

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT:  
DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOMS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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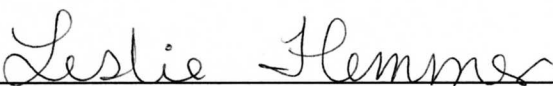
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## ABSTRACT

Classrooms in the United States hold every conceivable combination of cultures, values, and family structures. Democratic classroom strategies are good teaching practices which stem from democratic principals and inform learning and teaching to create a diverse and equitable learning community. However, these strategies are diverse primarily because the nature of their underlying beliefs about democracy and education differ. Thus, five themes are analyzed: political socialization, moral development, classroom management, cooperative learning and culturally relevant education. Overall, democratic classroom strategies create effective student-citizens by providing opportunities to understand and analyze the interplay of social, economic, and political forces and to develop skills and commitments for working collectively to improve society.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Today, more than ever, our society and country is a dynamic reflection of the world's population. Our classrooms hold students representing every conceivable combination of cultures, values, and family structures. Unfortunately, the system of education has been born from dangerous assumptions about population demographics, economics, skin color, religious practices, national origin, language and gender (Spring, 2008). As a result, classrooms are predominantly monocultural in curriculum, teaching staff and pedagogy, consequently, public school does not serve the educational needs and interests of every student. Democratic classroom strategies are good teaching practices which stem from democratic principals and inform learning and teaching to create a diverse and equitable learning community within the classroom. Thus, this paper will interrogate the notion of democratic classrooms and the strategies utilized as seen through five major themes: political socialization, moral development, classroom management, cooperative learning and culturally relevant education.

### Rationale

This research focus and culminating paper directly relates to the development of pedagogy because it provides a research base and critical lens to use as a starting point with which one can build a strong and just community in classrooms to support learning. By exploring the nature of democratic classroom strategies, one can teach other people's children with an informed practice. Moreover, fundamental goals as an educator must be to provide and participate in an equitable and culturally relevant system of education, community and society at large. Thus, in order to enjoy that reality, one must know how to create and nurture it.

The conclusions found in this paper strongly matter in the lives of children. A democracy is characterized by freedoms and rights, inclusion and respect, trust and participation. All children and members of society deserve that reality in both their education and life at large. This topic also has a strong relevance in the greater educational community. Research on democratic classroom strategies and their impacts on learning is not as common. By choosing this research focus, it provides the opportunity to collect and synthesize the various perspectives on democratic classrooms to look for holistic strategies that will create effective learning in elementary aged students. Moreover, as one would assume, in a decidedly undemocratic educational system, it is difficult to find high quality empirical research on democratic classrooms. Current research is lacking context-specific information and does not provide the variety of perspectives that are needed to discuss the meanings and application of democratic principals within a public classroom setting in the United States.

Finally, the last reason this topic is important to the educational community is primarily because other elements of schooling, such as high-stakes assessments tied to funding, are demanding the focus of the educational community and society in general. However, there is more to teaching, learning and schooling than high achievement scores. These scores do not fully reflect learning in a holistic and realistic way. Schooling presents an opportunity to enrich the lives of children. The educational community and society at large have differing opinions on the means and purpose of that opportunity however. This topic of democratic classrooms can provide a door to a richer and more diverse system of education on the whole. The tools children are given in a democratic classroom can help inform their lives and our greater society.

### Description of Controversies

The term, democratic classroom, has been used in different realms of professional education literature since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century primarily because there seemed to be little consensus to its meaning. Democratic classroom strategies are diverse because the nature of their underlying beliefs about democracy and education differ. Thrown about loosely, democracy indicates a societal attempt to “play fair.”

Today, democratic classrooms, and the strategies used within them, have continued to be used for many purposes: character education, civic education, moral enlightenment, group learning and classroom management techniques. Currently, the term *democratic classroom* has begun to emerge and tends to be linked to the notions of reform and further social organization. Some approaches to democratic classrooms even used democracy as a nationalistic and prideful excuse to perpetuate dominant ‘American’ culture and morals. The underlying definition of a democratic classroom, and of democracy as a whole, changes as the purpose and goals change, thus creating a matrix of valued elements within each. As a result, questions began to surface based on these controversies surrounding the term, *democratic classroom*; what are the morals, values and politics that are being taught to children? Who will support a truly democratic system of education? Finally, why should democracy be taught if it has been, thus far, not fully realized?

### Statement of Limits

Within this paper on democratic classrooms and context, the following did not go in-depth into the political implications or how the politics and policy makers influence the promotion of democracy. This discussion is has vast implications on society and the

system of schooling at large, however, in order to maintain a cohesive focus on education and learning, this topic was not included. Another aspect to this discussion that was not included was the vast body of professional literature pertaining to service learning. Service learning stems from democratic education roots in that the goals are to meet actual community needs, enhance what is taught in the school by extending student learning beyond the classroom, and to help develop a sense of caring for others (Bickmore, 2001). Unfortunately, service learning is a citizenship education initiative that primarily takes place outside of the classroom and thus, not a classroom-centered strategy. Most importantly, within all the research and literature reviewed for this paper, an age limit had to be set. There is a wealth of democratic classroom literature focusing on secondary education, however, the aim of this paper is to find democratic classroom strategies for elementary education.

### Summary

The research focus as identified in chapter one asserts that democratic classroom strategies are good teaching practices which stem from democratic principals and inform learning and teaching to create a diverse and equitable learning community within the classroom. Through analyzing democratic classroom strategies as found within the five major themes, provides a research base and critical lens to use as a starting point with which one can build a strong and just community in classrooms to support learning. Not only do all students deserve a just and equitable education, but this analysis provides the opportunity to collect and synthesize various perspectives on democratic classrooms to look for holistic strategies that will create effective learning in elementary aged students. However, the educational community and society at large have differing opinions about

the means and purpose of education. This topic of democratic classrooms can provide a door to a richer and more diverse system of education and provide children with tools to help inform their lives and our society at large.

Chapter two will discuss a brief history that depicts the history of democratic classrooms as generally found in the five main areas discussed within this paper: political socialization, moral development, classroom management, cooperative learning, and culturally relevant education. Each has a different context for approaching education and schooling. This also implies differences in their approaches to democratic classrooms. Chapter three will present a field of research that informs the focus of this paper on the effects of democratic classroom techniques on student learning in elementary education. The chapter is a review and critique of current literature and research. Again, the five major themes will be utilized as the framework for this research. Finally, chapter four presents a summary of historical and professional literature findings as well as implications and further research suggestions.

## CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Introduction

Chapter one introduced the topic of this paper: the effects of democratic classroom strategies on learning and teaching in elementary education. Also included, was the reasoning behind exploring democratic classrooms as they pertain to learning. Chapter two will provide the history of the major aspects of democratic classrooms that contribute to the collective definition of the terms used in this paper.

Democratic classroom strategies are diverse primarily because the nature of their underlying beliefs about democracy and education differ. A commitment to democracy, for some, is associated with liberal notions of freedom, while for others democracy is primarily about equality of opportunity. Some people assert that civil society is essential, while others hope social change happens through healthy free markets. Thus, in order to contextualize democratic classroom strategies, one must first integrate the historical contexts from the major themes that promote such differing notions of strategies and pedagogies used in democratic classrooms today. Historical research of democratic classrooms is generally found in five areas which are included in this brief historical background: political socialization, moral development, classroom management, cooperative learning, and culturally relevant education.

### Political Socialization

The history of democratic classrooms as creating student-citizens who are responsible, actively participate in their own rights and duties of citizenship, and are justice oriented could very well be a history of democracy itself. This history encompasses the founding of the United States of America and the documents and ideals

that were born with it. Thomas Jefferson, and those who followed and fought for freedom and equality throughout history, believed that the success of American democracy depended on the development of an educated citizenry who would vote wisely, protect its own rights and freedoms, defeat political corruption, and keep the nation secure from internal and external threats to democracy (Spring, 2008). Hence, the roots of democratic education and political socialization began.

One major debate that began at this time, and continues today, was what is a ‘good’ citizen? For some, good citizens in a democracy participate in volunteer activities, while others take active parts in political processes by voting, forming committees or later, protesting. There began to be a great spectrum of ideas about what good citizenship is and what good citizens do. Thomas Jefferson indicated the essentials of good citizenship, “...people who mean to be their own Governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives” (Soder, Goodlad & McMannon, 2001, p. 172). This statement represents the use of knowledge and education to promote good citizenship and democracy as a whole. This idea of democracy harkens to the “common school” philosophy of the 1830s and 1840s, where education began to be used to reduce tensions between social classes, eliminate crime and poverty, stabilize the political system, and form patriotic citizens (Spring, 2008). This was considered essential in creating and continuing a ‘good’ society. Without it, the health of American society would be threatened and so would the future of our political and economic standing as a nation within the global community (Wyett, 1997).

An education specifically encompassing political socialization, or the acquisition of political values, attitudes, and behaviors, was first included in social studies education

and grew out of the Progressive movement, 1890-1920, (Ichilov, 1990). This movement came about as a response to the changes brought about by industrialization and primarily advocated a wide range of economic, political, social, and moral reforms. Thus, schooling changed in order to solve social and economic problems and try to improve the lives of individuals. Some elements of change included the expansion of the social functions of the school to include direct concern for health, vocation, and the quality of family and community life. This also triggered the use of principals of psychology and the social sciences in classroom instruction, and the attempt to have instruction meet the needs of different kinds of classes of children (Spring, 2008).

This era of history represents the first conception of the ‘good’ citizen; the *personally responsible* citizen. According to Westheimer and Kahne (2002), the personally responsible citizen acts responsibly in their community by, for example, working and paying taxes, obeying laws, keeping themselves and their property clean, volunteering their time, and staying out of debt. The concept carries specific ideological beliefs regarding the capacities and commitments citizens needed in order for democracy to flourish. In the realm of education, this concept carried specific implications for pedagogy, curriculum, evaluation and educational policy. Specifically, there is a long tradition of making honesty, integrity, responsibility and other virtues central aims for educators, beginning with Horace Mann in 1838 and growing into what is now referred to values or character education today.

A second concept of citizen exists however, and presents a change in focus for political socialization in education. The *participatory* citizen was born from the ideology that education for democracy entails development and commitments for civic



participation (Westheimer & Kahne, 2002). Alexis De Tocqueville (1805-1859), a French political thinker and historian discussed the importance of participation in his 1835 book *Democracy in America* (De Tocqueville, 1899). He argues that civic participation transcends particular community problems or opportunities and develops relationships, common understandings, trust and collective commitments.

Beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a different version of ‘good’ citizenship began to influence education. The development of participatory citizens focused on teaching students about how government and other institutions works and about the importance of planning and participating in organized efforts to care for those in need, for example, or in efforts to guide school policies. The philosophy of John Dewey specifically addressed this connection and heavily influenced social studies education. Active participation by the citizens of a democratic society was promoted by Dewey, as was his belief that education in such a society must give citizens a personal stake in their society. Dewey promoted the development of the ‘habits of mind’ to affect necessary social change (Dewey, 1916/1944, p. 99). Social studies was then charged with the primary responsibility of educating effective democratic citizens (Engle & Ochoa, 1988). Effective democratic citizens (i.e., good citizens) then became defined as citizens who are not just patriotic and law-obeying, and also those who are informed critics of the nation and participate in its improvement (Engle & Ochoa, 1988).

Dewey furthered his argument for the role of democracy in classrooms by positing that learning occurs more readily through experience that allows for active engagement. Dewey put forward a vision of "Democracy as a Way of Life" and emphasized participation in collective endeavors. To support the efficacy of these

collective efforts, he also emphasized commitments to communication, experimentation, and scientifically informed dialogues. Such commitments were also prevalent in the educational writings of the Nation's Founders. Jefferson, Franklin, and others viewed informed participation in civic life as a fundamental support for a democratic society and saw education as a chief means for furthering this goal.

As Dewey explains, when children are at recess they develop ways to work together and establish cooperation (Dewey, 1960). Dewey promoted democracy in education primarily because he believed that students must have opportunities to learn how to work together in groups, form respectful attitudes, develop understanding for others and learn problem-solving skills. Dewey believed that when students worked together, they prompted learning in each other. When students are only concerned with individual learning a competitive learning environment rather than a caring and collaborative environment is created. Dewey believed caring was essential to social progress and that learning through individualism lacked the social aspects necessary to bring about this progress (Dewey, 1960).

This thinking is still prevalent today and found primarily in social studies curriculum (Engle & Ochoa, 1988). At best, using a democratic classroom to these means idealistically shapes the classroom into a 'laboratory' for instruction in democratic principals, involving the study of human rights, laws, and voting into the basic history curricula. The use of democratic education as a means to political socialization is for the purpose of teaching democracy. However, even though an understanding of what a democracy looks like and how it works is essential, students do not need to learn about democracy, they must live it.

That is where the third and final concept of citizen begins; the *justice oriented* citizen (Westheimer & Kahne, 2002). In other words, an analogy to differentiate the three concepts of citizenry would say that if participatory citizens are organizing the food drive and personally responsible citizens are donating food, justice oriented citizens are asking why people are hungry and acting on what they discover.

The strongest proponents of this perspective were likely the Social Reconstructionists who gained their greatest hearing between the two world wars. Educators like Harold Rugg (1921) argued that the teaching of history in particular and the school curriculum more generally should be developed in ways that connect with important and enduring social problems. George Counts (1932) asked, "Dare the School Build a New Social Order?" He wanted educators to critically assess varied social and economic institutions while also "...engag[ing] in the positive task of creating a new tradition in American life" (p. 262). These educators emphasized that truly effective citizens needed opportunities to analyze and understand the interplay of social, economic, and political forces and to take part in projects through which they might develop skills and commitments for working collectively to improve society. And it was the job of the school to shape those citizens.

Through this brief history of political socialization focused education, underscored is the political implications of education for democracy. These implications suggest that the narrow, and often ideologically conservative conception of citizenship embedded in many efforts to teach for democracy, reflects not arbitrary choices but rather political choices with political consequences. Democratic classrooms, as found connected to Social Studies curriculums, service learning, citizenship education, and many other

directions, are heavily influenced by the history of political socialization in American education.

### Moral Development

Historically, public schools have *not* been places where individual rights are guaranteed. The free exercise of religion (*West Virginia v. Barnette, 1943*), freedom of expression (*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District, 1969*), freedom of association (*Healy v. James, 1972*), freedom against unreasonable search and seizure (*New Jersey v. T.L.O., 1984*), equal protection under the law (*Brown v. Board of Education, 1954*), and due process (*Goss v. Lopez, 1975*) are all examples of such rights. According to the Supreme Court, students should not be forced to “...shed their rights at the school house gate” (*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District, 1969*). However, to simply teach responsible exercise of these constitutional rights, especially within a white dominant-cultural setting, is simply not enough. Not to mention will not yield a deep understanding of the democratic ideals that uphold said rights. It must be a personal internal moral compass that guides students and adults regarding right and wrong. Democratic classroom strategies, especially for elementary-aged students, are also informed by theory and research from a moral development school of thinking. Thus, the historical contexts of moral development, specifically character or values education and moral reasoning must also be integrated to further understand strategies for today’s democratic classroom.

Today, many public schools are returning to the promotion of civic values, and incorporating them into the curriculum. This process of developing a strong, educated citizenry is also an opportunity to teach respect for non-white and non-dominant cultures

and socioeconomic backgrounds. Historically, one of the primary missions of American public schools has been to instill moral virtues in students that will help to make them good neighbors and good citizens. For the school reformer, Horace Mann, this was essential to reducing friction among social classes to create equal economic opportunities (Spring, 2008).

Character education or values education has been an ongoing theme within the history of education. It can be traced from the direct teaching of Victorian values in the 1800s, to the increasingly values-neutral stance of the mid-1900s, and finally to the current belief at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that values must be taught to secure the stability of society. Through the centuries of contextual shifts within values education, two primary approaches to teaching values became clear; a product approach and a process approach (Andrews, 1994). A product approach is primarily teaching 'core' or 'fixed' values through direct teaching. This school of thinking asserts that a consensus exists about central values, such as 'respect' and 'responsibility.' A process approach is using the classroom as a context for values clarification.

One predominant means for teaching core values throughout history has been through literature. School textbooks have historically encouraged and supported the values of the "moral life" to some degree throughout our nation's history. The "moral life" of seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century America was predominantly defined by the Judeo-Christian heritage of the Western European settlers, and the Bible was often the only book in the home of rural Americans. Many historical accounts of educational materials used in the United States begin with a discussion of the hornbook, in popular use in schools of the seventeenth century. A hornbook is sheet of paper containing the

Lord's Prayer, the alphabet, and phonic elements, such as the vowel and consonant combinations, and was attached to a wooden paddle, covered with a thin layer of horn. One major purpose of schooling was to produce readers proficient enough to read the Scriptures.

Consequently, the content of the first primer to be widely disseminated in the United States was largely religious: The Lord's Prayer, the Creed, prayers, and hymns. This collection, *The New England Primer*, was first published circa 1690, and it continued to be published for one hundred and fifty years, totaling over three million copies. Throughout the eighteenth century a major purpose for schooling remained the fostering of active participation in one's own salvation through involvement in church liturgy and religious morals. The schoolroom use of books other than the Bible received impetus from the publication of the McGuffey Readers in 1835. They served as the main reading materials, confirmed moral values and truths, and shaped the literary tastes of American children.

One of the vital educational reform movements of the 1990s has been character education. The origins of this movement, and one of the reasons for its continuing popularity, is primarily due to a general feeling among American people that a crisis exists with regard to the character of youth. By the mid-1980s the movement was characterized by the development of a wide variety of character education programs by national organizations as well as by local school districts. More recently, this character education movement has begun to focus on the evaluation of character education programs. Increasingly the founders of such programs, as well as the communities that these programs serve, have begun to ask for evidence with regard to program efficacy.

Until quite recently, the major approach to the evaluation of character education programs was largely anecdotal in nature (Leming, 1997). Today, there is recognition that better research is needed if the movement is to remain vital and to move forward.

As we have seen in the historical beginnings of character education, virtually all of the current efforts to educate for character continue to utilize narratives. This is primarily because through the use of stories, cultural values are most often given shape and made meaningful in the lives of children. As MacIntyre (1981) has noted in his influential work *After Virtue*, "... Man in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially is a story-telling animal ... I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?' ... the telling of stories has a key part in educating us into the virtues" (p. 201). Again, as the Puritans forged the path of American education—explicitly virtue-based literature, this practice was continued in the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, most notably through McGuffey's Readers. The popularity of this approach is evident through the fact that the *Book of Virtues* by William Bennett (1993) has sold over two million copies in the United States.

