls do, then answer the questions.

Things that boys do:	Things that girls do:
1) fix cars	1) go to work
2) go to work	2) clean the house
3) go to school	3) go to school
4) talk a lot	4) go shopping for food
5) sleep	5) talk a lot
6) fol a round	6) get cool clothes
7) get games	7) sleep
8) go cabing	8) fol a round
9) go to danny's	9) make-up
10) her mick	10) go cabing

name- C

Make 2 lists, one of things that boys do and one of things that girls do, then answer the questions.

Things that boys do:

- 1) Police
- 2) Teachers
- 3) watch
- 4) army
- 5) Doctors
- 6) Fixing
- 7) plumbers
- 8) Market people
- 9) Illustrators
- 10) bab

Things that girls do:

- 1) Police
- 2) car workers
- 3) Flower girls
- 4) Army
- 5) Illustrators
- 6) Market people
- 7) mother
- 8) perinobole
- 9) acerise
- 10) Arthur

name- D

Make 2 lists, one of things that boys do and one of things that girls do, then answer the questions.

Things that boys do:

- 1) fixe house's
- 2) paint
- 3) macanicik
- 4) lomajer
- 5) fixe washes
- 6) thechers
- 7) nars.es
- 8) work for barbary
- 9) exrsies
- 10) drive cars

Things that girls do:

- 1) vets
- 2) clean
- 3) Take care of kids
- 4) cook
- 5) work for barbary Shope
- 6) read books
- 7) thechers
- 8) narsers
- 9) exrsies
- 10) drive cars

name- E

Make 2 lists, one of things that boys do and one of things that girls do, then answer the questions.

Things that boys do:

- 1) Farmers
- 2) cops
- 3) doctor
- 4) Garbage man
- 5) actors
- 6) minister
- 7) BUS driver
- 8) teacher
- 9)
- 10)

Things that girls do:

- 1) work in a hair salon
- 2) Nurses
- 3) cop
- 4) minister
- 5) BUS driver
- 6) teacher
- 7) Principal
- 8) actor
- 9) new reporter
- 10) Author

name- F

Make 2 lists, one of things that boys do and one of things that girls do, then answer the questions.

Things that boys do:

- 1) go to the army
- 2) play football
- 3) cook
- 4) play baseball
- 5) soccer
- 6) basketball
- 7) ps
- 8) xbox
- 9) se ga
- 10) ps 2

Things that girls do:

- 1) go to the army
- 2) play football
- 3) cook
- 4) play baseball
- 5) soccer
- 6) basketball
- 7) ps
- 8) xbox
- 9) se ga
- 10) ps 2

name- G

Make 2 lists, one of things that boys do and one of things that girls do, then answer the questions.

- | Things that boys do: | Things that girls do: |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Be cops | 1) play Babis |
| 2) play sports | 2) ride Bike |
| 3) be Macnic | 3) ride scooter |
| 4) be a Gas boy | 4) ride Montencicles |
| 5) give pepole ^{cents} hair | 5) play tag |
| 6) make girls bald | 6) play gamecube |
| 7) make girs your slave | 7) Play Nintendo |
| 8) make them do your job | 8) Pigs |
| 9) be a Army | 9) Farmers |
| 10) have all the money in the world | 10) garbage girl |

name- H

Make 2 lists, one of things that boys do and one of things that girls do, then answer the questions.

Things that boys do:	Things that girls do:
1) full arand	1) cool calthes
2) talk alot	2) sleep
3) go to school	3) work
4) do work	4) pay ment
5) fixy care	5) do hair
6) open legs	6) make up
7) sleep	7) go out driving
8) watch tv	8)
9) play paintball	9)
10) Ment	10)

name- J

Make 2 lists, one of things that boys do and one of things that girls do, then answer the questions.