However, moral development and moral reasoning, according to social psychologists, does not happen through reading a book, no matter how many narratives are included. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the psychological community began to create theoretical frameworks to approach moral development in children. Respectful discussions of conflicting perspectives provide significant learning experiences and have an extreme impact on social and moral development.

This catalyst for learning has been highly valued by Jean Piaget (Singer & Revenson, 1996) and further influenced Moral Development psychologists Lawrence Kohlberg and Thomas Lickona (1987). However, it is not simply the sharing of ideas that encourages learning. By interacting with someone who does not hold the same views, one is forced to question and reflect upon their own beliefs. According to Lawrence Kohlberg and Thomas Lickona (1987), we cannot morally develop by being taught what is right and wrong, or what is correct and what is incorrect, what is biased and what is unbiased. They state, "...the spontaneous interpersonal conflicts of the classroom offer excellent opportunities to promote both social and moral reasoning and behavioral application" (p. 165). We have to discuss and grapple with the dissonance through experience. We have to be shown the next stage or level of moral development and run into the walls that our current morals have built. By seeing the barriers that our morals and biases present, we can better develop and learn and broaden our thinking.

If students are to defend and uphold rights in public schools and in society at large, they must engage in conflict and criticism of such rights and responsibilities. According to Levstik and Barton (2005), "...the American Declaration of Independence lays out a rationale for the right of people to overthrow governments that violate their rights, and the Bill of Rights begins with a guarantee of freedom of speech, including disagreeable speech" (p. 136). Democratic governments have been based on conflicting ideas, debate and negotiation, which is also the essence of moral development and learning. At the root of both a democracy and moral development is the ability to reason.

Today, as with most moral development and character education programs, the goals of the curriculum are stated only in general terms with a primary focus on helping



students develop a structured system of values, ethics and morals; helping students develop ethical standards based on multicultural understanding; providing reference points for common cultural and ethical choices; and providing an “anchor” for children in universally common virtues. Generally speaking, the goal is to help children learn the character attributes that enable them to become caring and responsible adults in a democratic society.

### Classroom Management

Managing the climate within the classroom has been a preoccupation for most teachers, sometimes prioritized higher than academic learning. Yet, some insight can be gained about democratic classrooms from the field of classroom management. In a historical sense, discipline was the word of choice, and was used as a destructive teaching tool. However, through this history, what can be insightful is the transformation of how a child is viewed and, as a result, treated.

The family is the first context for learning society’s rules and the obligation to obey, as well as the first cause of socialization during the child’s early years (Spring, 2008). Within a child’s development, the parent, or parent substitute, plays a critical and irreplaceable role. It is the parent who first introduces the child to the laws and logic of social order; they inform children about sanctions within and beyond the family enforce these sanctions as well as communicate to the child their social purpose. Then, participation within social order meant cultivating a respect for authority as well as a compliance with social rules. However, historically there has been great emphasis on enforcing social rules with little introduction or communication of their social purpose.

Thus, discipline has been viewed as the foremost means of cultivating within the child, a proper involvement with social order.

For centuries, strong religious doctrines have ruled the home and the family, thus commandments of the Church and Bible were the only acceptable social order. However, maintaining a social order within a religion requires a respect for its authority, or that of its God, as well as obedience with its social rules. These rules filtered down to influence those within the home, specifically children. This “divine” authority was taken to extremes, right and wrong was more than a moral lesson from parents, wrong indicated the direction of eternal existence for both the child and its parents. Thus, parenting was a pedantic job of controlling the child, and when “...parental faithfulness is attended with its usual blessing, joys nearer akin to those of heaven than of earth are the result” (Abbott, 1972, p. 161).

As a practical utility for the mothers who attended his ministry, in 1834 John S.C. Abbott (1972) wrote his treatise, *The Mother At Home or The Principles of Maternal Duty*. This book set out to provide information respecting the “government of a child” for mothers in the common walks of life. Inculcated through religious sentiments, the only goal for the education of the child, according to Abbott (1972), was to prepare the child for its heavenly home.

Through evangelical directives and various antidotal tales, Abbott (1972) shaped the role of the mother as a secret and silent influence. Influence which, when exerted on the mind during the first eight or ten years of life, “...in a great degree guides the destinies of that mind for time and eternity” (Abbott, 1972, p. 2). Aside from merely acting as guardian and guide, Abbott (1972) charged the mother with the formation of the character

of man. Thus, despite the momentary innocence, playful endearments, and happy laughter, which awake thrilling emotions in the mother's heart, years of unalleviated misery may be caused if one's job is not done correctly. Thus, the concept of obedience is entered into "proper family government." Abbott places it as absolutely essential and without it, all other efforts would be in vain. Obedience is seen as prompt and cheerful acquiescence in parental commands, yielding to arguments and persuasions, submitting to authority.

Abbott (1972) assures his readers that it is impossible to govern a child by mere discussion, and that "...many cases must occur in which it will be incapable of seeing the reasonableness of the command" (Abbott, 1972, p. 21). Abbott explains that the first thing to be aimed at is to bring the child under subjection. Teach the child that it must obey, sometimes giving reasons and sometimes withholding them. By adapting the child to "...immediate and cheerful acquiescence in your will," obedience is obtained, which is absolutely essential to good family government, according to Abbott (1972, p. 21).

Abbott asserts that it is the duty of parents to convince their children of the reasonableness and propriety of their requirements. This should be done to instruct them, and to make them acquainted with moral obligation. However, there should always be authority sufficient to enforce prompt obedience, even if the child cannot see the reason of the requirement.

Until the late 1800s, the internal workings of the mind were not considered in terms of raising and disciplining children. Within the common home, there was great emphasis put not on how or why children functioned, but the results of any failure to function 'properly'. However, with the beginning of behaviorism, a new focus was put on

children, they were becoming likened to animals. Behaviorism is the philosophical position that says that psychology, to be a science, must focus its attentions on what are observable, the environment and behavior, rather than what is only available to the individual. Perceptions, thoughts, images, and feelings were considered subjective and immune to measurement, and therefore thought they could never lead to an objective science. Eventually, behaviorists narrow down what is considered observable in terms of physiological responses to stimuli.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, John B. Watson (1913) began his work studying the biology, physiology, and behavior of animals, inspired by the, then recent, work of Ivan Pavlov. From his paper, "*Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It*," John B. Watson (1913) states that psychology is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behavior. Introspection forms no essential part of its methods, nor is the scientific value of its data dependent upon the readiness with which they lend themselves to interpretation in terms of consciousness. The behaviorist, according to Watson (1913), recognizes no dividing line between man and brute. All animals, he believed, were extremely complex machines that responded to situations according to their "wiring," or nerve pathways that were conditioned by experience. Humans were simply more complicated than animals but operated on the same principles. He believed that human personality is created not by inner forces but by environmental stimuli. We are the products, according to Watson (1913), of conditioned responses. Fear stems from loud noises or the sudden loss of physical support; rage from physical constraint; love from the stroking of erogenous zones.

By 1917, Watson (1913) had focused his research on children. He carried out pioneering observational and experimental work on newborns and infants, produced *Experimental Investigation of Babies* (1919), one of the first psychology films done in the United States, wrote the best-selling manual *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (Watson, 1928), and became a popular child-rearing expert. Much of his research was directed at distinguishing unlearned from learned behavior. Observations of hundreds of babies revealed that sneezing, hiccupping, crying, an erect penis, voiding of urine, defecation, smiling, certain eye movements and motor reactions, feeding responses, grasping, and blinking were unlearned, but that they began to become conditioned a few hours after birth. Crawling, swimming, and right or left-handedness appeared to be learned (Watson, 1928).

Watson (1928) also traced the beginnings of language to unlearned vocal sounds, and found that three forms of emotional ("visceral") responses can be elicited at birth by three sets of stimuli: fear (by loss of support and loud sounds), rage (by hampering of bodily movement), and love (by stroking of the skin, tickling, gentle rocking, patting). Just as there was no innate fear of darkness, there was no instinctive love of the child for the mother; conditioning shaped all "visceral habits." In one of the most controversial experiments of all psychology, Watson conditioned eleven-month-old "Little Albert" to fear furry objects; this case was for him proof that complex behavior develops by conditioning out of simple unlearned responses.

Watson considered the ultimate aim of psychology to be the adjustment of individual needs to the needs of society. He encouraged parents to approach childrearing as a professional application of behaviorism. *Psychological Care of Infant and Child*

(1928) is dedicated "...to the first mother who brings up a happy child." Such a child would be an autonomous, fearless, self-reliant, adaptable, problem-solving being, who does not cry unless physically hurt, is absorbed in work and play, and has no great attachments to any place or person. Watson warned against the dangers of "too much mother love," and advocated strict routines and a tight control over the child's environment and behavior.

Watson (1928) instructed mothers to never hug or kiss their children and even suggested a hand shake as a proper morning greeting. Watson further argued that children should be prevented from thumb sucking, as it was a bad habit. He suggested painting nasty-tasting stuff on the baby's thumb, or putting aluminum mitts over the baby's hands. If those do not work, Watson suggests laying the baby spread-eagle in its crib, and tying its wrists to the slats of the side of the crib. Watson paid little to no attention to the development of morals and a greater understanding of social order. There was no direction to verbalize with the child; it was merely cause and response. The child was not given a chance to obey voluntarily; rather they obeyed out of coercion or fear.

By pushing aside 'science,' Benjamin Spock (1903-1998) came to be the leading influence on child-care in the mid-1940s. Spock attacked behavioral views of children and parenting and approached child rearing from an intuitive, psychoanalytic, and highly Freudian, perspective. In 1946, he was given the chance to publish his iconoclastic views in *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (Spock, 1946). In post-war America, parents were in awe of doctors and other childcare professionals; Spock (1946) assured them that parents were the true experts on their own children. They had been told that picking up infants when they cried would only spoil them; Spock (1946) countered that

cuddling babies and bestowing affection on children would only make them happier and more secure. Instead of adhering to strict, one-size-fits-all dictates on everything from discipline to toilet training, Spock (1946) urged parents to be flexible and see their children as individuals.

Spock (1946) challenged the cold authoritarianism favored by most other parenting books of the time by asserting that good-hearted parents who are not afraid to be firm when it is necessary can get good results with either moderate strictness or moderate permissiveness. On the other hand, Spock (1946) believed that a strictness that comes from harsh feelings or a permissiveness that is timid or vacillating can each lead to poor results. Dr. Spock (1946) stressed the importance of parental love and respect for their children. Spock (1946) asserts, "...parents don't need to be paragons of virtue, but they should be decent, kind and approachable," (p. 74). They should respect themselves and their children, and they should expect respect from their children in return.

After Dr. Spock, there was a backwards step, towards behavioral views. There was less concern with physical behaviors such as thumb sucking, but more of a focus on building a well-behaved child. Dr. Fitzhugh Dodson in his 1970 book, *How to Parent*, defines discipline as a form of instruction, education or training. The latter is the synonym of choice by Dodson (1970). He asserts that the word discipline is related to the word disciple, when you discipline your child, you are really training him to be a disciple of you. The ultimate goal of discipline, according to Dodson (1970), was to produce an adult who has learned self-regulation and to make his own choices, to regulate his own behavior and has learned to exercise his freedom in a responsible way.

Dodson (1970) continues to present nine different reinforcement methods of discipline that can be learned from the research of experimenting and training animals, however, none of the actual research is cited within his text, *How To Parent* (1970). One lesson from reinforcement psychology Dodson (1970) stresses, as it is the name of his chapter on discipline, “*Can you teach a dolphin to type?*” Dodson asserts that the animal, as well as child, must be able to perform the task you want him to learn. Dodson continues, “. . . animal trainers are realistic. They know they can teach a dolphin to jump through a hoop. They also know they can’t teach a dolphin to type. So they don’t try” (p. 209). Through a lack of understanding of what the child is capable of, Dodson feels that parents expect children to learn things, which are above their capacity to learn. The examples given are that parents toilet train their child at nine months, or expect their child to sit still in a restaurant at two years. Parents tend to expect far more than the child is actually capable of at its stage of development.

Another rule Dodson states is that instead of punishment, when you want to get a child to stop doing something undesirable, use the “extinction technique.” When certain behavior is not wanted, by simply eliminating the positive reinforcement, the behavior will cease. Likened to a rat in a cage, if you stop rewarding a rat by feeding it at every push of the lever, it will stop pushing the lever. Similarly, if you stop giving attention to a child who is using bad words, they will eventually stop using them.

For Dodson (1970), much like Watson (1928), there is no attempt at giving an understanding of the social structures to the children who must obey them. Conversely, there is also no attempt made to understand the needs of the child as reflected by their behavior. Without a visible purpose, familial and eventually societal rules hold no value



to the child, nor will they be respected. This will diminish the concept of authority as well, preventing any moral development through participation with social order. As developmental psychology took hold of the field of child development, beginning in the late 1970s researchers began taking a closer look at the emergence of morality in young children. A shift had taken place from disciplining poor behavior to the morals behind such behavior.

However, there is great variation from one family to the next in how children are induced to follow social rules, treated, raised, communicated with, as well as socialized. Damon (1998) states, "...such variation accounts for important differences between children in their later propensities towards moral and not-so-moral behavior" (p. 53). Thus, when children become school age, their concepts of social order and various levels of moral understanding are carried with them and enter the classroom. When the learning environment is threatened or a social rule is disobeyed, action on the part of the teacher is taken to restore order. Various techniques are used to retain and restore social order, however, like child-rearing techniques, some work better than others.

Ancient Greek and Roman schoolmasters adopted various instruments for classroom management, such as ferrules, switches, and taws, which nineteenth-century English pedagogues found useful. In some nineteenth-century Latin schools in Germany, children passed by whipping posts on their way to class, and when they got in trouble had to visit the Blue Man, the official in charge of punishments. The Blue Man always wore a blue coat, under which he concealed his tools. Some medieval European and some colonial American schoolmasters probably thought they were doing their students a favor by literally beating the Devil out of them.

Historical records make it plain that some teachers and school administrators enjoyed having licenses for their tempers, and perhaps some still do. But a central fact in most sorts of schools has always been the fear of the “Lilliputian mob.” In America, corporal punishment began to wane around the time when elementary education was becoming universal and compulsory- around the time, that is, when keeping order probably became more difficult (Spring, 2008).

Strictly speaking, discipline means to teach, not to punish. But somewhere along the line, parents, teachers, and others in authority started equating discipline with punishment. In the past, it was far more common for a teacher to reach for a paddle or to eject a misbehaving student from the classroom in hopes of maintaining order. But most states have banned the paddle, and school officials realize that, unless the incident involves weapons, violence, or drugs, throwing students out of class defeats the learning process. As a result, teachers have turned to alternative methods.

Consistent with this view is that of Wolfgang (2009) who propose that the decisions of teachers about classroom discipline typically are compatible with specific theories about child development and behavior. It seems reasonable to assume that the discipline approaches that teachers implement are based to some extent upon their beliefs about child development. Each teacher formulates their beliefs, experiences and observations about what students can and should be expected to do (or not do) on the basis of their age and physical/psychological development. It is upon these attitudes which teachers construct their best methods to help students meet those expectations.

### Cooperative Learning

As a socially situated method of learning, cooperative learning replicates

democratic principals through maintaining all members of society have equal access to power and that all members or citizens enjoy universally recognized freedoms and liberties. In this way, in classrooms that focus on learning through democratic principals, not only does more effective learning take place but a commitment to our democracy and society on a whole is modeled to our future citizens. However, cooperative learning has existed for thousands of years as an effective learning method. In the third century the Babylonian Talmud included a center for education that promoted cooperative methods of learning. Each reader needed a partner for the purpose of promoting understanding of the Talmud (Zeitlin, 1955; Johnson & Johnson, 1981).

Using cooperative learning for the purpose of promoting and understanding American culture occurred early in U.S. history. Cooperative learning was brought to the United States from England in 1806 to a school in New York City that was of Lancastrian origin (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell founded the school. The interest in cooperative learning for this school stemmed from the desire to promote American socialization, since students were from diverse backgrounds (Marr, 1997).

In the early 1830s, Horace Mann developed the common school with the idea that equality of education would eliminate social class differences. Mann believed that through education, students would be able to increase resources for themselves and society, in this way Mann promoted socialization to achieve education. The socialization that Mann was interested in refers to what students learn from interacting with other students, following school rules, and participating in school social events (Spring, 2008).

Student learning through the interaction with others was also promoted by

Colonel Francis Parker. In the late 1800s, Colonel Francis Parker, a school superintendent in Massachusetts, was a promoter of cooperative learning. The reason Parker promoted cooperative learning is that he felt it was directly related to democracy when students share responsibility for learning. Parker did not believe that competition in the schools was effective and thought shared learning was essential (Marr, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1993). The methods of Parker involved students working together cooperatively. However, his democratic methods were popular only during a thirty year period (Johnson & Johnson, 1993). Beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, educational practices began to be influenced by organizations in the business sector (Johnson & Johnson, 1987).

Due to this shift in influence, individualism became popular in education in the 1930s. Competition among students was fueled in the 1930s by “business interests” (Johnson & Johnson, 1987, p. 10). For example, the National Association of Manufacturers and the Liberty League actually encouraged educators to promote competition in schools. By the 1960s this competitive environment was well established in our public schools, and this traditional education is still prevalent today (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). These traditional methods focus on individual success and competitive goals, which do not serve students in equitable ways (Maruyama, Knechel, Petersen, 1992).

John Dewey has been a strong proponent of democratic education beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He asserted that children enjoy interacting with each other. In fact, now it is clear that education itself occurs through socially constructed encounters as learning occurs more readily through experience that allows for active engagement. As

Dewey indicated, when children are at recess they develop ways to work together and establish cooperation (Dewey, 1960). Dewey promoted democracy in education because he believed that students must have opportunities to learn how to work together in groups, form respectful attitudes, develop understanding for others and learn problem-solving skills. Dewey believed that when students worked together they prompted each other to learn. When students are only concerned with individual learning, a competitive environment, rather than a caring environment, is created. Dewey believed caring was essential to social progress and that learning through individualism lacked the social aspects necessary to bring about this progress (Dewey, 1960). Although Dewey promoted democracy in education, this has been difficult to achieve throughout United States history (Slavin, Shlomo, Kagan, Hertz-Lazarowitz, Webb and Schmuck, 1985).

Societal influences have severely interfered with the ability to eliminate class differences within the system of schooling. Students of non-white racial backgrounds often have lower socioeconomic status and fewer resources to augment their school experiences. Desegregation did not overcome the effect that society has on education (Spring, 2008). Currently schooling still does not overcome these differences allowing for better opportunities for those students of disadvantaged backgrounds. Equal opportunities do not exist without equal education (Slavin, et al., 1985; Spring, 2008).

The Fourteenth amendment was added in 1868 to provide citizens with equal treatment regarding laws. However, the Supreme Court decided in 1895 that equality would also occur if there was “separate but equal” treatment under the law. Finally, in 1954, ‘separateness’ was eliminated through the desegregation case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)*. Unfortunately, schools that were attended by African

American students were often in poverty stricken areas and the education received was inferior to what white children received.

One of the problems that occurred, and still exists today, is inferior funding between school districts (Hallinan, 2001). Without proper school funding in poverty stricken areas, poorer districts do not have the necessary resources to provide the same education that wealthier districts provide. This inequality in the public schools is slowly changing. In 1998, New Jersey was the first state to mandate equal funding for all school districts in the state. While financial support for poorer schools has slowly improved, desegregation mandates have subsided (Hallinan, 2001).

As part of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VI ensured compliance with integration. It was possible that segregated schools would lose federal funding if they did not comply with desegregation (Spring, 2008). One of the purposes of desegregation however, was for social integration to take place. Unfortunately, there was no specific theory that relevantly outlined how integration would actually have an effect on interracial contact (Spring, 2008).

Desegregation did not change the achievement gap between black and white students and residential segregation started to occur after desegregation mandates began. As a result, a lot of public schools became more segregated again in the 1980s and 1990s, with black students living in urban areas and white students living in the suburbs (Hallinan, 2001). There are other factors that may attribute to the achievement gap besides residential segregation, however residential segregation occurs and impacts a significant number of students in the United States.

Students are often segregated within schools as a result of ability grouping or

tracking. Students that are placed in “lower” tracked classes for an entire year lack the advantages of a more vigorous curriculum (Huerta, 2009). Content in the curriculum and pedagogical practices may play a role in the achievement gap. It is necessary for schools to have high expectations for all students in order to promote academic achievement (Hallinan, 2001).

In the early 1970s, Elliot Aronson helped to develop Jigsaw classrooms in order to address problems of inequity, which occurred in integrated traditional classrooms. Aronson’s cooperative group work eliminated individual competition and was promoted so that each child in the classroom had something to contribute to their own learning and to the learning of others. An early requirement of Jigsaw was interdependence, and the Jigsaw classroom was highly structured even during its early beginning. Since the Jigsaw method is fashioned so differently than traditional methods, students need some time to adjust to the different teaching method when it is implemented.

Considerable development and research has occurred regarding modern cooperative methods. Much of the diverse interest in cooperative learning was the result of desegregation and traditional methods of teaching. David and Roger Johnson began training teachers to facilitate cooperative methods since the 1960s at the University of Minnesota and formed the Cooperative Learning Center. Many forms of cooperative learning have since been developed. Cooperative learning has been used to promote understanding, shared responsibility and academic achievement. Modern cooperative learning was designed when researchers saw the need after desegregation failed to eliminate the achievement gap and move towards more democratic ideals within education.

## Culturally Relevant Education

The history of culturally relevant education must begin with an unfortunate history of education aimed to promote dominant white ‘American’ culture. Through the history of bias and racism as seen in segregation, immigration, and bilingual education begins the emergence of a multicultural curriculum as a way to provide a historical framework for culturally responsive teaching. Segregation was one approach that ended up being implemented in such a way that it was highly inequitable (Spring, 2008). Bilingual education was (and still is) an approach to linguistic diversity that some believe to be necessary for the cognitive development of English language learners. Finally, culturally relevant and democratic education became one answer to the cultural diversity of schools, but this did not really manifest until the late twentieth century (Spring, 2008).

The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which was added in 1868, extended the freedoms of the Bill of Rights into the jurisdiction of both state and local government. This should have made public schooling equal to everyone, regardless of gender, race or religion. In 1895, the ideologies of the fourteenth amendment were manifested into an idea of “separate but equal.” However, this statute was proven to be anything but equal (Spring, 2008). In 1954, the inherently unequal “separate but equal law” was deemed unconstitutional based on a famous historical court decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education*. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 took the 1954 case of desegregation a step further. With this movement, the federal government became responsible for making sure that school systems were not segregated.

Gary Orfield, an advocate for desegregation, presented a report called *Resegregation in American Schools*. Although segregation was supposed to have ended in



the 1950s, this report was issued in 1999. His study proved that southern schools were steadily becoming more segregated from 1988 to 1997. Perhaps the students who suffered from this the most were the Hispanic population, as they attended schools that were over 50% non-white 75% of the time. They were (and still are) the most likely out of any racial group to drop out of high school. Still concerned with this increasingly oppressive issue, Orefield organized a conference with members from Harvard University's Civil Rights Project and the University of North Carolina's Center for Civil Rights. They reported reasons for segregation that included: court decisions outlawing race as a main factor in student assignment, residential segregation and increasing attendance of private schools by upper class White children (Spring, 2008).

Historically, segregation was considered an answer to biased schooling, as teachers could not favor some students based on race if all the students were of the same cultural background (Spring, 2008). Although this theory may have worked in the individual classrooms, it did not work within the larger system of schooling. This form of schooling was proven to be the opposite of equitable as the dominated groups typically were educated in schools that were inferior on many levels, such as funding and resources for schools and teacher preparedness (Huerta, 2009).

Integrated schools are definitely not a cure-all for oppressive practices. What is called second-generation segregation is the problem of certain minority groups over or under representation in higher and lower-level classes, standardized test scores and other methods of academic tracking. Educational facilities are a smaller reflection of the larger society. As Spring (2008) states, "Integration of a school system can help ensure equality of educational opportunity, but it cannot break down society's racial barriers. Although

schools attempt to deal with this problem, its solution requires a general transformation of racial relationships in the larger society” (p.74).

As Mexican and Native Americans became more integrated in public schools in the 1960s, they fought for the implementation of bilingual education. Mexican-Americans wanted schools to teach students about Mexican culture as well. School boycotts in Los Angeles resulted from the lack of response to this request, eventually leading to the creation of La Raza Unida. This organization fought for the teaching of languages and cultures that were being dominated by the majority culture. Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas responded to this demand through legislation entitled Bilingual Education Act of 1968. Spring (2008) asserts, “...the legislation promised that their cultures and languages would be preserved by the public schools. Bilingual education, as it was conceived of in Hispanic and Native American communities, involved teaching both English and Spanish or a Native American language” (p.422).

Bilingual education was intended to teach non-native English speakers to be fluent in two languages; it was also a method of keeping cultural value for people other than Anglo Americans. However, bilingual education soon became a point of contention and a political bipartisan issue. The Republican administration of the 1980s and 1990s attacked the notion of teaching in any language besides English (Spring, 2008). Bilingual education became a political issue rather than an educational issue. It was not a matter of whether or not students can effectively learn to be fluent speakers of two different languages, but a matter of whether or not they should. People opposed to bilingual education felt that it was unpatriotic to not speak English as your primary language (Spring, 2008).

After the civil rights movement of the 1960s, multicultural education became a major political issue. The underlying contention, however, was sparked by the ethnographic research conducted by G. D. Spindler in 1955. He studied minorities in education and found that there was great division in the mainstream culture and the cultures of minority students. People who wanted to implement a more culturally relevant curriculum believed that it was inequitable to ignore these differences, as that would provide unjust favoritism to the majority group and continue to bring down the minority groups. This controversy led to a field entitled educational anthropology. Many researchers went on to study how schools impacted the identity of minority students (Kim, Clarke-Ekong & Ashmore, 1999).

Through this broad view of movements and reformations relating to culturally responsive education, there have been many influential people throughout history who had different ideas of what should be the instructional strategies and curricular emphasis in American schools. Some based this on the needs of the dominant students, some based it on increasing the economic success of society and others based it on the individual needs of students. There has always been disagreement concerning education: what was most important to implement in the curriculum and to whose needs education should serve.

Although schools are no longer segregated purely by ethnicity, there is still a segregation based on economic status, which typically corresponds to race. Therefore, students who are not White or middle class are likely to not have the same access to quality teachers, technology, classroom resources, extracurricular activities and educational programs that more privileged students have (Spring, 2008, Huerta, 2009).

Teachers concerned with culturally relevant pedagogy need to be aware of this inequity in order to work toward changing it. Culturally relevant education creates democratic methods for teaching that counter the assumption that low minority achievement is due to a problem with the students or their parents and culturally relevant teachers believe that a solution lies in the restructuring of the school system.

### Summary

Chapter two discusses the history of democratic classrooms as organized by five major themes: political socialization, moral development, classroom management, cooperative learning and culturally relevant education. Overall, democratic classroom strategies are born from the history of democracy. The latter history is rich with conflict and resistance, which is one of the fundamental aspects of the concept. However, the history that best supports a truly democratic classroom is much like the history itself; it depicts a tapestry woven by many individuals from many schools of thought all-resulting in a continually evolving understanding of each other. Democratic classrooms are created from an authentic and all-encompassing idea of democracy and democratic principles, which continue to be written to this day.

Democratic classroom strategies are good teaching practices which stem from democratic principals and inform learning and teaching to create a diverse and equitable learning community within the classroom. Thus, chapter three will present a field of research that informs the focus of this paper on the effects of democratic classroom techniques on student learning in elementary education. The chapter is a review and critique of current literature and research and will interrogate the notion of democratic classrooms and the strategies utilized as seen through a framework of five major themes:

political socialization, moral development, classroom management, cooperative learning and culturally relevant education.

## CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, the concept of a democratic classroom is quite diverse primarily because the nature of the underlying beliefs about democracy and education differ. As the brief history has depicted, research on the beginnings of democratic classrooms is generally found in five areas: political socialization, cooperative learning, culturally relevant education, moral development and classroom management. Each has a different context for approaching education and schooling. However, the unifying theme throughout each educational context is the notion of democracy and fundamental democratic principals. Thus, in order to isolate democratic classroom strategies to be able to look at their effects on learning in the elementary classroom, one must first isolate and interrogate the major themes that promote such differing strategies and pedagogies used in democratic classrooms.

Presented in this chapter, is an integrative review of the professional literature contributing to the subject of democratic classrooms. The first category of research that will be analyzed is that of political socialization. Within this research category, the general focus is on creating student-citizens who are responsible, actively participate in their own rights and duties of citizenship and are justice oriented. Following will be an analysis of a body of research surrounding moral development. Research within this theme primarily focuses on helping students develop a structured system of values, ethics and morals; helping students develop ethical standards based on multicultural understanding; providing reference points for common cultural and ethical choices; and providing an “anchor” for children in universally common virtues. Generally, the goal

appears to be to help children to learn the character attributes that enable them to become caring and responsible adults.

The third body of research within the framework of this paper focuses on classroom management. Simplistically, this research focuses on the way the classroom atmosphere and members are organized and managed. The fourth section of chapter three will explore democratic classroom strategies within the theme of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning generally describes instructional techniques or grouping structures in which students are divided into heterogeneous groups to complete instructional activities. Each member of the group contributes to the group project. Even though individual members often have different assigned responsibilities, they complete the group activity collectively. In addition, the success of the group depends on all members learning the relevant information and concepts taught.

The final section within the framework of this paper will focus on research surrounding culturally relevant education. This category, according to Ladson-Billings (1992), rests on several propositions: students must experience success, students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the existing order. Culturally relevant education is a means of teaching and learning that is cross-cultural and multiethnic. Not only does it include culturally relevant pedagogy utilized by the teacher as the framework for their practice, but it also includes the curriculum that is taught to the students, no matter what ethnicity or culture they belong to.

Though this range of perspectives that contribute to democratic classroom strategies provides sufficient focus for studying educational efforts with democratic aims,

the concept of democracy is broad and reaches far beyond educative purposes. However, this spectrum of research will provide a sufficient context to interrogate and integrate learning within democratic classroom strategies.

### Political Socialization

The first body of research discussed is that of political socialization. Lee Ehman (1980) identifies four fundamental outcomes of political socialization in a pre-university schooling setting as political knowledge, attitudes and values toward society and the political world, attitudes toward political participation and participation in political or quasi-political affairs. Political activity can be valuable in itself, it socializes and educates citizens, and popular participation can check powerful elites. However, Ehman (1980) concludes in his research review that classroom climate and student participation in school activities, and the school organizational climate were main factors found related to student political attitudes. Thus, to understand democratic classrooms and strategies used, political socialization and citizenship education theories, programs and ideologies must be studied.

### Classroom Practices and the Development of Political Efficacy

To begin this exploration, this first quantitative study by Carol Meixel and Emil Haller (1973) looks at the factors that contribute to political efficacy in elementary students, grades four, six and eight. Meixel and Haller (1973) assert that “...political efficacy is seen as an individual's subjective feeling of political competence -- his belief that he can influence the political process, that governmental officials will be responsive to him, and that he has access to the channels of political power” (p. 1). Within this research, they focused on exploring if the students held a belief that the political system is



responsive to the demands of ordinary citizens and that as an adult they will be able to influence the political process.

In this research, Meixel and Haller (1973) asserted the hypothesis that modes of classroom interaction and the political content of class discussions (rather than the social studies curriculum) affect children's sense of political efficacy. To get a more complete look at the (hypothesized) elements of political efficacy, there were several variables that were used. The first was school efficacy, or the children's sense of their own ability to affect events at school. Political knowledge was also a tested variable and was defined as knowledge of how the system works. Another variable was classroom politicization or the degree to which political events occurring in society regularly form a part of the classroom curriculum. The final variable tested for was the student participation in classroom decision making. These four variables were hypothesized to have a positive effect on political efficacy. Included in the final set of variables were also some personal characteristics such as grade, sex, IQ and socioeconomic status.

To test this, Meixel and Haller (1973) collected data from 1341 elementary school children and teachers in Separate (Catholic) Schools in Toronto, Canada. Seventeen schools were drawn randomly from among the total number of schools in a particular district. Questionnaires were given to all the children and their teachers. Because nearly all the children were Catholic, religion was held at a constant and limited the generalizability of the study.

The dependant variable was a political efficacy scale that was constructed from seven student responses to a questionnaire. Responses ranged from 7 to 35, with a mean of 22.41 and a standard deviation of 4.59. Cronbach's alpha was used as an internal

consistency reliability measure and equaled .65. It was organized so that the higher numbers on the responses indicated a higher political efficacy.

Overall, Meixel and Haller's (1973) results showed that at least a rudimentary sense of political efficacy has developed even in the lowest grade studied (fourth). However, the aspects of schooling included in the study, political discussions and participation in classroom decision making, had no direct effect on the development of a sense of political efficacy in children. However, school efficacy and political knowledge appeared to be the most important determinants of political efficacy. In general, Meixel and Haller (1973) concluded that increasing educational levels would result in greater perceived political efficacy, while exposure to social studies curricula in schools seemed to have little if any statistical effect. This study suggests that both of the generalizations may be correct. That is, this research indicates that schooling may heighten children's beliefs that as adults, they will be able to influence the political process, but that these beliefs result from generalizing similar beliefs about the school itself and from specific factual knowledge concerning the political process.

There are several external validity issues surrounding these conclusions by Meixel and Haller (1973). To start, the history of the school district, programs or culture is not divulged within this paper. Because there was only one treatment, one questionnaire filled out, the results could have been as a result of specialized situations within the politics of the school, or within society at large that the children are reflecting. A longitudinal study would have helped to provide some greater validity of the findings. Another issue that could skew the results is called the Hawthorne Effect (Mertens, 1998). This is where the participants of the study react differently than they would normally

because the idea of receiving special attention or of being signaled out to participate in a study effects their behavior and thus, the results.

One aspect that did emerge from this study by Meixel and Haller (1973) was the effects of the personal characteristics (grade, sex, IQ and socioeconomic status) on political knowledge, which did, in turn show a statistical effects on political efficacy. There were quite negative effects of being female, lower SES or having a lower IQ on the knowledge these participants had of the workings of the political system. Though these factors themselves are by no means any disadvantage, unfortunately, they tend to illicit different treatment from others. To be clear, these results were by no means fully validated by the data presented and the conclusions made by the researchers. However, this study does present a basis for asserting that the variables do affect political efficacy, it is just unclear if it is all in a positive way.

#### Conflict Resolution, Power “Sharing” in Schools, and Citizenship Education

If schooling can impact political socialization, one goal of elementary education should be to help children learn the skills, knowledge, and values associated with citizenship. According to Dewey, the goal of political socialization development of the ‘habits of mind’ (Dewey, 1916/1944, p. 99) would even affect necessary social change in society. In a study by Kathy Bickmore (2001) however, she points out that there is “...little consensus about what these goals really mean: various schools, and various programs within any school, may promote different notions of ‘good citizenship’” (p. 137). In this qualitative and quantitative study, she uses a conceptual framework for engaging in and studying citizenship education in schools in order to study peer conflict mediation programs. She asserts that peer conflict mediation, like service learning, can

create active roles for young people to help them develop capacities for democratic citizenship (such as critical reasoning and shared decision making).

This Bickmore (2001) study examined the character and effectiveness of the Center for Conflict Resolution peer mediation training and programs as they were implemented in six elementary schools from one large unnamed urban school district. The main research focus driving the focus of the study was, “What processes of conflict resolution learning are being facilitated at each school, and what are the observable effects of these processes, among peer mediators and within each whole school community?” The researcher defined Conflict Resolution Education as a kind of education for citizenship in that it develops some of the skills necessary for citizen activity and imparts values regarding the ways citizens are expected to behave. Mediation is defined as assisted interpersonal conflict negotiation, in which a neutral third party (mediator) facilitates a process of problem identification and resolution. Bickmore (2001) further explains mediation in the context of schooling,

In school-based peer mediation, the mediators of conflicts among students are literally peers—other students without special disciplinary or judicial power. Mediators are expected to neither judge nor counsel nor offer suggestions regarding the content of conflict itself. They are responsible for guiding the process only—for assisting peers to communicate with one another and to negotiate a solution to their own problems. (p. 141)

For this study by Bickmore (2001), a team of 20 to 30 students and one or two adult advisors from each of the 20 elementary schools received program development assistance and an intensive three-day peer mediation training by the CPS Center for Conflict Resolution. Trainers were diverse urban youth who recently had graduated from high school in Cleveland. Mediators, according to program guidelines, were to be children whose social leadership potential had been exhibited in “negative” as well as

“positive” ways, and who were representative of the school’s entire racial, cultural, and gender populations—*not* only “good” students. The student mediators, grades 3–5, were guided to develop conflict resolution and mediation skills, and also to take initiative and make joint decisions in developing conflict resolution programs in their own schools. The program emphasized both the creation of peer mediation services in each school and the engagement of the young student trainees as peer leaders, responsible for spreading nonviolent conflict management knowledge and practice throughout their school communities.