Things that boys do:

- 1) play
- 2) play football
- 3) play Baseball
- 4) play Basketball
- 5) play with toy's
- 6) play video games
- 7) play hockey
- 8) boy's take a salad
- 9) boy's are better's
- 10) boy's in the Xgames

Things that girls do:

- 1) play with Barbie's
- 2) they do there hair
- 3) house cleaning
- 4) girls !
- 5) getting Girl's
- 6) Basketball
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)

Appendix B

RESULTS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

The following are data I collected while using my character education curriculum framework:

- 1) Friendship
 - a) Help - 2
 - b) Get - 1
 - c) Have - 4
 - d) Care - 2
 - e) Be - 4
 - f) Forever - 3
 - g) Do - 1

Sentence: Friendship is when you have a friend forever and you help and care for your friend.

“Have” and “be” were the words most frequently used. These suggest a balance between a state of being and a state of having on the part of children.

- 2) Loyalty
 - a) Friend - 6
 - b) Slave- 1
 - c) Fair - 2
 - d) Parents - 1
 - e) Follow – 1

Sentence: Loyalty is to always be there for your friends, family, and anybody who needs you.

These words suggest that children view friendship as being directly related to loyalty. A value for friendships is common, especially for children.

- 3) Respect-
 - a) Respect other’s stuff - 1
 - b) Respect the family - 1
 - c) Respect the adults - 1
 - d) Respect my mom - 1
 - e) Respect my dad - 1
 - f) Respect other’s space - 1
 - g) Respect the teacher - 2
 - h) Respect my classmates - 1
 - i) Respect people - 1

j) Respect everybody - 2

Respect is to acknowledge the qualities of others.

There was a lot of agreement among the children in relating respect in almost all cases to people, although there was little agreement as to what individual they identified the characteristic with. Respect was linked to authority figures in most cases.

- 4) Kindness
- a) Being kind - 8
 - b) Being nice - 3
 - c) Good manners - 1

Sentence: Kindness means being nice to others, having good manners, especially with your friends and family.

The children seemed to have an intrinsic understanding of kindness that they cannot express clearly. This may be why they use the same word with the allusion to family and friends.

- 5) Self-discipline
- a) Follow directions - 6 (of mom, dad, family)
 - b) Doing chores - 1
 - c) Punish myself - 1
 - d) Behave – 1

Sentence: Self-discipline means to follow directions, to do my chores, to behave well, and to blame myself if I don't do well.

The children recognized the relationship of parenting and learning self-discipline.

- 6) Tolerance
- a) Get along - 3
 - b) Treat people nicely - 4
 - c) Accept the people - 1

Sentence: Tolerance is getting along with my friends and family and accepting people as they are.

The students seemed to have a good understanding of what tolerance entails and related it to being nice to friends and family.

- 7) Honesty-
- a) Tell the truth - 11
 - b) Being honest - 1
 - c) Not tell a lie - 1

Sentence: Honesty is to tell the truth especially to my parents.

The students overwhelmingly related honesty to truth and family. At this early age they recognize the acceptability of things as true or not and relate it to the respect they have for their parents.

- 8) Responsibility-
- a) Take care- 7
 - b) Have responsibility- 2
 - c) Being responsible - 2
 - d) Being organized - 1

Sentence: Responsibility is taking care of my things, sick people, children and the elderly.

This is an example of the students' sense of the connection between care and justice.

- 9) Cooperation-
- a) Paying attention - 4
 - b) Listen - 4
 - c) Follow directions - 1

Sentence: Cooperation is paying attention and listening to the teacher and parents. Cooperation was overwhelmingly linked to the act of listening to the other. Listening and relating to others cooperatively is equaled. It would seem that the children understand the role of listening to be a necessary prerequisite to cooperation.

- 10) Perseverance-
- a) Never give up - 8
 - b) Try your best - 4

Sentence: Perseverance is to try my best always and never give up. The students associated persistence with quality. If you persist, you have to do your best. A sense of work ethic would seem to be implicit in this assertion.

- 11) Courage
- a) Being brave - 9
 - b) Save someone - 2
 - c) Protect yourself - 1

Sentence: Courage means being brave. Children seem to understand the relationship between courageousness and bravery, and they apply the concept to themselves. They feel they are brave and that it is good to be brave. A notion of the importance of altruism is present.

Conclusion from the analysis: The students seem to have an understanding of these values and relate them concretely to themselves and their relationships with their parents, friends, and other adults. They seem to possess an altruistic way of seeing things by stressing the importance of care for the most unfortunate and the importance of courage.