Using the qualitative (observations, interviews with administrators, program advisors, other teachers, peer mediators and other students) information collected between 1997 and 1998, Bickmore (2001) used three primary dimensions of citizenship education to categorize the six schools. The first central component is modeling for democratization. This requires the enactment of democratic principles in the school community, including the inclusion and protection of minorities and equitable opportunities for all to participate, directly and through representatives, in collective decision making. Specifically the focus was on modeling a nonviolent community. The next dimension of citizenship education used within the framework of this research was critical reasoning. Critical reasoning requires learning to listen respectfully to alternative viewpoints and to analyze problems and solutions. Finally, shared authority was the last citizenship education component used. It requires involving students as a “part of the system of justice” in the school, rather than teaching them only to obey rules made and enforced by others.

The results of the Bickmore (2001) study showed that each citizenship

educational component could be found at two out of the six schools, with no school fulfilling more than one component each. However, what was even more clear was that only a few schools embodied “democratic” citizenship by including critical reflection, decision-making, and autonomous action by the diverse students in these schools. Overall, this made the point that each element of citizenship education is important, but each is not sufficient on its own for the development of democracy.

Another issue that became clear from this study by Bickmore (2001) pertained to power roles. The peer mediation program model called for schools to delegate meaningful authority to student mediators to take autonomous action outside of traditional student roles and to apply and demonstrate their skills for the benefit of others in their communities. However, school leaders limited the types of students who were allowed to exercise this aspect of the program because mediator participation was “democratized” to include students representing a broader range of ages and academic skill levels, even including children whom teachers had seen as “negative” peer leaders.

Finally, another weak link in nearly all of these programs studied by Bickmore (2001) was the lack of attention to critical reflection and problem solving (beyond individual self-evaluation for skill development). There was no structured link to the formal classroom curriculum, with which students and teachers occupy most of their time. How far can a mediation service develop, and what kinds of thinking/learning can it facilitate, if the program remains resolutely extracurricular, squeezed into 25-minute lunchtimes, 10-minute recesses, and, sometimes, after-school activity periods? All six school programs were severely constrained by the pressure of centralized curriculum, and especially by the fourth grade achievement testing. Sustainable and transferable learning

requires frequent opportunities for guided critical reflection and problem solving (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996).

The nature of this in-depth and multi-method case study research is that it is interpretative and naturalistic. Each school was chosen because each of their mediation programs had been implemented far enough to develop noticeable adaptations to their own school contexts and because these cases contrasted sufficiently to serve as good illustrations of different approaches to citizenship education. Some credibility existed in this research due to Bickmore's (2001) substantial engagement, over one year, and persistent and careful observations for each school.

What is interesting is that because of the Center for Conflict Resolution's emphasis on empowerment of diverse students and responsiveness to context on a local level, the programs were able to take different forms in the various elementary schools. This created, in effect, a natural experiment: the same basic training and program development package was given to a range of elementary schools in one city school district. The contrast between each school, then, lies in the different ways that "same" program was actually interpreted and implemented at each school. Unfortunately, in the end, these contextual factors also limited the research, as each sample essentially received different treatments based on the diversity of implementation, community and administrative support or lack thereof, etc. This made it difficult to truly see the effects of citizenship education through the specific peer mediation program on these urban elementary students. Because of these many variables within each school, Bickmore's (2001) primary conclusion is about the effects of the differences in implementation.

One goal Bickmore (2001) intended to achieve with this study was to clarify the

meaning of “good citizenship,” which ironically, she left undefined in this study. In the end however, all of the peer mediation programs examined embodied notions of “citizenship,” as defined by the National Council for the Social Studies of the US in their position statement published in 1979 (National Council for the Social Studies, 1979), but only a few of them embodied the “democratic” aspect of citizenship by including critical reflection, decision making, and autonomous action by the diverse young people in these schools. The framework used to organize the research and paper may have limited her view of these other factors within each case study school. Had she utilized a peer debriefing, and conducted a progressive study to monitor her own developing constructions, she may have become more aware of the fact that her research could not verify any concrete aspects of citizenship education.

The three dimensions of citizenship education examined in this research by Bickmore (2001) have a cumulative relationship to one another. Building and modeling peaceful community is the necessary condition for citizen action and is a base upon which the more obviously democratic elements of citizenship education can be (but often are not) anchored. Inclusive critical reflection and problem solving, which arguably develop participants capacities for democratic participation, is extremely difficult without a peaceful community context. Sharing authority (implementing democratic processes) requires both a peaceful context and reflective problem solving. By analyzing the roles of various participants in each school in relation to these three dimensions, these case studies begin to point out the elements that would be required to support sustainable change toward nonviolent and democratic school climates.

Conflict is wrapped up in relations of social power, and conflict resolution is a



crucial component of democratic participation (Bickmore, 2001). This study examines how the power to manage conflict was (and was not) shared with diverse students in these urban school programs illuminates the contrasting meanings of citizenship education in practical terms. From this research, it can be concluded that by being explicit about the cultural and political goals underlying civic education programs, educators may be more able to focus their energies on the important challenges, and making a little more space for learning democracy.

#### Preparing Active and Informed Citizens

This next qualitative ethnographic study by Kathryn Obenchain (1998) examined efforts to incorporate experimental democratic citizenship into the life of two upper elementary classrooms. The primary purpose of this research study was to determine if specific qualities and characteristics of democratic elementary classrooms might motivate students to become participatory citizens. Obenchain (1998) utilizes a definition of a democratic classroom by VanSickle (1983) as containing opportunities for decision-making and student participation, as well as defined responsibilities and consequences of not fulfilling one's responsibilities. Obenchain (1998) focused on identifying characteristics that values civic participation and democratic elements with democracy being described as "...a way of living in which we collectively deliberate over our shared problems and prospects" (Wood, 1988, p. 169). She also asked how students interact with others that reflect the democratic nature of the classroom. Finally, she wished to identify how, and by whom, are opportunities for civic participation introduced.

To do this, Obenchain (1998) utilized an ethnographic research design to be able to appropriately study and describe cultures, or democratic classrooms. Data was

collected during the 1996-1997 school year and it included the Obenchain's (1998) field notes, interviews, artifacts, and archival data. Each classroom under study was considered a separate case and each case was a separate unit of analysis. Both within- and cross-case analysis were used to analyze the multiple sources of data to look for patterns, themes, and categories.

The major assertion that Obenchain (1998) made from this data analysis is that in classrooms where democratic elements were present, such as providing student choice, shared responsibility, shared decision-making, and deliberate opportunities for student civic participation, students were beginning to accept more responsibility for their immediate community. This assertion, which seemed present in both classrooms, pointed to the climate that the teacher set in the classroom (allowing and encouraging students to become important stakeholders in decisions that are important to them) as the cause.

Student choice was the first democratic element identified by Obenchain (1998). There seemed to be two different means for incorporating it into the classrooms. When choice was presented deliberately within the classroom, it occurred when the teacher structured a situation that required student choice and the language of the teacher specifically presented the opportunity for student choice. Less deliberately structured opportunities for choice were presented casually and often consisted of comments to individual students.

A sense of shared responsibility was also a part of Obenchain's (1998) findings as one of the democratic elements that contributed to a more community focused culture. This element was identified as students sharing a sense of community spirit. This was exemplified by the teachers and students sharing responsibility for classroom

management, helping themselves and one another learn, and accepting responsibility for others in the community. Both teachers in the study nurtured this attitude of shared responsibility with the use of specific community building activities.

Shared decision-making was the third element that was found by Obenchain (1998) and focuses on behavior or skills to be practiced. Although not witnessed frequently, examples appeared to be important, most notably the establishment of classroom rules [class constitution]. Student involvement in establishing classroom rules was mentioned in nine of ten group interviews with students when asked if they believed they had a say in what went on in their classroom. Students also partook in academic shared decision-making by contributing to assessments and assessment criteria, discussing class room arrangement and daily and weekly schedules.

The final element within both classrooms that contributed to a shared acceptance of responsibility occurred when the teacher deliberately created an opportunity for students to become participants in civic life. One primary example, among many, was the work with a younger buddy class. Several other observed actions by the teachers that contributed to the shared acceptance of responsibility and community climate were the presence of structured opportunities involving democratic elements, a common vocabulary referring to the classroom as a community, to community members, and responsibility to the community, and finally, significant repetition of all these elements (Obenchain, 1998).

The overall critique of the study has to do with the transferability of the findings. There was extremely thick descriptions of the occurrences in each classroom, however, there was very little information about who was studied. Obenchain (1998) simply states

that she studied two geographically and ethnically diverse self-contained upper elementary classrooms. This setting is broad but vague. Also it seems that this was a convenience sample, as Obenchain (1998) states that the classrooms were chosen because they possessed democratic elements. The relationship of the researcher to the samples then must come into question, if the studied results are already known and expected. Nonetheless, the findings of this study seem to indicate that through the repeated use of several key democratic citizenship education strategies, upper elementary students will learn a responsibility to their community and will help to establish and maintain a community climate.

#### A Justice-Oriented Democratic Curriculum

This next ethnographic qualitative study by Brian D. Schultz (2007) focuses on a justice-oriented democratic curriculum taught to fifth-grade African American students living in public housing in inner city Chicago. Schultz (2007) represents both the research and teacher in this study, thus included in the research is ethnographic, autobiographical and interpretive data.

Based on a program called *Project Citizen* (Center for Civic Education, 2003), Schultz (2007) started a year-long project with his class of fifth-grade students that focused on one major problem that affected them. The problem the students unanimously agreed upon, after the multiple brain-storming sessions was the poor condition and inadequacy of their school building. The students then began to collectively brainstorm many solutions to their problem. Throughout the year, the students made collective decisions and agreements about how to proceed and tackle this inequitable issue. They chose three major ways to approach solving the issue and organized their efforts to

collaboratively work on all three. The students focused on “people we can talk to,” “getting in newspapers and magazines,” and “putting pressure on people” (Schultz, 2007, p. 169). This yielded research, investigation, planning and dedication.

One major concern Schultz (2007) had in the beginning of this project, was how to introduce such a progressive and democratic curriculum into a ‘traditional’ classroom and still maintain all the state standards and requirements. However, because the students chose a topic that they felt was very important and that they wanted changed, their motivation was positively impacted as they became engaged in “real life curricula” (Schultz, 2007). Much was learned in that year in an integrated way because they became integral to solving the problem; leadership, collaboration, peer teaching, coaching, shared authority, respectful debating, communication, research, reading, writing, history, civics, economics, statistics, data analysis, the list goes on. Schultz (2007) states, “...the standardized test scores of most students increased over the previous year, several significantly, without direct time spent on test preparation (i.e., 35% of students previously not testing at the national norm in reading on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, achieved scores at/or above the 50th percentile)” (p.171). Also, discipline problems were reduced and attendance was at 98%.

There were many people who believed, including one high-level Chicago Public School official, that Schultz (2007) was “behind this” and that the students were not capable of the type of work they were doing. However, Schultz (2007) asserts that the reason that his low socioeconomic status African American students were so successful was because the information “belonged to them from the start” (p. 171). The students worked hard at learning the necessary knowledge to achieve their goal and became active

participants in their own learning (Schultz, 2007). They surpassed the district and state standards because, in order to make progress and see results to their problem, they wanted and needed to actively participate in their project.

The students were given an authentic opportunity to inquire and create their own curriculum based on a real-life challenge that not only affected the students daily lives, but was chosen by the students. Schultz (2007) furthered the interests of his students without limits or parameters “on what they could deem a worthwhile project” (p. 168). With this project, he focused on the many capabilities of the students and increase their confidence in the classroom and school. Throughout the process, Schultz (2007) was reflective of his daily practice and utilized it to make sense of lived classroom experiences and make adjustments to his practice. For his students, he provided assistance and support to in their meaning-making and the freedom to move at their own pace and self-select the learning that they deemed most valuable.

In a statement of limits and discussing credibility of the study, Schultz (2007) explained that he triangulated the autobiographical accounts, student work and public documentation for corroboration. He readily acknowledged that, “...as my own practice was part of the phenomenon of interest, I am cognizant of the limitations of my subjectivity and acknowledge that if one of my students were to tell this story, it may be very different from my account” (Schultz, 2007, p. 167). This does not heavily affect the credibility of the research however because there are other aspects that enhance the credibility. This study had prolonged engagement and lasted for a school-year with daily persistent observational ‘research’ taking place. There also seemed to be strong progressive subjectivity through continual journaling and monitoring of the process and

Schultz's (2007) beliefs.

Overall, this study by Schultz (2007) demonstrated the approach of one teacher in an urban elementary school who implemented a social justice-oriented curriculum with his students. Though the curriculum within this study was aimed at civic education, it provided much more than a new awareness for governmental structures and politics. The students demonstrated growth through writing samples, comments from third-parties and observational comments made by the researcher. Though political socialization occurred, it brought about other pleasant results that reflect the method and strategies used within the classroom in addition to the curriculum of civic education.

#### Building Relationships of Solidarity

In this final qualitative case study by Shira Epstein and Celia Oyler (2008), they look at the curriculum and practice of a New York City public school teacher which is based on developing solidarity in her first grade students. Social action within the classroom is defined as "...offering both critical thought and action around social problems so as to improve the common good" (Epstein & Oyler, 2008, p. 405). Curricula for social action is developed with the understanding that active citizenship can be taught and practiced as part of the regular school curriculum. By using a social action curriculum within this first grade classroom, it is the teachers hope that her young students can work toward the common good through building solidarity with a community member.

Solidarity building is considered one unique practice that can be used within a social action curriculum (Epstein & Oyler, 2008). As a result of its development, children can come to feel concern for social issues that do not directly relate to their own lives, but

instead to the lives of others, and then be compelled to act. The far reaching effect of solidarity building is that through the development of solidarity, children can come to understand the perspectives of those with less power in society, thus, potentially alerting them to the importance of the so often undervalued knowledge of marginalized peoples (Epstein & Oyler, 2008).

Research for this case study by Epstein and Oyler (2008) took place during 16 classroom visits from December through April. In addition, the research protocol included spontaneous interviews with students, parents, and classroom visitors, planned semi-formal interviews with the teacher, the collection of student work and teaching artifacts, field notes and transcriptions of audio-taped classroom events.

One major way solidarity was introduced and developed within the first grade classroom was through the content students were exposed to, "...she integrated Woody Guthrie's songs, a biography on Bessie Coleman (the first African American woman pilot), and folk tales from different cultures to do so" (Epstein & Oyler, 2008, p. 410). This began to build the tools for understanding social issues and taking action, as evidenced through the excitement and motivation of the children to further their study and research in various topics.

The other major way solidarity and justice oriented curriculum began to develop was through classroom interviews. These involved students meeting community members who spoke to them about a subject that the students were studying. One visitor who came during the study was a local pizzeria owner and a security guard at the school who was a participant in a Woolworth's lunch-counter sit-in in 1960. Through the interview process, students listened to life experiences, recorded notes, and responded to the narratives



during their later work in the classroom. It was after the interviews took place that the students became inspired by the life-stories that they heard. Students then began to take new directions with the curriculum as they adopted others' concerns as their own and acted in response to their learning (Epstein & Oyler, 2008).

The classroom selected for this case study by Epstein and Oyler (2008) was an extreme case as it was exceedingly special and unique considering the age range of the students and approach to a social action curriculum. The majority of students attending this elementary school were deemed as middle class, with some being more privileged. Also, a number of students' families were first generation immigrants from varied countries, such as Brazil, France, Greece, and few African American and Latino students. Both the size of the study and sample negatively affects the transferability of these findings, too small and too limited. The other credibility issue is that the researchers did not seem to be present for long enough to document a real change in student thinking. This could have been evidenced through data from the beginning of the year and contrasted with the end of year data. There is just not enough evidence of long-term effects of these strategies on first graders.

Overall, the basic justice-oriented classroom practices utilized within the case study included student-led decision making, the discussion of multiple viewpoints including interviews, the building of content, conceptual, and socio-historical understandings of identified problems, the development and utilization of activist or community organizing skills, building community advocacy through ties of solidarity with others, and student reflection and evaluation of their process and outcomes. The results of said practices were mostly evidenced through student's further or follow up

questions, the directions of their inquiry and some passages from writing assignments. On the whole, students reflected critical understanding of the subject matter and complexities within the context (Epstein & Oyler, 2008). They showed a historical and conceptual understanding in addition to addressing, through the writing and performing of a final play, injustices and inequalities. These were not factual or historical references, but empathetic in nature and encouraged others to feel solidarity towards their subject matter.

### Political Socialization Summary

The analysis of the research in the context of political socialization in elementary education suggests several successful strategies for learning within a democratic classroom community. Meixel and Haller's (1973) results established that schooling may heighten children's beliefs that as adults, they will be able to influence the political process, but that these beliefs result from generalizing similar beliefs about the school itself and from specific factual knowledge concerning the political process. In the research by Bickmore (2001), a further look at the functioning of schools helped to isolate specific elements that were required in the political socialization process of elementary students. Successful democratic functioning schools included critical reflection, decision-making, and autonomous action by the students.

From the research by Obenchain (1998), several more democratic elements found within classrooms were analyzed. In classrooms where democratic classroom strategies were present, such as providing student choice, shared responsibility, shared decision-making, and deliberate opportunities for student civic participation, students were beginning to accept more responsibility for their immediate community. This assertion points to the climate that the teacher set in the classroom (allowing and encouraging

students to become important stakeholders in decisions that are important to them) as the cause. Schultz (2007) also demonstrated the success of the above democratic classroom strategies within an urban elementary school.

Finally, the research of Epstein and Oyler (2008) isolated several more basic justice-oriented classroom practices utilized within a case study urban classroom. These strategies included student-led decision making, the discussion of multiple viewpoints including interviews, the building of content, conceptual, and socio-historical understandings of identified problems, the development and utilization of activist or community organizing skills, building community advocacy through ties of solidarity with others, and student reflection and evaluation of their process and outcomes.

#### Moral Development

Morals, or values, have historically been a significant aspect of the public school curriculum since ‘public school’ came into existence. Typically their inclusion is within a character or values education. There are many programs that focus on teaching values, especially since a major educational reform movement in the 1990’s (Leming, 2000). As with most character education programs, the goals of the curriculum are stated only in general terms with a primary focus on helping students develop a structured system of values, ethics and morals; helping students develop ethical standards based on multicultural understanding; providing reference points for common cultural and ethical choices; and providing an “anchor” for children in universally common virtues. Generally, the goal appears to be to help children to learn the character attributes that enable them to become caring and responsible adults. This section will look at the

research of several character education programs as well as some aspects of moral development that are critical to developing a democratic minded student.

### Literature-Based Character Education Evaluation

Within this first study, James S. Leming (2000) conducts quantitative research on one of the more notable character education programs, the Heartwood Institute's (1992) "An Ethics Curriculum for Children." The Heartwood curriculum is a read-aloud, multicultural, literature-based approach to teaching children ethical values (attributes of character) in grade one to six. The curriculum is organized around seven universal ethical values: courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty and love.

Leming (2000) evaluated this program utilizing four major research questions: 1. What is the effect of the Heartwood curriculum upon students' knowledge and understanding of the Heartwood curriculum's attributes of character? 2. What is the effect of the Heartwood curriculum upon students' emotional responsiveness and inclination toward actions consistent with the Heartwood curriculum's attributes of character? 3. What is the effect of the Heartwood curriculum upon students' ethical conduct as demonstrated by in-school behavior? 4. What proportion of the variance in dependent variables can be accounted for by character-related dimensions of teachers' classrooms?

The study by Leming (2000) was conducted in two school districts. At a western Pennsylvania site, a total of 602 students in two elementary schools located in a mid-sized, semi-rural school district served as the sample. The student population in the western Pennsylvania district is 95.6% Caucasian. Twenty-five per cent of the school district's students qualified for free or reduced lunch—approximately the national

average. At the southern Illinois site, a total of 361 students in two elementary schools located in a small, semi-rural school district participated in the study. Two of the four elementary schools in the district participated in the study. The student population for the two participating schools in southern Illinois was 85.6% Caucasian. The largest other non-Caucasian ethnic/racial group was African-Americans, who comprised 13.3% of the school population. Fifty percent of the two schools' students qualified for free or reduced lunch.

This quasi-experimental research was conducted during the 1995-96 academic school year. A pre-test was administered to all students, program and control, during the second week in September of 1995. A post-test was administered to all students during the third week of May 1996. Prior to the beginning of the school year teachers at both schools had received a half-day staff training workshop that focused on the objectives and methods of the Heartwood curriculum. The Heartwood curriculum consists of 42 children's literature trade books, two for each of the seven character attributes. The books of the curriculum feature stories from other cultures as well as some of the cultural groups in the United States with a heavy reliance on folktales, folklore and fairy tales. Only four of the 42 books in the curriculum feature white American characters (Leming, 2000).

The program also consists of a teaching process designed to develop children's understanding of the attributes. The lessons consist of an introduction of the concept based on what the students can say about it, a story read to the students by the teacher that illustrates the concept, discussion questions that help to explain and apply the

concept, and an activity the teacher devises to reinforce the concept. A “wrap-up” follows in which the students typically write something about the concept (Leming, 2000).

There were several instruments used throughout this study by Leming (2000). The instrument used to measure students’ understanding of the vocabulary of the seven character attributes taught by the Heartwood curriculum was an ethical understanding questionnaire. The instrument used to measure the extent to which students express a preference for actions that exemplify the character attributes that serve as the objectives of the Heartwood curriculum was the ethical sensibility questionnaire. The final questionnaire tested for ethnocentrism. Classroom-climate character-related characteristics were also noted through further tests.

The results showed that the most consistent and strongest program effect noted in this evaluation was with regard to cognitive outcomes. Program students at all grades demonstrated higher levels of ethical understanding than comparison students. It was also found through the testing for ethnocentrism that the program was effective in decreasing racial/ethnic prejudice among Caucasian students in grade one to three. Teachers on all levels noted improved student conduct. Overall, compared to the climate variables, the curricular variable, the program, contributed more than any other variable to the tested character-related dimensions. Leming (2000) asserted that findings from this evaluation suggest that the adoption by teachers of a pervasive approach to character education that cuts across all aspects of the curriculum is an important component of an effective character education program (Leming, 2000).

Generally, some of the validity issues that appear are due in fact to selection problems. Some teachers in one district seemed to not fully implement the program

throughout the year. Thus, the teachers tended to reflect some rivalry towards this program. However, it was in one district that held both control and program classes. In terms of the external validity, because this was an equivalent materials sample design study, with multiple treatments, the materials, lessons, climate, etc. it seems difficult to know which treatments or combination of treatments brought out the results. It is because of these validity issues that Leming (2000) asserted a generalized suggestion from the findings. He suggests that to implement a character education program, it must be incorporated within the entire class curriculum, not removed from the normalized class learning.

#### Values Education in Elementary Schools

This next qualitative study by Andrews and Martin (1995) describes an approach different from that of the Heartwood curriculum. The Heartwood curriculum is considered a product approach, referring to the specific products or outcomes of this values education program as "fixed" values, "core" values, or "moral basics" (Andrews & Martin, 1995). This program that they detail in their study is what they consider a blend between a product approach and what they call a process approach (Andrews & Martin, 1995). Opponents of a moral education based on a set of fixed or core values are believers in the process of coming to know one's values, or values clarification. Process educators believe that the fundamental error of traditional approaches to values education is that it results in indoctrination; "...none of us, they argue, has the only 'right' set of values to pass on to other people's children" (Andrews & Martin, 1995, p. 5).

The grant project was initiated in the spring of 1994 and sought to research democratic and social values such as informed decision-making, freedom with

responsibility, justice, and a strong work ethic. The study by Andrews and Martin (1995) included sixty fifth grade students from a Houston intermediate school. A needs assessment revealed the overall school student population was 1037, with 44.2% African American, 34.1% Hispanic, 20.4% white and 1.3% other. Seventy-one percent of the students at this school classified as needing free and reduced lunch, with 53% identified as at-risk, and 16% ELL students.

This case study by Andrews and Martin (1995) utilized seven main methods and activities to teach social values within the classrooms. Learning classroom routines, dialogue journals (students write daily reflections on experiences in their own lives related to discussions in class from current events or literature. Teachers and classmates can write back in response to ideas and thoughts), working in learning teams (students work collaboratively on chosen topics), literature circles, read-alouds, action research projects, and school/community projects.

Some strategies used within this case study were that the teacher used “thinking points” that students could earn for good ideas, thoughts, and research. Both the students and teacher decided. Another strategy used was working in learning teams to work collaboratively on chosen topics. Within the reflective literature logs, the students kept track of decisions being made by characters, vocabulary, questions and comments. Within the personal reflective journals the students kept, they recorded instances of "familial love," "work ethic," "consequences of right and wrong," "cooperation and teamwork," etc. Students recorded these examples from their own reading, from class read-aloud's and discussions. Students also made decision making charts to record and understand characters decisions from literature and their own actions and decisions. The



class also visited various community organizations within their school/community projects (Andrews & Martin, 1995).

Overall, the students showed an increase in decision-making skills, communication, cooperation, and moral thinking skills as observed through field notes, recordings and student work. Throughout this study, it is clear that the researchers have some biased views of the success within the classrooms. One of the researchers, in fact, was one of the teachers that participated in this study. Though the study was prolonged and substantial, there were no triangulation or member checks conducted. Though Andrews and Martin (1995) assert that the process of group inquiry, teamwork, and process-writing developed compromise, notions of consensus building, mutual support, shared decision making, interpersonal reasoning, and perseverance, there appears no confirmable means to check for results.

#### Character Education for Social and Emotional Competence

In this next quantitative study by Richardson, Tolson, Huang and Lee (2009) the character education program *Connecting with Others: Lessons for Teaching Social and Emotional Competence* is analyzed. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether this social skills program would enable students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms to develop skills that would facilitate socialization with peers with and without disabilities. The research question addressed the students' acquisition of social skills as a result of the training.

This program studied by Richardson et al. (2009) is based on a friendship model developed by Evans and Richardson (1989) to encourage teachers to increase positive interactions in an inclusive classroom. *Connecting with Others: Lessons for Teaching*

*Social and Emotional Competence* was originally developed with a Louisiana state grant to support teachers in their instruction of pro-social skills and to facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classroom settings.

The curriculum includes 30 lessons divided into six skill areas: Concept of Self and Others, Socialization, Problem Solving/Conflict Resolution, Communication, Sharing, and Caring/Empathy. Each lesson follows a specific lesson cycle, and goals, objectives, and materials are included for every activity. The program was developed with practical utility as a primary goal. The teacher directly teaches the skill and involves the students through guided questions while providing prompts and feedback. The teaching is followed by a brief assessment to check for understanding. The students engage in teacher guided and independent activities following the instruction. The guided activity involves the students working in heterogeneous cooperative groups. The independent practice activity allows the teacher to observe the students' learning styles and individual abilities. A summary section synthesizes the information and concludes with optional enrichment activities. The specific strategies used for teaching are storytelling, bibliotherapy, relaxation, modeling, coaching, behavior rehearsal, role playing, verbal mediation, creative expression (for example, art, music, poetry, and puppetry), creative visualization, cooperative learning, and transfer learning (Richardson et al. (2009).

The 25 participating students in the study by Richardson et al. (2009) were selected from five schools districts. Seventeen students were identified as having learning disabilities, and eight students were classified as having behavior disorders. Of the 25 students, 80 percent were African American, 17 percent were white, and 3 percent were

Asian. The students ranged in age from 9 to 13 years old. They were primarily chosen because the teachers reported that both groups of students demonstrated antisocial behaviors, including inability to make friends, noncompliance, impulsivity, inability to grasp future consequences of behavior, inability to delay gratification, and inability to self-regulate emotions. Twenty-one educators implemented the program. Eighteen were general education teachers, two were speech therapists, and one was a counselor. All were trained for 35 hours on implementing this program.

The Social Skills and Attitude Scale (SSAS) was developed to assess the social skills included in the program studied by Richardson et al. (2009). This instrument uses a five-point Likert scale to measure the level to which a student reflects or demonstrates the skill or trait identified in a statement. There are 50 items on the instrument, which was administered as a pretest and posttest. The six skill areas tested were: Concept of Self and Others, Socialization, Conflict Resolution/Problem Solving, Communication, Sharing, and Love/Caring. The teachers were instructed to teach selected social skills lessons class-wide three times per week for 40 minutes for 16 weeks. In addition, they addressed social behaviors throughout each day according to the demands of the situation presented.

The findings of Richardson, et al. (2009) indicate that based on the student growth observed by teachers and the data collected from the SSAS, the students did indicate growth in the areas tested (Richardson, et al., 2009). The social skills the students with disabilities developed from this program resulted in positive social experiences both in the school and community. This can yield a sense of self efficacy or a feeling of being in control of ones own emotions.

Within this time series designed study by Richardson et al. (2009), the majority of the internal validity factors were controlled. The major issue with using this research is that it has a very limited sample. The participants were selected were extreme cases of students with disabilities with this particular school. Thus, the results can not be fully generalized due to the specialized treatment the students received. Nonetheless, this study did show a well implemented program that resulted in positive results for its students. Social skills were positively influenced through these strategies within this character education program.

#### Teaching Children to Indicate Uncertainty

In this next quantitative study, Sieber, Epstein and Petty (1970) look at how effective modeling and concept-learning procedures are as means of teaching fifth-grade students to discriminate between non-problematic and non-problematic statements. They also research how to teach children to express uncertainty in group discussions. The researchers defined uncertainty as, the state of having either no response or various plausible responses to a situation that one wishes to understand (Sieber, et al., 1970).

In this pretest/posttest control group design by Sieber, et al. (1970), students were grouped according to IQ and gender ranking, so each group would have one highest ranking boy and girl in each group on down. Each group watched a short movie and were asked questions before and after their treatment both orally and in written form. Within the control group there was no training. Within the second condition group, the concept learning group, subjects were taught to give examples of each type of problematic question. They were also, through discussion, formally taught about different types of problematic and non-problematic problems and the training criterion was reached when

each subject was able to give at least one example of each of the 5 kinds of problematic questions.

Within the third condition group, subjects observed a well-liked student who “modeled” correct identification of problematic questions and was socially reinforced for this by the experimenter. A “bright, well-liked girl” was chosen to be the model. She was trained as in condition II and was also trained to give the appropriate answers to 18 questions about a short film. Then all subjects in Condition III were shown the film as a group, when questions were asked, if the students did not respond with some appropriate indication of uncertainty, the model provided the correct answer and was socially rewarded. Finally, the condition four group received both II and III treatments (Sieber, et al., 1970).

The participants of this Sieber, et al. (1970) study were 16 boys and 16 girls, all in the fifth grade. The students were in the middle to lower-middle class socioeconomic range and attended a public elementary school in the San Francisco Bay Area of California.

The findings from this study supported the expression of uncertainty by school children is influenced by both; a) the belief that expression of uncertainty will be socially rewarded, and b) the understanding of concepts of certainty and uncertainty. Subjects who observed modeled behavior of expressing uncertainty in discussion more frequently expressed uncertainty than in the control group. Subjects who had experienced concept learning more correctly discriminated between written test problematic statements (Sieber, et al., 1970).

There are some small issues of internal validity within this study by Sieber, et al. (1970). The first has to do with the testing. This issue arises in studies that use both pre- and post tests and refers to becoming “test-wise” by having taken a pretest that is similar to the posttest. This could be a potential problem because the format of the testing was similar and so were the questions. Another internal validity issue that could have influenced the results is called Experimental Treatment Diffusion. This is where people will talk, and if the ideas they hear sounds interesting, they might just try to use them themselves. This could also be a potential threat to validity because the group discussions are all happening in the same school and the students may talk to each other from different groups.

Overall, despite the possible issue with internal validity, the findings indicate that the expression of uncertainty by school children is influenced by both a belief that expression of uncertainty will be socially rewarded and also an understanding of concepts of certainty and uncertainty (Sieber, et al., 1970). Given these findings, with the existence of appropriate social norms, modeling and concept training, students will develop warranted uncertainty, or problem finding skills.

#### The Role of Social and Dialogic Interactions in a Democratic Classroom Community

In this final qualitative case study by Jeanne Klockow (2008) she explored the nature of social and dialogic interactions that occurred within classroom practices that encouraged the development of a democratic classroom community. By dialogue, Klockow (2008) means a social tool used to mediate meaning about classroom community membership. The participants of this study by Klockow (2008) were 25 African-American fifth graders who were attending the Gassia College Preparatory

Academy. The class was an even distribution of gender, and the demographics of the school are considered low-income and high-risk. Students were chosen to attend the school based on a lottery system.

Data collection occurred in three phases using video/audio taping, observations, focus groups, and collecting field notes. The initial focus group consisted of six students randomly selected, based on a class list where gender and prior student knowledge was unknown. The same focus group was interviewed each time during the data collection phase. Klockow (2008) states, "...this was done to discover the cultural progression among community members about the meaning of a democratic community from the individual (student) to the collective (group)" (p. 25). The researcher also used two 'telling cases' (Mitchell, 1984) to examine the dynamics of the classroom on a microcosmic level. Data collection was conducted in three phases, at six to eight week intervals between implementation. When conducted, data collection occurred on three consecutive days to promote consistency (Klockow, 2008). Finally, all academic areas, such as math and literature, as well as the classroom norms, were observed and recorded as a follow-up to see if community transferred to academic areas as well to support validity.

The findings of this case study were that the teacher used social interaction and dialogue with her students as a way of establishing a democratic foundation for students to construct their own democratic classroom community (Klockow, 2008). Throughout the research, different themes emerged: establishing norms; having a voice; expectations; reflection; and accountability.

One positive credibility practice that Klockow (2008) utilized in her naturalistic research was triangulation. This process involves checking information that has been collected from different sources for consistency. In this study, the two contexts that were utilized were interactive analysis and within-method triangulation. The researcher also utilized a negative case analysis and persistent observation to strengthen the credibility of this research. Overall, this research documented the students taking ownership and responsibility for not only their classroom, but also for their personal and academic conduct and growth within that classroom.

### Moral Development Summary

This section looked at the research of several character education programs as well as some aspects of moral development that are critical to developing a democratic minded student. One character education program studied by Leming (2000) indicated that by utilizing an overarching curriculum, that is, one that integrates character education with academics, students demonstrate higher levels of ethical understanding. Through the combination of literature organized around seven universal ethical values (courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty and love), specific lesson plans and continual revisiting of subject matter, students also demonstrated decreased racial/ethnic prejudice, ethnocentrism and improved conduct.

The curriculum used in the study by Leming (2000) focuses on the “fixed” values product or outcome of the program. Alternatively, Andrews and Martin (1995) focus on a social values curriculum that is a blend between a product approach and a process approach. The successful strategies researched were: learning classroom routines, Dialogue Journals (students write daily reflections on experiences in their own lives



related to discussions in class from current events or literature. Teachers and classmates can write back in response to ideas and thoughts), working in learning teams (students work collaboratively on chosen topics), literature circles, read-alouds, action research projects, and school/community projects. Overall, the students showed an increase in decision-making skills, communication, cooperation, and moral thinking skills as observed through field notes, recordings and student work.

Further research of a similar social skills program by Richardson, et al. (2009) revealed positive results for the socialization and integration of students with and without disabilities as well. The specific strategies used for teaching were storytelling, bibliotherapy, relaxation, modeling, coaching, behavior rehearsal, role playing, verbal mediation, creative expression, creative visualization, cooperative learning, and transfer learning (Richardson et al. (2009). Modeling was also supported by the research of Sieber, et al. (1970) as positively influencing students ability to express uncertainty. Finally, in the research by Klockow (2008), social interaction and dialogue is also supported as promoting moral development as a democratic classroom strategy. Throughout the research, various strategies emerged: establishing norms; having a voice; expectations; reflection; and accountability. These strategies allow for the student to develop not only individually, but become more socially capable of maintaining a democratic learning community.

### Classroom Management

There are many strategies of classroom management that promote various purposes and assumptions about discipline and learning. Overall, each model and strategy changes based on the power dynamics involved. However, in a classroom that is

representative of our diverse society as a whole, it is critical to establish rules that do not reflect personal biases or prejudice. Management structures must be created for the purposes of leveling the playing field, teaching students about how to negotiate power relationships appropriately, and how to make decisions that benefit themselves and their community. McEwan Landau (2004) states, "...democratic classrooms are not those in which students are in charge nor are they places where students make up the rules with no framework on which to base the rules" (p. 14). The following collection of research explores aspects of the classroom management category that influences democratic classrooms and the strategies used within them.