A story about perseverance

One of the stories that the students were asked to write was to illustrate the value of perseverance. These were the topics the students wrote about in regard to this value:

- 1) Luck in games - 1 (prize)
- 2) Learning to skate - 1 (alone)
- 3) Learning to skate -1 (with friends)
- 4) Learning a lesson for school
- 5) Learn to walk - 1 (with mom and dad) prize involved
- 6) Playing football – 1 (praise because the team won)
- 7) Learning to swing alone -1 (peer help)
- 8) Learning to skate - 1 (with brother)
- 9) Playing soccer (praise) prize

Conclusion: Perseverance is mostly connected to the act of learning games and getting prizes. Friends and family members were frequently involved in them too. Praise was also a prize.

A picture about kindness:

The students had to draw a picture and a caption of a time when they were kind. Some students didn't write the caption.

The following were the results:

- 1) Make people happy
- 2) Helping brother ride bike
- 3) Sharing toys with baby sister
- 4) Helping a kid that fell down
- 5) Helping mother with house chores

A computer story about a specific value, friendship:

- 1) Friendship - Joseph doesn't believe in fairies. Jake takes him to fairy town, now he believes and has a friend. (Friendship related to trust)
- 2) Friendship – Dorothy doesn't have friends and makes herself a friend of a frog and a fairy. (In a case of loneliness, a story about imaginary friends.)

A story about responsibility:

Following the same pattern, the teacher showed the children a poster about responsibility. The students discussed the meaning and some specific examples of responsibility. The students worked in pairs telling each other about occasions when they showed or didn't demonstrate responsibility. The children asked each other questions about their stories, and finally the children wrote about this topic. These were the results and the conclusions that they reached about responsibility:

- 1) Mother tells the child to clean their room and he doesn't do it.
- 2) Mother was late preparing a meal and she made herself a sandwich.
- 3) Helping to babysit her sister to help her mother.
- 4) Caring for a baby brother.
- 5) Making breakfast for your mother when she is tired.
- 6) Finding a person who was lost.
- 7) Watching a baby.
- 8) Cleaning when there is a party.
- 9) When your sister cleans the room for you so you don't get hit.
- 10) Going to school although you don't feel very well.
- 11) To study for a test.
- 12) To take care of the dogs.
- 13) Take care of your baby brother.

Conclusions: Virtually all of the stories take place at home or at school. In most cases where siblings are referred to, the older sibling has to take care of the younger one. A number of stories involve chores, and punishment is often referred to or inferred. Others involve voluntary work.

It would seem that at a very young age these children are learning adult responsibilities, including taking care of children, cooking, and cleaning. They seem to have a very positive attitude about doing certain tasks that are considered adult responsibilities. However, they frequently refer to more child-like activities like parties, playing, sharing with the family, etc.

The pattern of responses changed when the children made comparisons between boys and girls. When asked what boys do versus what girls do, for instance, when asked to respond to the following question: Can girls do things that boys do?

Boys	Girls	Answer to question
Fix things -9	work - 24	yes - 3
Work - 20	take care of house - 6	no - 1
Play sports -14	take care of kids - 2	
Play games - 14	read books - 1	
Leisure - 10	play games - 9	
School - 1	play sports - 2	
	leisure – 12	

Boys were mostly seen doing active things like work, fixing houses, playing sports and games. Girls were seen as working and playing games, but also caring for the kids and cleaning the house.

Conclusions: Grace, an American girl, almost equalizes what boys and girls do with some exceptions. She seems to be on the verge of seeing the actual differences and thinking that things can change yet. Martha, a second-generation Puerto Rican girl, perceived basically the same roles for both girls and boys. Robert, a second-generation Latino boy, also did not differentiate between the roles. Anthony, another Latino, thinks that girls should serve boys. George viewed girls as different, but not as servants. He assigned traditional roles to each gender, yet boys are seen playing all the time. Antonio, a boy believes both sexes can do the same things. Rebecca, an African American girl, seems to see boys as irresponsible and girls as doing all the housework, paying rent, and going driving. Ruth, an African American girl, gives importance to girls looking nice, going shopping, cleaning the house, and going to work. Boys' roles are seen by her as going to work, fooling around, and playing. She doesn't mention the caring part of boyhood. Milton conceives of both as having a very active life of work, amusement, and responsibilities.