#### Children's Perceptions of Elementary Teachers as Authority Figures

In this first quantitative study by Dunbar and Taylor (1982) the main purpose of the research was to examine students' perceptions of teachers as authority figures. The researchers asserted that teacher authority may be divided into two parts, formal and informal, thus, the study attempted to identify how these subdivisions were related to the various independent variables.

Formal authority was defined as a set of institutionalized rules, regulations, and cultural ideologies which imply compliance and may result in minimum obedience. Informal authority was defined as that granted by consent or loyalty of the students, which, as such, "must be earned" and may lead to enthusiastic compliance (Dunbar & Taylor, 1982). One of the questions that was examined was whether the children's perception of the teacher as an authority figure followed the same pattern as had been found in the overall less favorable attitude toward school as the child matured. The first major objective was to examine teacher authority (formal and informal) as perceived by

children in grades one, three, and six. Also of interest were moderator variables, which could influence the children's perceptions. The second major objective was to determine the relationship between grade level and the factors that may influence these perceptions, such as geographic location (rural or urban), type of school (public or parochial), sex (female or male), *IQ* (94 and below, 95 to 109, 110 to 123, and 124 and above), and socioeconomic status (blue collar, white collar, farmer, and unemployed).

A sample of 555 children was used in this study by Dunbar and Taylor (1982) consisting of 175 first-grade pupils, 182 third grade pupils, and 198 sixth-grade pupils. Included was approximately equal representation according to sex, school location in towns of less than 1,000 population and in a metropolitan area with a population in excess of 100,000, and type of school (public or private). On the basis of parents' occupation, 48% of the children were found to be from homes in which the main wage earner was a blue collar worker, 37% white collar, 12% farmers, and 3% unemployed. Of the children for whom *IQ* scores were available, 13% had *IQ*s of 94 and below, 38% 95 to 109, 35% 110 to 123, and 15% 124 or above.

This study consisted of an 'opinionnaire' concerning teachers as authority figures. A panel of teacher educators classified the 13 items into two categories, formal and informal. The opinionnaire was then administered by trained research assistants in each classroom involved in the study. Each child's answers were recorded and each response was assigned a weighted value (Dunbar & Taylor, 1982).

The results of the opinionnaire showed a relationship between grade level and formal authority as being non-significant,  $F(2, 552) = .94$ . However, the comparison for grade level and informal authority was significant,  $F(2, 552) = 17.77, p < .01$ . When all

subgroup pairs were compared, the means of grade one and grade six were significantly different. The results indicate that although children at various grade levels perceive the teacher similarly in the area of formal authority, they view the teacher's informal authority less positively as they move through the elementary grades. First-graders are more likely to give enthusiastic compliance to their teachers, while sixth-graders must be shown by the actions of their teachers that their teachers are helpful, keep promises, and do indeed like their students (Dunbar & Taylor, 1982).

There was one internal validity issue that stood out with this study. The researcher did not state exactly when this opinionnaire was administered. How long had the students been with their current teacher before they were questioned? Thus, grade indicators do not seem to be completely valid. One other issue seemed to be in the ability to generalize the results. There was no race or ethnicity of the participants indicated, thus it is difficult to generalize the findings to all children. However, this study does demonstrate that as children get older, they are less likely to view their teacher's informal authority positively, or be enthusiastically compliant (Dunbar & Taylor, 1982).

#### The Problem of Teacher Legitimation of Social Power

In this next study, Larkin (1975) looked at teacher leadership styles and classroom climates according to task and expressive orientations. Task orientation indicates the amount of emphasis the teacher puts on "getting the job done." Larkin (1975) gives the example, a high-task-oriented teacher is one who programs pupils' activities, provides immediate and detailed feedback, and checks to see that the pupils are learning the concepts that are being taught. Power orientation indicates the amount of decision-making that the teacher keeps to themselves and the amount they invest in the pupils. The

expressiveness dimension indicates the warmth of the relationship between the teacher and their pupils. A high-expressive teacher is one who has "good rapport" with their pupils.

The five hypotheses asserted by Larkin (1975) are that the task orientation of the teacher and classroom morale will be positively related; expressive orientation of the teacher and classroom morale will be positively related; teacher power orientation and classroom morale will not be related; the higher the teacher's use of power, the greater the difficulty of legitimating his power; and teachers legitimate their power by satisfying the task and expressive needs of their pupils.

To test the hypothesis, 1,750 elementary students in grades four, five, and six in the Southern California area were sampled. They were drawn from seventy-five classrooms among thirteen schools in five school districts. The five school districts contained a tremendous variety in enrollment, community size, racial and ethnic characteristics of the student population, urbanization of the community, and social class of the community it served. There were 56% Caucasian students, 13% African-American students, 29% Mexican-American students, and 2% Asian-American students. The data was collected through a questionnaire provided to the students (Larkin, 1975).

The findings indicate that the relationships between the three dimensions of teacher leadership and the three indicators of classroom climate are positively related to classroom morale (Larkin, 1975). Furthermore, although power orientation of the teacher is not important to classroom morale, it acts as a powerful suppressant on the peer group. The higher the power orientation of the teacher, the less influence the peer group has and the more distributed the peer-group structure.

The issue with these findings is again, as stated previously, there was only one questionnaire administered. This leaves an internal validity issue to contend with. History could be a point of weakness, with unknown events happening during the course of the study. This unknown context of the classroom and school could influence the results of the study. However, overall this study demonstrates that authority is part of a social exchange process in which students and teachers involve themselves. There are many variables, however teachers who utilized high levels of task and expressiveness scored higher class morale. The democratic classroom strategies utilized within this study indicate that by remaining task oriented and focusing on the needs of the students, classroom climate and learning will be positively affected.

#### Non-Instructional Factors Relating to Classroom Climate

In this next qualitative study by Beattie and Olley (1977), they explored classroom climate. This study discusses observations of teacher practices in elementary classrooms which are not directly related to instruction, but that affect measures of classroom climate and teacher indirectness. One factor examined was the teachers “warmth” or the way in which the teacher reacts to the pupils. The other factor examined was the teachers directness or indirectness, or the extent to which pupil activities are controlled by the teacher.

During observations, 230 student teachers were asked to complete an open-ended response form during a practicum experience in elementary schools. Each student teacher was in a single classroom for at least two weeks. Teachers being observed were aware that observations were being recorded. It was emphasized that responses were to describe specific procedures used by the teacher for dealing with specific situations. No opinions

or value judgments were to be expressed. The practicum experiences of the students occurred at varying times of the school year (Beattie & Olley, 1977).

The results of the observations of classroom climate during instructional segments have shown the use of teacher praise, acceptance of pupils' ideas and absence of criticism to obtain measures of warmth, and have associated the use of democratic procedures, the extent of control of pupil activities and encouragement of pupil initiative as measures of teacher indirectness (Beattie & Olley, 1977). These results show a significant prolonged and substantial engagement because the student teachers were present throughout the year. Though the specific student teachers changed, the presence of their observations were consistent. Also, the nature of having multiple observers within the same classroom at various times throughout the year seems similar to a triangulation method, checking the results with other sources of data.

Overall, the observations described above illustrate that teachers vary widely in their choice of routines and procedures which provide opportunities to display warmth and indirectness. While some procedures emphasize pupil initiative, individual worth and facilitate pupil-teacher rapport, others are mechanistic in nature, and routinely use nagging as a teaching tool. Some are even demeaning. For example, to use the bathroom, in one procedure children were required to ask and permission was always granted, provided the request was within certain time periods, but were subjected to interrogation regarding their need or reminded about going at recess, etc., In another bathroom procedure, children were required to ask, but permission was granted only if the teacher were persuaded as to the emergency nature of the situation.

#### Student Preferences of Teacher Discipline Styles

In a quantitative study by Lian Hwang Chiu and Michael Tulley (1997), researchers looked at students' preferences of teacher discipline styles. A total of 712 (368 males and 344 females) were sampled from eight school districts in rural communities, small towns, and suburban areas in north central Indiana. Of these, 197 were enrolled in the fourth grade, 206 in the fifth grade, and 309 in the sixth grade. During the Spring of 1993, students were administered the Beliefs on Discipline Inventory for Children (BDIC), a modification of the Beliefs on Discipline Inventory described by Wolfgang (2009), which measures teachers' preferences for three discipline approaches.

Regardless of grade level, gender, or academic achievement, the most preferred approach was the Confronting-Contracting approach to discipline (grounded in social and developmental psychological theories). This approach is grounded in the assumption that interrelationships between individuals and their environment are the keys to understanding behavior, and considers it the role of the teacher to interact continually so they can together arrive at solutions to behavior problems. Chiu and Tulley (1997) assert that the preference for this approach seems easily explained by the emphasis on student participation and joint decision-making. Most students at these age and grade levels would likely consider an approach that granted them the voice in decisions that directly affect them an attractive one.

In this study by Chiu and Tulley (1997), comparatively low percentages of students indicated a preference for the Rules/Reward-Punishment approach (grounded in experimental behaviorist psychologies). This is generally considered an approach not only widely advocated but also quite commonly depended upon by classroom teachers.



This approach is grounded in the assumption that external stimulation is a primary force in behavior. In this view, the teacher controls the learning environment through direct commands and positive and negative reinforcement. The limited preference for this approach might easily be explained by its teacher-centeredness, and also its reliance upon punishment as one tool for manipulating behavior. It might also be the case that their familiarity with, and recognition of, this approach led students to choose statements that appeared to represent alternatives to practices they were accustomed to experiencing.

Within the Relationship-Listening approach (grounded in humanistic and psychoanalytic thinking), which is embedded in the beliefs that inner feelings and outward behavior are directly linked, and that teachers should attempt to maintain a classroom environment in which students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and emotions. This is arguably the most student-centered and humanistic of the three approaches, and would seem to have strong appeal to students. It may be the case, though, that statements associated with this approach were objectively viewed by students as simply and unrealistically too generous and tolerant and perhaps in part because it eliminates comfortable boundaries for flexibly monitoring their actions (Chiu & Tulley, 1997).

Validity of this study by Chiu and Tulley (1997) is quite strong. Because there was only one questionnaire, the results could not be influenced by any testing validity issues. However, as with the prior studied in this section, it is unclear how the students were prepared for this administration of the questionnaire nor any history or context of the classrooms and experiences with the different discipline approaches. Nonetheless, the results can reasonably demonstrate students understandings of different models and their

preferences.

Consistent with the view of Chiu and Tulley (1997) is the work of Wolfgang and Glickman (1986) who propose that teachers' decisions about classroom discipline typically are compatible with specific theories about child development and behavior. It seems reasonable to assume that the discipline approaches that teachers implement are based to some extent upon their beliefs about child development. Each teacher formulates their beliefs, experiences and observations about what students can and should be expected to do (or not do) on the basis of their age and physical/psychological development. It is upon these attitudes which teachers' construct their best methods to help students meet those expectations.

#### How Do Children Develop the Will to Solve Conflicts?

In this next ethnographic study by Catherine Lewis (1996) she looks at accounts of conflict resolution from Japanese preschools and elementary schools, and then explores the idea that although conflict resolution skills may be learned as other skills are learned (for example, through modeling, practice, feedback, and so on), the will to solve conflicts needs to be conceived differently. She hypothesizes that the will to solve conflicts needs to be considered a value that is internalized by children, depending in part on characteristics of the school setting.

Lewis's (1996) observations of Japanese education began seventeen years prior to her published research, first with structured two-day observations of fifteen diverse preschools, and then with similar observations of fifteen first-grade classes in the Tokyo public schools. Later, she conducted longer, unstructured observations of up to three months duration in about twenty additional elementary schools in several regions of

Japan.

Throughout her observations, Lewis (1996) observed that at both preschools and elementary schools, teachers kept a very low profile as authority figures. For example, Lewis (1996) stated “...in only 53 percent of spot observations were all preschoolers even within sight of their teacher; elementary students, not teachers, assumed responsibility for many aspects of classroom management, including supervising transitions from recess to study, leading class meetings, and evaluating their own behavior and that of other students” (p. 92). However, teachers did focus on building children's social skills (such as communication and cooperation), their emotional connections to one another and to the teacher, their willingness to buy into classroom practices and values, and their habit of self-critical reflection. Children are given greater responsibility and treated with greater respect for their own person and their own learning. A child who disrupts a lesson is rarely singled out for special treatment by the teacher, who usually waits for the disruption to cease or goes on in spite of it.

Japanese teachers talked about conflict resolution both as a matter of skills (that children need to learn to listen to each other and to express themselves) and as a matter of will. They describe it as focusing on developing the friendships, and the attachment to school that will make children want to solve conflicts and maintain the well being and harmony of a group they value (Lewis, 1996).

One technique Japanese teachers use is in regards to fighting. They view fighting not so much as a problem between two children as a class problem and an opportunity. Incidents of fighting, crying, teasing, and other kinds of conflict inevitably resurfaced in teachers' comments at the end of the day. The teacher will recount what happened and

who was helping to mediate the problem. This restating helps the students to understand their actions and isolate cause and effect more efficiently.

Some other strategies that Japanese teachers commonly used to help children manage conflicts were: framing the conflict as the class's problem and encouraging class members to help solve it, teaching children how to elicit each side's perspective and needs, and revisiting the problem with the whole class to build their understanding of what led to the conflict and to its solution. These strategies are generally similar to those employed by conflict resolution programs found in a growing number of US. Schools. However, overall by allowing fights to take place, with safety in mind, the Japanese teachers are allowing children to take personal responsibility and initiative. They also did not take sides or cite fault to either side of the fight. Both sides were to blame, even if one student resorted to violence (Lewis, 1996).

Overall, within this study by Lewis (1996), the will to solve conflicts stemmed from a focus on friendships and unity or cohesiveness with others in the class as well as the teacher. This took precedence over technical competence. The other technique utilized is predominantly group oriented lessons, work time and play time.

This ethnographic study was extremely rich with information about those observed, the school contexts and cultural contexts as well. Though this study took place in Japan, there was an enormous amount of details to be able to understand the importance of specific actions or beliefs made by the teachers in the study. Lewis (1996) compared all of her findings with several other researchers and utilized a peer debriefing and triangulation of sorts to check for credibility. Finally, though she was not fully clear on the exact amount of time spent in the field, this study was the culmination of over 15

years of observations at many schools.

### Intervening in the Process of Social Exclusion

In this next quantitative study by Harrist and Bradley (2003), they focus on researching if a whole-class intervention is an effective way to decrease social exclusion. Within this study, they piloted a class-wide intervention disallowing overt social exclusion in the kindergarten classroom and playground. They then assessed post-intervention whether children in intervention classes differ from children in non-intervention classes. Their overall aim was to increase inclusion of all children in play. Effective Intervention was defined as post-intervention differences of one or more of the following: relative to children in the non-intervention classes, children in the intervention classes should report liking their classmates more, report greater self-perceived acceptance and social satisfaction, have a lower level of teacher reported peer difficulties, and be observed to have less exclusionary behavior during play.

Within this study by Harrist and Bradley (2003), a partial randomized group design took place over one year. Wave I- students were given 8 weeks before the new rule was introduced/intervention was implemented. During this time, some children were identified as at risk of exclusion based on interviews, teacher questionnaires, child interviews and observations.

Once the intervention was implemented, 8-10 10 minute sessions occurred over the course of 3 weeks including discussions, role playing, and story-telling. Then weekly visits were made for 6-8 weeks to continue discussion of the rule. Teachers were expected to maintain and enforce the rule in addition to the researchers weekly visits. Finally, a large banner was placed in the room with the rule on it. The Wave II-students,

the social exclusionary at-risk students, were observed again and evaluated based on interviews, teacher questionnaires, child interviews and observations.

The participants of this study by Harrist and Bradley (2003) were 10 kindergarten classes (6 target and 4 control) from three elementary schools within the same school district with a total of 144 children (73 boys, 71 girls). In this school, students all had a full school day and all students were from the surrounding neighborhood. Children were not bussed out of their neighborhoods to attend school. Thus, the ethnic distributions within the schools reflected the children's neighborhoods. There were 57% European-American, 34% Mexican-American, 5% Asian-American, and 4% African-American. The social economic status ranged from poverty to upper middle class, with a majority of the families being lower-middle class.

The findings of the researchers Harrist and Bradley (2003) indicated that the classes with the rule reported that they liked each other more at the end of the year than the control. However, the "target" classes also reported a higher level of social dissatisfaction than the control groups. This could be because there is uncertainty as to social ranking and acceptance within the class. This can cause social anxiety in children if they are still developing the autonomy and self-confidence needed to be independent.

There is only one primary internal validity factors that could impact these findings, history. Because this study took place over a year, there is no way of knowing what the context of the year was for the participants of the study. There did not seem to be enough to describe the circumstances, such as administration and parental support, etc. Overall, the study seems to be repeatable and generalizable, since the participants information were fully indicated. In general, this study demonstrated a good objective

practice, the intervention, and the positive results indicated an increase in social inclusion.

### Judicious Discipline

In this final action research study, Gathercoal and Nimmo (2002) utilize both qualitative and quantitative measures to assess the theoretical outcomes of implementing a discipline program called *Judicious Discipline*. *Judicious Discipline* is a student-centered education approach that professes that in order for students to become responsible citizens they must be given responsibility. The qualitative measures included videotaped interviews with teachers, students and administrators, anecdotes, and other artifacts. The quantitative measures included a questionnaire developed by The Social Development Group, Research Branch of the South Australian Department of Education, and published in their 1980 book, *Developing the Classroom Group*.

This longitudinal study by Gathercoal and Nimmo (2002) spanned 5 years and gave questionnaires to all students from 1<sup>st</sup> grade –5<sup>th</sup> grade at least once a year that consisted of 8 true/false questions. Students were placed in one of four development groups “dependant,” “rebellion,” “cohesion,” and “autonomy.” Social development was measured in 4 categories; 2 power categories, “teacher power” and “student power,” and two relationship categories “student/student relationships” and “teacher/student relationships.”

The participants of the study included elementary students, teachers and administrators (grades 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) in Mankato, Minnesota. The schools were chosen “...to implement this model based on the school’s culture and the belief that teachers in the chosen schools were ready for such a ‘leap of faith.’” (Gathercoal & Nimmo, 2002, p. 1).