Conclusions: Basically, all of the children agreed that both genders could do the same things, especially work and play. Family experience may affect these assertions. Most of these students come from single parent homes where the mother does all the housework and works outside the home, too. Their mothers probably engage the children in helping them, or the children feel the necessity to help them. Fathers are most often seen by the students as working or “playing around.”

A story about respect produced these examples:

- 1) Give borrowed stuff back
- 2) Shaking people’s hands when you lose a game - 2
- 3) Helping - 4
- 4) When adults say do something, go and do it - 4
- 5) Asking for permission to go places
- 6) Saying please and thank you - 2
- 7) Taking off your hat
- 8) Sharing your things
- 9) Following instructions - 2
- 10) Promising to obey rules of conduct
- 11) Listening to the people when they are talking
- 12) Saying “sorry” – 2

Most students thought that respect is doing what adults tell you to do and to help them. Others paid more attention to manners like saying “I’m sorry, please, and thank you.” In most of the stories, respect is shown mostly to people who are older.

I asked the students to write a sentence with each of the following 16 values:

Courage

- 1) Stand up by yourself
- 2) Courage in his heart
- 3) Brave like my mom
- 4) Courage to be brave
- 5) My friend is courageous
- 6) Courage in her heart

7) Brave at doing something

Courage in your heart: Courage is viewed as an internal personal characteristic that does not always show.

Kindness

- 1) Everyday she is kind
- 2) He is kind - 2
- 3) I am kind - 4
- 4) To give

Kindness is seen as a desirable quality that people possess.

Perseverance

- 1) Never give up - 4
- 2) My mom is ...
- 3) I persevere in school

Most of the students equated perseverance with not giving up.

Tolerance

- 1) Gets along - 5
- 2) I am

The students mostly associate tolerance with getting along.

Friendship

- 1) Having friends - 4
- 2) Kindness
- 3) My mom doesn't fight

Most students conceptualized friendship with having friends. While this is certainly logical, it might also suggest a sense of consumerism.

Patience

- 1) Wait my turn - 2
- 2) Like to have
- 3) I am - 2
- 4) Can wait

5) Opposite of in a hurry

Most students appropriately related patience with the act of waiting and being. It seems they have experienced it and identify positively with the behavior.

Cooperation

- 1) Cooperates with others
- 2) Cooperates in class
- 3) Am cooperative
- 4) Do a lot of things
- 5) Helping each other
- 6) Me and my sister
- 7) Raises her hand

Most students associate cooperation with various forms of sharing.

Patriotism

- 1) Love my country - 3
- 2) My country
- 3) Feel great to be in America
- 4) Not littering
- 5) Since the war started

Most students connected patriotism with love of their country. One of them mentioned that it is greater since the war in Iraq started.

Loyalty

- 1) I follow my teacher
- 2) I follow my friends
- 3) Tell the truth
- 4) To my mom
- 5) Dogs are loyal to owners
- 6) To care

Most students talked about loyalty as a kind of following and understand it as a relationship with someone/something else or state of service.

Caring

- 1) For everybody
- 2) For my family - 2

- 3) For my mom - 3
- 4) For my pets

Most of the students indicated they care for their families/mothers; only one did not mention humans.

Compassion

- 1) Feel compassion for the sick - 3
- 2) Me and my friends
- 3) Cheer up friend crying
- 4) As sad as my friends

Half of the students associated compassion with relationships with friends, and the other half related compassion to people who were sick. All the students associated the feeling of compassion with humans—unlike other values that were often associated with their pets by at least one student.

Respect

- 1) My friend
- 2) Respect moms and dads - 4
- 3) Respect elders

Most students expressed respect for their elders, especially their parents.

Responsibility

- 1) Responsible for things - 3
- 2) Responsible for pets
- 3) Do chores at home
- 4) For my family

Most students expressed a sense of responsibility for things. Only one mentioned humans, i.e., “family.”

Self-discipline

- 1) Listening to others
- 2) To wake up
- 3) Do homework - 3
- 4) With myself

Half of the students related self discipline to something that they are in control of such as “doing homework.” This suggests an understanding of the concept, not only the definition of the value. However, three showed little understanding of the word/concept.

Honesty

- 1) Don't lie
- 2) With parents - 2
- 3) Tell the truth
- 4) I am

Only two students associated honesty with their parents directly. The three other children were able to generalize/identify.

Themes for statues:

Tolerance- children from different parts of the world sharing

Care - a friend giving her friend a gift because she is sad

Self- discipline - a statue of myself doing homework and house chores

Perseverance - when I did well in my report card

Friendship - going to the movies

Loyalty - a child proudly holding the American flag (that may be me one day)

Cooperation - helping another person

Friendship - friendship is good

Courage - my uncle in the war

Generosity - giving something back

Analysis of the Data by Value

Friendship

Friendship - going to the movies

Friendship - friendship is good

Computer story about a specific value:

- 3) Friendship - Adam doesn't believe in fairies. Jake takes him to fairy town, now he

believes and has a friend. (Friendship related to trust)

4) Friendship - Dorothy doesn't have friends and makes herself the friend of a frog and a fairy. (In case of loneliness, a story about imaginary friends)

12) Friendship-

- a) Help - 2
- b) Get - 1
- c) Have - 4
- d) Care - 2
- e) Be - 4
- f) Forever - 3
- g) Do - 1

Sentence: Friendship is when you have a friend forever and you help and care for your friend.

Have and be are the words most used. A balance between a state of being and a state of having is noted.

Generalization: Trust is seen as an integral part of friendship. There is a kind of balance between being a friend and having a friend.

Tolerance

Tolerance - children from different parts of the world sharing

Tolerance

- a. Gets along - 5
- b. I am

Most students have associated tolerance with a relationship to others: getting along which implicitly suggests that they understand that it requires overcoming differences.

13) Tolerance-

- a) Get along - 3
- b) Treat people nicely - 4
- c) Accept the people - 1

Sentence: Tolerance is getting along with my friends and family and accepting

people as they are.

Generalization: Tolerance is related to the act of making peace or living in peace.

(Getting along, accepting people from around the world)

Respect

Respect

- 4) My friend
- 5) Respect moms and dads - 4
- 6) Respect elders

Most of the students associated respect with their elders, particularly parents.

Story about respect:

- 13) Give borrowed stuff back
- 14) Shake people's hands when you lose a game - 2
- 15) Helping - 4
- 16) When adults say do something, go and do it - 4
- 17) Asking for permission to go places
- 18) Saying please and thank you - 2
- 19) Taking off your hat
- 20) Sharing your things
- 21) Following instructions - 2
- 22) Promise to obey rules of conduct
- 23) Listening to the people when they are talking
- 24) Saying "sorry" - 2

Most students thought respect is doing what adults tell you to do and/or the act of helping adults. Others paid more attention to manners like saying "I'm sorry, please, and thank you." Respect is shown mostly to people who are older in most of their stories.

- 14) Respect
 - a) Respect other's stuff- 1
 - b) Respect the family - 1
 - c) Respect the adults - 1
 - d) Respect my mom - 1
 - e) Respect my dad - 1

- f) Respect other's space - 1
- g) Respect the teacher - 2
- h) Respect my classmates - 1
- i) Respect people - 1
- j) Respect everybody -2

Respect is to acknowledge the qualities of others.

Respect is not clearly defined by the students. All but two of the students associated respect with their relationships to adults/people, most with specificity as to which adult. Respect is linked to authority and the value of everybody or the value of being.

Generalization: There is a balance between respecting adults and respecting the things of others of the same age. It also is related to good manners. Respect is largely associated with relationships to adults and, implicitly, authority figures and relationships of power.

Responsibility

Responsibility

- 5) Responsible for things - 3
- 6) Responsible for pets
- 7) Do chores at home
- 8) For my family

All but one student associated the value of being responsible with things.