The researchers triangulated the data and affirmed the validity and reliability of the questionnaire results. Schools implementing *Judicious Discipline* found success within 4-8 weeks, if implementing for the first time. At the end of five years, every classroom in the elementary school, except one, scored high toward the autonomous stage of social development in all four categories. Teachers who conducted democratic class meetings in their homerooms maintained a classroom climate that was more aligned with *Judicious Discipline*. The program helped to establish new school culture in some schools, and helped to reduce work-related stress levels for teachers (Gathercoal & Nimmo, 2002). Overall, this study indicates the need for giving students responsibility. This democratic classroom strategy can be used as a means to develop autonomy in elementary students.

#### Classroom Management Summary

Throughout the research regarding classroom management, the researchers found various approaches and results from classroom management strategies which influence its impact on democratic classrooms. To start with, Dunbar and Taylor (1982) found that although children at various grade levels perceive the teacher similarly in the area of formal authority, they view the teacher's informal authority less positively as they move through the elementary grades. First-graders are more likely to give enthusiastic compliance to their teachers, while sixth-graders must be shown by the actions of their teachers that their teachers are helpful, keep promises, and do indeed like their students (Dunbar & Taylor, 1982). Furthermore, Larkin (1975) asserts that there are positive relationships between the task orientation of the teacher and classroom morale. Thus, not only does the age of the student influence the classroom climate, but how the teacher



legitimizes their power also matters. Larkin (1975) indicates that teachers should try to remain task oriented, focus on the needs of their and utilize high levels of expressiveness to maintain high classroom morale.

Researchers Beattie and Olley (1977) indicate other positive influences on classroom climate are the use of teacher praise, acceptance of pupils' ideas and absence of criticism to obtain measures of warmth within the classroom. Similar to these findings are those of Chiu and Tulley (1997). They assert that regardless of grade level, gender, or academic achievement, the most preferred teacher discipline method was the Confronting-Contracting approach. This approach emphasizes student participation and joint decision-making. Most students at these age and grade levels would likely consider an approach that granted them the voice in decisions that directly affect them an attractive one.

Within a democratic classroom, the focus on friendships and unity or cohesiveness with others must be maintained, because according to Lewis (1996), that is where the will to solve conflicts originates. Lewis (1996) also maintains that predominantly group oriented lessons, work time and playtime contributes as well.

The findings of the researchers Harrist and Bradley (2003) further indicate that students liked each other more at the end of the school year when a whole-class intervention strategy was utilized. This allowed all students to utilize a relative level of responsibility in maintaining their own classroom climate. This level of self awareness and responsibility for the classroom climate is also supported by the research by Gathercoal & Nimmo (2002). They also assert that in order for students to become responsible citizens they must be given responsibility within the classroom.

## Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning methods have been extensively researched and demonstrated effective in multiple areas for more than 20 years. As a result, their use has greatly increased over the past decade (Johnson & Johnson, 1991; Slavin, 1994). The term cooperative learning generally describes instructional techniques or grouping structures in which students are divided into heterogeneous groups to complete instructional activities. Each member of the group contributes to the group project. Even though individual members often have different assigned responsibilities, they complete the group activity collectively. Cooperative learning structures stress both social and academic development. There is interaction among the group members such that they help one another to be successful and work together toward the group goal. In addition, the success of the group depends on all members learning the relevant information and concepts taught. This next body of research explores the use of cooperative learning strategies to promote learning in an equitable and democratic way.

### Classroom Learning Preferences

In one empirical quantitative study, researchers Ellison, Boykin, Tyler and Dillihunt (2005) utilized a one-shot case study design. The researchers examined classroom learning preferences among upper-elementary school students as measured by the Social Interdependence Scales. Learning preferences, as defined by the researchers, refers to inclinations toward the type of strategies and structures students believe would optimize their learning. Also, the researchers identified cooperative learning as existing when individuals work together to achieve combined learning group outcomes.

The research by Ellison, et al. (2005) consisted of 138 African American (33 girls, 33 boys) and White (39 girls, 33 boys) 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade students from one public elementary school located in a major southeastern city. Over 95% of the students at school qualified for free/reduced lunch, which indicates the low socioeconomic status of the students. The students were told that the purpose of their participation was to determine their preferences for how they would best like school activities to be conducted. Students responded on a 7-point Likert type scale to the items on the Social Interdependence Scales to assess student's preferences for cooperative, competitive and individualistic classroom learning. The students were tested in groups of twelve outside the classroom and were given ten minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The results found cooperative learning was the most endorsed by students regardless of ethnicity or gender (Ellison et al., 2005). Students preferred cooperative learning significantly more than competitive and individualistic learning, with African American students reporting a significantly higher preference for cooperative learning than for competitive and individualistic classroom learning. White American students also reported a significantly higher preference for cooperative learning.

Though both African American and White students indicated a preference for cooperative learning, this study by Ellison, et al. (2005) did not indicate the time in which the study was conducted. Some further internal validity questions that emerge are how long had the students been in the school year and what were their associations with cooperative learning and in what context?

Taken as a whole, this study supports that cooperative learning is preferred by both African American and White low socioeconomic upper elementary students (Ellison

et al., 2005). Positive preferences or inclinations towards a particular learning strategy should not be taken lightly, as it is believed to optimize student learning. In addition to the positive preference of cooperative learning strategies, the results indicate that this strategy could work for many students, not just a specific profile, indicating generalizability of the findings. However, just as cooperative learning is preferred by many students, research also supports its positive impact on student achievement, self-esteem and social acceptance of high-ability students (Johnson, Johnson, Taylor, 1993).

#### Impact of Cooperative Learning on Achievement, Self-Esteem and Social Acceptance

In this next quantitative study by Johnson, Johnson and Taylor (1993), the academic achievement of high ability students taught through cooperative learning was compared with academic achievement of high ability students taught through traditional methods. The primary research questions guiding the study were: How does cooperative learning and individualistic learning experiences impact the academic performance and higher level thinking of high-ability students? How does cooperative and individualistic learning impact self-esteem and social acceptance of high-ability students? (Johnson, Johnson, Taylor, 1993).

The method of cooperative learning described within this study by Johnson, et al. (1993) is called Learning Together (LT). The characteristics of the Learning Together cooperative method enables students to work together in groups of four to five individuals for the purpose of achieving a common goal. There is individual accountability because each student must demonstrate learning. LT also requires that students are taught group processing skills. Groups work on one worksheet together and turn that in to the teacher, receiving praise and rewards from the teacher.

High-ability students are defined within this study by Johnson, et al. (1993) as those who were in the top 25% in reading. Within the cooperative condition, students were told to work together as a group, to make sure everyone worked hard and mastered the material and that everyone gave their ideas and suggestions, listened to each other, share ideas and materials, ask each other questions and for help, and to praise each other and help each other. In contrast, within the individualistic condition, students were instructed to work on their own, avoid interaction with other students, work hard on the task, complete the task to the best of their ability, work quietly, ask the teacher for help, and check their progress with the teacher. The teacher praised and rewarded each student individually.

The achievement was measured by Johnson, et al. (1993) using 70 short answer and multiple choice questions, containing both recall questions and higher level reasoning questions. In addition, attitude was measured using 4 attitude scales (5-pt Likert-type scale). They measured self-esteem (belief that one is competent and worthwhile), cohesion (students belief that members of their class liked each other and were friends), cooperation among group members (students feelings about working cooperatively), and individualistic efforts (how well the students liked working individualistically).

The design of the study by Johnson, et al. (1993) was a post-test only control group design with two groups compared both of which were randomly assigned. There were 17 high ability fifth grade students in one cooperative learning science class and 17 high ability fifth grade students in one science class taught through traditional methods. The groups were stratified for gender and class. Teachers rotated between the two classrooms so each teacher taught both cooperative learning and traditional methods from

a script to ensure accuracy. Both teachers received thirty hours of training prior to the study. The students experienced six lessons, fifty-five minutes long each.

After the classes, achievement was measured through a test from the science curriculum book for both traditional and cooperative learning methods only at the end of the study. Researchers indicated the high ability students in the cooperative method had higher achievement than their high ability peers in the traditional method (Johnson, Johnson, Taylor, 1993). They also reported higher achievement occurred in the cooperative classroom for recall questions,  $p < .02$  as well as higher level questions,  $p < .09$ , although the mean difference between cooperative and traditional methods for higher level questions was slightly less than a two point difference (Johnson, Johnson, Taylor, 1993). Cooperative condition students performed better on the test and the academic self-esteem was higher than that of the individualistic condition students. They also felt a greater sense of cohesion and morale. Interestingly, the results also indicated a higher level of reasoning in the cooperative learning group.

Due to the post-test only design of this study by Johnson, et al. (1993), testing did not occur prior to the unit. Therefore, it is unknown what prior knowledge students had regarding science. If students were already knowledgeable about the content, then prior knowledge would be a confounding variable for the study. One aspect that helps to restore some internal variability of the results however is the use of a control group. In theory, both groups should have started out in the same place. Testing and retesting during the study would have made results from the study more reliable.

One strength of the study by Johnson, et al. (1993) was the fact that teachers rotated between the two classrooms so each teacher taught both LT cooperative learning

and traditional methods. This made it is less likely that individual teachers had an effect on the outcome of the study. In addition, included in the research was an experimental check which consisted of two research assistants observing each classroom to make sure everything was happening as it should (teacher was following the script, correct student perceptions of cooperative learning or individualistic learning, etc). This helped to ensure that the content has remained the same and so the students are reacting to the learning method, not the content.

Overall, the generalizability of the findings is somewhat weak. There was no racial information regarding the students, and all the participants came from a “middle-class” background, as identified by the researchers. Therefore, the findings are somewhat limited, as it is hard to tell who to use them for.

#### Combining Cooperative Learning and Individualized Instruction

Using a method that combines cooperative learning with individually programmed instruction, Slavin, Leavey and Madden (1984) call it TAI, or Team-Assisted Individualization. It is primarily designed to address the problems of programmed instruction by allowing students to manage the individualized program and creating a greater sense of motivation to complete their work rapidly and accurately because team recognition is provided based on the number of programmed units completed by team members each week and the accuracy of these units (Slavin, Leavey & Madden, 1984).

Within this eight week study by Slavin, et al. (1984), the researchers measured academic achievement for third, fourth and fifth grade classes participating in TAI. Five-hundred four students were involved in the study in a Maryland school district located in

the suburbs. Eighty percent of the students were white with fifteen percent of the students were black and five percent Asian-American. Seventeen percent of the students in the study required special assistance with speech or reading, and another six percent of the students were considered to have serious learning problems.

The research design of this study by Slavin, et al. (1984) was a true experimental pretest/posttest control group design. There were eighteen classes throughout six schools and the schools were randomly assigned to either cooperative learning or traditional methods. This random assignment allows for equal chance of being placed in either group. Each participating school had a third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade class involved in the study. Achievement in math was measured through a test before the study and a test after the study. The test to measure achievement was the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS).

Because the control groups in this study by Slavin, et al. (1984) were untreated, the possibility that the differences between the experimental and the control groups were due to the Hawthorne Effect or novelty effects cannot be ignored. Had the research been conducted for a longer period of time occurred, or used control groups that also received some sort of treatment, the results might have had stronger validity.

With that being said, there were some overall results that were conclusive. The findings showed that students learned significantly more through the TAI method than through traditional methods,  $p < .03$ . This study evaluating the TAI program clearly supports the conclusion that this method increases student achievement (as measured by the CTBS) more than traditional group-paced instruction (Slavin, Leavey & Madden, 1984). Significant differences in achievement favoring the TAI condition were found in



both studies. It appears that TAI is helpful in producing math achievement, behavioral ratings and student attitude gains for third, fourth and fifth grade suburban students in Maryland. African American students were not differentiated in this study so no specific conclusions can be made regarding achievement and ethnicity.

#### Numbered Heads Together with and Without Incentives

Numbered Heads Together (NHT) is another small group learning method using student teams. NHT is similar to another cooperative learning method called Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD). The protocol for STAD is students of mixed-ability levels, gender and ethnicity, are assigned to four-member learning teams. The lesson is taught and the students work in teams to try to master the material. Both NHT and STAD utilize heterogeneous groupings of students.

NHT begins by being placed in groups. There is one high achieving student, one low achieving student and two average achieving students on a learning team. Then, each member of each learning teams begin to count off from one to four, each member having a unique number. Students sit with their small team while the teacher conducts the lesson. The teacher gives a question to the class and students confer with their team. Student teams are to make sure that all students in their group understand the answer. The teacher then asks, for example, “how many threes know the answer?” The teacher then selects at random one of the students with the number three to respond. After the first student provides an answer, the teacher asks additional questions to students of that particular number asking for further details. All students that have responded correctly or that provided additional explanations receive recognition or are rewarded by the teacher. When NHT is used with incentives, the incentives are similar to rewards used in STAD.

Incentives in NHT include a variety of team certificates that are publicly displayed. The certificates are based on team averages.

In this next study however, Maheady, Michielli-Pendl, Harper, and Mallette (2006) did a study with sixth graders in New York City for the purpose of discovering achievement differences between Numbered Heads Together plus incentives and Numbered Heads Together without incentives. Researchers studied one chemistry class where the teaching methods were alternated between NHT plus incentives and NHT without incentives.

Out of the twenty-three students in the study by Maheady, et al. (2006), thirteen of the sixth grade students in the chemistry class were Mexican American and 10 were white. Eight of the students were English language learners and two were special needs. The same highly experienced teacher with 28 years experience also had experience teaching NHT and taught both versions of NHT.

The research design for this study was an A-B-BC-B-BC design (Maheady, et al., 2006). The Terra Nova achievement test was given four months before the study, revealing a mean in the 36th percentile for the class. To measure achievement during the study, one of the researchers and the teacher designed daily quizzes. They also designed a test to give at the beginning of the chemistry unit and at the end of the study. The quizzes and test were congruent with state learning standards.

Eighty-three percent of students received their highest grades when NHT plus incentives were used. Baseline scores after five daily chemistry quizzes averaged 72.4% prior to NHT when traditional methods were used. The mean for the class when NHT plus incentives were used was 89.2%, without incentives was a mean of 82% (Maheady,

et al., 2006). One possible reason for these results could be that the teacher displayed more enthusiasm for NHT with incentives resulting in more engagement for students and higher quiz scores as an outcome. It is also possible that students in this classroom had been exposed to competitiveness associated with traditional methods and thus responded more favorably to NHT plus incentives.

Overall, it appears that Maheady, et al. (2006) found that Numbered Heads Together with incentives for the sixth grade urban class was more beneficial for teaching chemistry than when Numbered Heads Together was used without incentives. Although 57% of the students in the study were Mexican American, the authors of the study did not consider impact on different ethnic groups. However, every student had higher achievement when Numbered Heads Together was used compared to traditional methods. Therefore, Mexican American and white students in this urban New York location benefited from Numbered Heads Together.

Effects of Cooperative and Individualistic Instruction on the Achievement of Handicapped, Regular and Gifted Students.

In this next quantitative study by Smith, Johnson and Johnson (1982), they focused on comparing Learning Together (LT) cooperative learning and traditional methods on the effect of academic achievement of academically handicapped, gifted and regular sixth grade students. There were fifty-five participants including seven academically handicapped, fourteen gifted and thirty-four “regular” ability students. The students were from middle class backgrounds and attended a school in the suburbs in the Midwest. Throughout this five day study, conservation and land use lessons were taught for 65 minutes in length in January. Four graduate students with a rater reliability of

100% checked to make sure teachers were using the methods properly.

There were two teachers also involved in the study by Smith, et al. (1982). They were randomly assigned to teach either cooperative learning or traditional methods. The random assignment means that each teacher had an equal chance in being selected to teach either method. Each teacher received thirty hours of training regarding how to teach the conditions, and participated in a five lesson pilot study where they practiced the procedures. The pilot occurred with another sixth grade class enabling the achievement test to be refined. Each teacher also had over seven years of teaching experience.

Smith, et al. (1982) measured achievement with a test that contained twenty questions and tested for six levels of understanding. However, they also tested for retention, liking for peers, perception that peer encourage and support academic learning, perception that peers accept and approve of one as a person, and self-esteem. The academic test was given a second time, four weeks after the study, in order to determine learning retention.

The results showed significant achievement for the students taught in the LT cooperative learning treatment group compared to traditional methods,  $p < .01$ . Moreover, the significance was for all student groups, academically handicapped, regular and gifted students. This particular study also found that the cooperative learning method increased peer acceptance for all three groups of students as well (Smith, et al., 1982).

The results of this study by Smith, et al. (1982) are not in an extremely wide range of ability levels. Also, there was no indication of race or ethnicity within the participants of this study. However, overall the internal validity in this static group comparison is quite strong in this study. The students were all stratified for gender and ability levels.

Also, the pre- and posttests were different tests so there was no testing validity issues.

Thirty hours of teacher training and the opportunity to work with a pilot study may have also contributed to the successful implementation and usage of Learning Together.

### Cooperative Instruction Combined with Advanced Organizers as Related to Self-Concept and Achievement

In this next study by Box and Little (2003) they look how the use of a Jigsaw cooperative learning approach incorporated with social studies materials presented in the form of advanced organizers could positively affect the self-concept and academic achievement of elementary school students. The Jigsaw cooperative learning method allows students to become very knowledgeable on a particular section of a reading assignment, and then individuals that read the same section meet together for discussion. Following this meeting with peers that read the same material, students then disperse to groups where each person is an expert on the particular section that they read. Students then work in groups with others that read different material and they teach each other the material that they had explicitly learned (Slavin, 1995).

In this quantitative quasi-experimental study by, five third grade social studies classes in a school in the suburbs located in the Southeast were selected. Each class was assigned 25 students. One class was used as the control class. They received traditional, large-group instruction techniques. The four other classes received Social studies instruction via the Jigsaw cooperative learning approach. One of the four different types of advanced organizers was randomly assigned to each group. Advanced Organizers are written materials that serve the function of facilitating the incorporation and retention of reading material (Box & Little, 2003).

The researchers used heterogeneous grouping, which is a type of distribution of students among various classrooms of a certain grade within a school. In this method, children of approximately the same age are placed in different classrooms in order to create a relatively even distribution of students of different abilities as well as different educational and emotional needs. Gifted children will be scattered throughout the various grade level classrooms rather than all together in one classroom (Box & Little, 2003).