A story about responsibility:

Following the same pattern, I showed a poster about responsibility, and the students discussed the meaning and some specific examples of this value. The students worked in pairs telling each other personal times when they showed or didn't show the value of responsibility. The children were given the opportunity to ask each other questions about one another's stories, and, finally, the children wrote a story about the value. The following are the results and the conclusions that I reached:

- 14) Mother tells to clean the room and he doesn't do it
- 15) Mother was late doing meal and she made herself a sandwich
- 16) Helping babysit her sister to help her mother
- 17) Caring for a baby brother
- 18) Making breakfast for your mother when she is tired
- 19) Finding a person who was lost
- 20) Watching a baby
- 21) Cleaning when there is a party
- 22) When your sister cleans the room for you so you don't get hit
- 23) Going to school although you don't feel very well
- 24) To study for a test
- 25) To take care of the dogs
- 26) Take care of your baby brother

Conclusions: Most of the stories constructed or written by the students take place at home or at school. As these are the two key domains in most children's lives, this is to be expected. It suggests that both domains are important in developing values and the child's overall character. In most of the stories in the home environment, the bigger sibling has to take care of the youngest one. Some of the stories involved chores, and punishment is mentioned in a limited number of instances, showing an understanding of cause and effect as a consequence of not upholding the value. Other stories involved volunteer work.

At a very young age, these children are learning grown-up responsibilities, including taking care of children, cooking, and cleaning. They seem to have a very positive attitude about being required to do certain tasks that are often considered adult responsibilities. This is not to say that they don't continue to value activities that are associated with childhood and that are age appropriate. They clearly expressed appreciation for parties, playing, sharing with the family, etc.

Generalization: Responsibility is linked to the act of cooperating for survival at home and school.

Loyalty

Loyalty

- k) Friend - 6
- l) Slave - 1
- m) Fair - 2
- n) Parents - 1
- o) Follow -1

Sentence: Loyalty is to always be there for your friends, family, and anybody who needs you.

Generalization: Loyalty is linked to servitude for love.

Friendliness is directly related to loyalty. A spirit of friendship is common, especially among the poor.

Loyalty

- 7) I follow my teacher
- 8) I follow my friends
- 9) Tell the truth
- 10) To my mom
- 11) Dogs are loyal to owners
- 12) To care

Most students talk about loyalty as a kind of following or state of service

Kindness-caring

- 15) Kindness
 - a) Being kind - 8
 - b) Being nice - 3
 - c) Having good manners - 1

Sentence: Kindness means being nice to others, having good manners, especially to your friends and family.

The children seem to have an intrinsic understanding of kindness that they cannot express clearly. That is why they use the same word with the allusion to family and friends.

A picture about kindness:

The students were asked to draw a picture and a caption of an occasion on which they showed kindness. The following are descriptions of the pictures as interpreted by myself, the teacher:

- 6) Make people happy
- 7) Helping brother ride bike
- 8) Sharing toys with baby sister
- 9) Helping a kid that fell down
- 10) Helping mother with house chores

Kindness

- 5) Everyday she is kind
- 6) He is kind - 2
- 7) I am kind - 4
- 8) To give

Kindness is expressed in the pictures as a desirable quality that people possess in their relationships to others. It is associated with the act of caring.

Caring

- 5) For everybody
- 6) For my family - 2
- 7) For my mom - 3
- 8) For my pets

All but one of the children associated the value of caring with their family or mothers, especially their mothers. This suggests that their family relationships are good ones. The one child who always refers to pets instead of family member, despite the prevalence of children around him/her relating to family, may suggest that he/she does not have positive relationships at home. We all know that not all children are happy at home and that the research reflects or suggests that the need to look into this would be good.

Care - a friend giving her friend a gift because she is sad.

Courage

Courage - my uncle in the war

Courage

- 8) Stand up by yourself
- 9) Courage in his heart
- 10) Brave like my mom
- 11) Courage to be brave
- 12) My friend is courageous
- 13) Courage in her heart
- 14) Brave at doing something

Courage in your heart. Courage is viewed as an internal personal characteristic that does not always show.

- 16) Courage
 - a) Being brave - 9
 - b) Save someone - 2
 - c) Protect yourself - 1

Sentence: Courage means being brave.

Generalization: Children seem to understand the relationship between courageousness and bravery, and they apply the concept to themselves. They identify with courage/ bravery and that it is good to be brave. A notion of the importance of altruism is present.

Perseverance

Perseverance

- 4) Never give up - 4
- 5) My mom is...
- 6) I persevere in school.

Most of the students have appropriately associated perseverance with not giving up and with themselves. Only one did not identify with the value but ascribed it to their mothers.

A story about perseverance

One of the stories that the students were asked to write was about perseverance.

These were the general topics the students wrote on for this topic:

- 1) Luck in games - 1 (prize)
- 2) Learning to skate - 1 (alone)
- 3) Learning to skate - 1 (with friends)
- 4) Learning a lesson for school
- 5) Learn to walk - 1 (with mom and dad) prize involved
- 6) Playing football - 1 (praise because team won)
- 7) Learn to swing alone - 1 (peer help)
- 8) Learning to skate (with brother) - 1
- 9) Playing soccer (praise) prize

Generalization: Six of nine children made up stories associating perseverance with learning something (mostly games), and three associated perseverance with winning a game/prize. Friends and family members were frequently associated with these experiences as well. Praise was specifically referred to as a prize in three cases, suggesting that for these students there was a more significant consequence for carrying out the value in addition to being successful/ achieving the goal.

Self-discipline

- 17) Self-discipline
 - a) Follow directions - 6 (of mom, dad, family)
 - b) Doing chores - 1
 - c) Punish myself - 1
 - d) Behave – 1

Sentence: Self discipline means to follow directions, do my chores, behave well, and to blame myself if I don't do well.

Conclusions: Six of nine children detached themselves from the value of self-discipline while three directly related the value to themselves or their own acts.

Six drew a relationship between adult authority and self-discipline. It is interesting to note the two words mix/juxtapose responsibility and authority/power. The word “discipline” is most often associated with negative use of power by parents/adults.

Self-discipline

- 5) Listening to others
- 6) To wake up
- 7) Do homework - 3
- 8) With myself

Generalization: Half of the students ascribed the center of power of this value to themselves, and the other half to adults. This, once again, may be a result of the juxtaposition of the two words.

Cooperation

Cooperation

- 8) Cooperates with others
- 9) Cooperates in class
- 10) Am cooperative
- 11) Do a lot of things
- 12) Helping each other
- 13) Me and my sister
- 14) Raises her hand

Most students associated cooperation with some form of sharing.

- 18) Cooperation
 - a) Paying attention - 4
 - b) Listen - 4
 - c) Follow directions - 1

Sentence: Cooperation is paying attention and listening to the teacher and parents.

Generalization: Overwhelmingly, cooperation was understood as centered in the

child's action and therefore suggests that they understand that it is something that is within their control—but a consequence of their relationship with others. Cooperation is linked to the act of listening to others. Children seem to understand the role of listening as a prerequisite to cooperation. The lack of reference by any of the children to independent acts of their own that result in cooperation suggests that they readily related to the group values in their home and school settings at this age, despite the literature on the self-centeredness of children at this age. Their evidence of valuing cooperation also suggests that this is a good age to teach/reinforce these values.

Honesty

- 19) Honesty
- a) Tell the truth - 11
 - b) Being honest - 1
 - c) Not tell a lie - 1

Sentence: Honesty is to tell the truth, especially to my parents.

Inferences: Students relate honesty to truth and family. At this early age they seem to associate truth directly with honesty and the process of sentence construction suggests that they are most concerned about carrying out this value in the relationship with their parents.

Patriotism

Patriotism

- 6) Love my country - 3
- 7) My country
- 8) Feel great to be in America
- 9) Not littering
- 10) Since the [Iraqi] war started

Sentence: Patriotism is to take care of your country.

Generalization: Five out of seven of the students appropriately associated patriotism with feelings about /love of their country. One of them mentioned that patriotism is greater since the Iraqi war started.

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