Box and Little (2003) utilized a nonequivalent control group design and used three assessment instruments. One was the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale, which measured student reported self-concept with a pretest to posttest design. The next was the Teacher Inferred Self-Concept Scale, which measured the pre- to post assessments of students' self concepts' as reported by their classroom teachers. Finally, the researchers used a Social Studies Test based on the text used in the classrooms. This instrument assessed the pre and post social studies achievement of the students.

The findings from the Student reported self-concept pre & post test were that three of the four experimental classes gained in scores indicating student reported self-concept, the control scores declined. On the Teachers assessment of self-concept pre & post test three of the four experimental classes significantly gained in scores indicating teacher inferred self-concept, the control scores declined. Finally, on the Social Studies pre & post test, all four experimental classes gained in scores indicating academic achievement,  $p < .05$ , the control also gained,  $p < .05$ . Overall, the Jigsaw small group approach combined with advanced organizer was effective in improving the self-concept of students, and the academic achievement in social studies. Box and Little (2003)

suggest using small group cooperative instruction and advanced organizers to supplement conventional instruction.

When looking at the results for internal validity of this study by Box and Little (2003), due to the significant differences between the control and the experimental groups, the researchers suggest a hypothesis of high levels of motivation. Another possible issue that is unclear pertains to the pre and post tests. If they were the same, it could raise testing issues. These arise in studies that use both pre- and post tests and refers to becoming “test-wise” by having taken a pretest that is similar to the posttest. Finally, the study did not report ethnicity or socio-economic status. This negatively impacts the generalizability of the findings. Nonetheless, this study does show that the Jigsaw cooperative learning approach coupled with material in advanced organizers can positively impact academic achievement and self-concept.

#### Teaching Practices and Lesson Characteristics

In this final qualitative study by Emmer and Gerwels (2002), researchers noted individual accountability as part of successful lessons. The cooperative learning lessons used in this study were quiet diverse in their methods. Some were similar to Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) methods, while others seldom used group rewards or goals.

In this study by Emmer and Gerwels (2002), seven elementary schools in an urban area of the Southwest were used. The diverse students at these schools were mostly Mexican Americans, grades 2-6. Non-white student percentages at the schools were precisely 15, 22, 42, 46, 48, 92 and 99 percent. The selection of teachers for this study was made through nominations by school principals and university faculty. The criteria

for selection were that teachers had experience in the use of cooperative learning methods. Researchers did not indicate whether or not teachers were selected at random. Twenty-one teachers were chosen out of a pool of 38, and a total of 18 participated.

The data Emmer and Gerwels (2002) collected consisted of observations and interviews. Each class was observed on a minimum of three occasions. Observations occurred over the course of a year. The goal of the observations was to understand how the teachers used cooperative groups and how students participated in them. Observation notes included descriptions of activities and their formats, academic tasks, the nature of student work and interaction, group and room arrangements, routines, student on-task rates and other behaviors, and teacher directions, actions, and interventions. Researchers watched students working together and wrote notes about individual and group progress, as well as conducted teacher interviews. They categorized lessons and throughout observations, and counted how many students were engaged and how many were not. Teachers were observed by both researchers but not at the same time. Through these data collection strategies, researchers were able to monitor various levels of student engagement and achievement (Emmer & Gerwels, 2002).

Emmer and Gerwels (2002) found that when cooperative group work was used, accountability was important. When teachers reviewed work soon after it was completed it helped to keep students on task and promoted engagement and the completion of assignments. Another important finding in this study showed that student engagement was lessened if teachers did not interact with student groups during cooperative group work. Teacher interaction with student groups seemed to help students stay engaged. The researchers suggest to facilitate this, teachers must move throughout the groups.



Another finding from this study to consider is that researchers found that nine of the thirteen most successful lessons had manipulative materials for students (Emmer & Gerwels, 2002).

One issue with the study by Emmer and Gerwels (2002) that affects credibility is that there did not seem to be any level of consistent or prolonged engagement and observations. Classes were observed at least three times, but some classrooms were observed five times. The length of observation times also varied considerably between classrooms. The fact that there are differences in the amount of time that classrooms were observed seems to be a confounding variable in what the researchers discovered.

Occasionally the Emmer and Gerwels (2002) acted as participant observers and interacted with the students, which is a confounding variable. This interaction could have increased student engagement or performance in particular lessons that researchers were trying to study. Researchers might have had a bias toward the lesson that students were studying if they participated with the students. Also, by not approaching the research with an appropriate level of subjectivity, the researchers cannot monitor their own developing constructions. Nonetheless, although specific measurements of achievement were not tested in this qualitative study, it appears that group work was successful in promoting student engagement in this study when individual accountability was used and teachers were involved in interacting with all student groups (Emmer & Gerwels, 2002).

### Cooperative Learning Summary

This body of research explores the use of cooperative learning strategies to promote learning in an equitable and democratic way. Cooperative learning is the most endorsed learning method by students regardless of ethnicity or gender (Ellison et al.,

2005). Students preferred cooperative learning significantly more than competitive and individualistic learning. Johnson, Johnson, and Taylor (1993) also found that high ability students in the cooperative learning method had higher achievement than their high ability peers in the traditional method. Cooperative condition students performed better on the test and the academic self-esteem was higher than that of the individualistic condition students. They also felt a greater sense of cohesion and morale. Interestingly, the results also indicated a higher level of reasoning in the cooperative learning group.

Researchers Slavin, Leavey and Madden, (1984) also found significant differences in achievement favoring the cooperative learning condition. Math achievement, behavioral ratings and student attitude all increased within the cooperative learning condition. Maheady, et al. (2006) found similar results with a cooperative learning and incentives program for urban sixth graders as well.

Smith, et al. (1982) found significant achievement for the academically handicapped, regular and gifted students who utilized cooperative learning. Smith, et al. (1982) also found that the cooperative learning method increased peer acceptance for all three groups of students as well. Box and Little (2003) found that using small group cooperative instruction and advanced organizers improved the self-concept of students, and the academic achievement in social studies. Finally, Emmer and Gerwels (2002) found that when cooperative group work was used, accountability was important. When teachers reviewed work soon after it was completed it helped to keep students on task and promoted engagement and the completion of assignments. Another important finding in this study showed that student engagement was lessened if teachers did not interact with student groups during cooperative group work.

## Culturally Relevant Education

As Osborne (1996) asserts, "...quality schooling for all is a necessary condition for an ongoing participatory democracy" (p. 286). Culturally relevant education is a collection of pedagogy, curriculum and practices that rests on several propositions: students must experience success, students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the existing order (Ladson-Billings, 1992). This is a means of teaching and learning that is cross-cultural, multiethnic and democratic. Not only does it include culturally relevant pedagogy utilized by the teacher as the framework for their practice, but it also includes the curriculum that is taught to the students, no matter what ethnicity or culture they belong to. This final collection of research will briefly look at one of the most important aspects of a democratic classroom, that it is a successful and authentic education for all.

### Group Norms, Threat, and Children's Racial Prejudice

Within this first quantitative study by Neasdale, Maass, Durkin and Griffiths (2005), they look at group exclusion and inclusion students ages 7-9. Of particular concern was the issue of whether a group norm of out-group prejudice would influence group members to display prejudice (i.e., feelings of dislike or hatred) toward members of ethnic or racial out-groups. In addition, the study examined whether threat from an out-group toward the in-group affected the latter's ethnic attitudes and whether the impact of in-group norms was interactively influenced by out-group threat. In this study, group norm is defined as the expectations that particular groups have concerning the appropriate attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to be displayed by group members (Neasdale,

et al., 2005).

Included in this study by Neasdale, et al. (2005) were 197 White Anglo-Australian boys and girls, 94 from Year 2 and 103 from Year 4. All the children attended two elementary schools that served the same lower-middle class community and were 7-9 years old. The children indicated their liking for the out-group (either Anglo-Australian or Pacific Islander) and the in-group (Anglo-Australian), as well as the extent to which they wished to change membership from their in-group to the out-group.

This study by Neasdale, et al. (2005) had a 2 (age: 7 vs. 9) X 2 (out-group threat: present vs. absent) X 2 (group norm: inclusion vs. exclusion) X 2 (out-group race: same vs. different) factorial between-subjects design. At each age level, the children were randomly allocated into the Threat X Group X Norm X Out-Group Race conditions, with approximately equal numbers of boys and girls in each condition. The method consisted of a set of photos that was collected for use in representing the race of the in-group and out-group in the main study. The children participated in a drawing contest and were then asked to select their “team” to continue the competition. The children were manipulated to choose according to group norm and status.

Overall, the findings indicated that children’s prejudice was influenced by in-group norms as well as by out group threat (Neasdale, et al., 2005). However, when both factors were present in a situation, they exert an interactive effect on children’s prejudice that differs according to the age of the children. The findings also indicated that whereas children do show intergroup biases, they appear to be predicated on the nature of the relations between groups rather than on race or ethnicity, per se. However, race or ethnicity does appear to affect children’s willingness to change groups.

When looking at the internal validity of these findings by Neasdale, et al. (2005), one thing that could impact the results is an experimental treatment diffusion. This is in essence, becoming influenced by others and adopting their views. This could have occurred because all the students came from the same classes and there seemed to be no attempt made at preventing this. However, because of the nature of what was studied, how students influence each other, this seems to not be an issue.

#### Cooperative Learning on Academic Achievement in African American Males

Though this paper has addressed successful cooperative learning methods as a strategy for democratic classrooms and learning, these next three studies specifically address research on using cooperative learning methods with students of color. In this next study by Wilson-Jones and Caston (2004), they looked at the effects of cooperative learning on the academic achievement of elementary African American males. This qualitative study took place in rural Mississippi. Researchers interviewed 16 3-6<sup>th</sup> grade students six times at half an hour each. This occurred over a three month period during the 2002-2003 academic school year. In the interviews, students were asked to describe their feelings about school, teachers, parents and themselves.

The sessions were tape recorded and then transcribed and coded into reoccurring themes. By coding the responses from interviews, the researchers stated that the preferred method of classroom learning was cooperative learning. This was indicated by students stating they preferred to learn by working in groups with limited interaction with teachers. From this, Wilson-Jones and Caston (2004) generalized that cooperative learning was the best way for these particular students to gain academic achievement.

One issue with the validity of the claims made by Wilson-Jones and Caston

(2004) is that the researchers did not evaluate academic achievement using testing instruments. Therefore, it is unknown what effect cooperative learning actually had on academic achievement of these particular male African American students. Another issue with the specific interview questions that were asked was that they seemed leading and biased in assuming that cooperative learning would promote academic success. The researchers asked many questions specifically on working in groups. Finally, it is unclear if the same eight questions were asked every time or if new questions were asked for each of the interview sessions.

Though there is a certain level of dependability based on the results of many other successful cooperative learning studies, these findings by Wilson-Jones and Caston (2004) seemed unsupported and vague. Unfortunately, little reporting was made in the findings section of this study as to specific data used in the conclusions. Overall, it is clear that the 16 African American males in this study prefer cooperative learning, though the implications about academic achievement are not supported.

#### Effect of Cooperative Learning on Students of Color

In one quantitative study, Vaughan (2002) looks at how cooperative learning affects students of color outside the United States. In this one-group pretest/posttest designed research, the study measured achievement gains of black students that were taught through Slavin's (1978) Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD), where students of mixed-ability levels, gender and ethnicity are assigned to four-member learning teams. There were a total of 21 participants in one fifth-grade classroom in Bermuda. Eighteen of the students were black, two students were from the Azores, and one Indian student participated.

In the study by Vaughan (2002), the lesson is taught and the students work in teams to try to master the material. Treatment was administered over a 12-week period, and differences were measured by comparing pretest and posttest scores using a one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) repeated measures design. Students were prepped for 1 hour a day for 1 week about what cooperative learning is, the process and its importance. The students both had discussions and used practice activities to learn about the method. The parents were also prepped and informed of the benefits and process, etc. This was to help students and parents feel more comfortable during the process.

After the preparations in week 1, students were administered the pretest (CAT math sections) and the Attitudes test. Students were then grouped heterogeneously into four groups of 4 and one group of 5. Base scores were then assigned to students on the basis of their abilities and past performance. A classroom teacher (a doctoral candidate at a Midwestern university) who was very experienced in the use of cooperative learning taught the math curriculum using STAD. Groups were changed every 2 weeks so students could work with others and on Fridays, students were given individual quizzes on the material they had learned that week. Scores were tabulated using individual student's acquired scores along with their base scores to come up with points for each group. Winning teams were rewarded in class and were also recognized by the entire school during assemblies. The students took the same test as the pretest at the end of weeks 5, 9, and 13 (Vaughan, 2002).

Results from the study showed that student achievement gains occurred in mathematical computation, ( $p < .05$ ). Achievement in concepts and applications was also considered significant, ( $p < .05$ ), where achievement in mathematical concepts and

applications included problem solving, number sentences, geometry and measurement (Vaughn, 2002).

Without the use of a control group as a comparison, it is difficult to determine the extent that STAD was involved in achievement outcomes in this study by Vaughan (2002). It is possible that the expertise of the teacher may have had an effect on the positive achievement that occurred in the fifth grade classroom. In addition, since the California Achievement Test was given four times, the repetitive testing may have allowed students to become familiar with questions on the test, contributing to positive achievement gains. However, despite the internal validity issues, these findings are similar to other studies on the positive effects of cooperative learning with non-white students (Wilson-Jones, 2004 and Johnson & Johnson, 1993).

#### Cooperative Learning and Race Relations

In this next quantitative study, Slavin and Oickle (1981) conducted a twelve week study in rural Maryland for the purpose of measuring achievement of African American and white students when learning through STAD. The 230 participants were in sixth through eighth grade English classes.

Four classes used STAD with a total of 84 students and 30 students were African American. The academic achievement of students taught through STAD was compared to the achievement of one hundred forty-six students taught through traditional methods, of those 48 were African American. Four teachers taught both STAD and traditional methods. One other teacher taught just a traditional class (Slavin & Oickle, 1981).

Slavin and Oickle (1981) measured academic achievement through the Hoyum-Sanders Junior High School English Test, which was a standardized test. The



standardized test covered language skills including capitalization, punctuation and English usage. Standardized testing was used before and after the study. Testing before the study enables researchers to discover students' prior knowledge. Testing after the study allows researchers to determine achievement gains hopefully made during the study.

African American students in cooperative groups performed as well as white students in language arts over a twelve week period. Testing after the study for STAD classes resulted in scores for African American students at 74.12 and white students at 75.04. There were not significant achievement gains in the traditional classes. African American students in the traditional group scored 69.53 compared to whites in the traditional group at 76.32 (Slavin & Oickle, 1981).

One variable that Slavin and Oickle (1981) did not seem to be accounted for was the effect the teachers may have on the results. If classes are taught by different teachers, the teachers themselves may attribute to the differences in learning and engagement. A teacher's training and experience may have an effect on student learning and engagement and thus, cause a change in the results possible.

The Slavin and Oickle (1981) study showed that cooperative learning had a substantial impact on the academic achievement for African American students in punctuation, capitalization and English usage. This study reiterates the other findings that cooperative learning is a successful method for students of color (Vaughn, 2002; Wilson-Jones, 2004).

#### Effects of a Hands-On Multicultural Education Program

In this next quantitative study, Kim, Clarke-Ekong & Ashmore (1999) examined

the effects of a groundbreaking educational program built around a cooperative and active learning mode. Researchers looked at how much students' knowledge concerning the content of the program (human origins) improved as well as any changes to their self-awareness.

The program Kim, et al. (1999) utilized provided a hands-on approach that educated students about the origin of humans and the value of social and cultural diversity. This is called the CHOCD program (Center for Human Origin and Cultural Diversity) and is used as a model for new generations interested in cultural education. It is based on a learning-to-learn model. Students work in small groups in a kinesthetic environment, discovering solutions to questions that are posed.

The overall purpose of the research by Kim, et al. (1999) was to see if this form of hands-on and cooperative learning was effective in meeting the goals the program was set up to achieve. These goals were: Enhance students' content knowledge about human fossil records and value of biological variation and the characteristics that are common to all humans; and to influence their self-awareness about human origin.

The program used anthropologically based information with a purpose to extend knowledge of the origins of others and how differences are important to survival. Students encountered these issues at three different learning stations. The first station presented students with history of fossilization. They worked together to assemble fossil casts from oldest to youngest. After the assemblage, students engaged in discussion about what they noticed in the morphology of humans over time. Finally, students placed pictured stickers on a map, which reinforced the importance of Africa. The second station interacted students with fossils in a museum-like setting. They learned about geological

dating, functional dental morphology and proportions of skeletons. In the third station, students were presented with information about skin color variation (Kim, et al., 1999).

The stations addressed sensitive subjects. Therefore, students may have held emotions and attitudes that contradicted what they learned. Schools are powerful tools for reinforcing or critiquing attitudes from the home. The researchers stated that it is mandatory for children to "...acquire this foundation [concepts pertaining to human origin] to be able to function in our global society" (Kim et al., 1999, p.3).

The participants in the study by Kim, et al. (1999) were 187 students from sixth to twelfth grade. There were 80 males and 106 females. Pre and post questionnaires were constructed to measure students' development of content knowledge, with three questions given for each station's content. The pre-questionnaire was given a week before the program to assess prior knowledge. In addition, students were given four Likert-type questions to test their self-awareness. These questions were: "1. Knowing about the places that humans came from will help me better understand people today. 2. Understanding why people have different skin color is helpful in understanding people. 3. Knowing that there are similarities and differences will help me get along better with other. 4. My skin color is just as important as a skin color different from mine" (Kim et al., 1999, p.4).

The results of the content knowledge questions indicated significant learning improvements from all three learning stations. The lowest score of the three stations was station 3 (skin color). The authors emphasized that it was highly predictable that skin color would yield the lowest overall improvement in score because of the abstract nature of the information and because issues involving skin color are politically and emotionally

saturated. Thus, the researchers felt this response difference may have been due to apprehension in overcoming previously held stereotypes. The results of the self-awareness scores demonstrated a significant progress,  $t(172) = 5.096$  [less than] .05 (Kim, et al., 1999).

One issue with the study by Kim, et al. (1999) was that the researchers did not fully measure the long-term effects of the program with prolonged and substantial observations. It is not known whether students would retain the specific factual information they learned or the underlying social and political connotations and self-awareness. In terms of generalizability, it is difficult to know who to apply the findings to as the researchers did not identify which students improved the most. In other words, the study did not say whether certain ethnicities learned more about human origin than others.

Overall, this research showed a well-planned, structured form of cooperative learning. Students could look at culture and origin from a historical and scientific manner while also realizing the social idiosyncrasies that came about through ignorance of skin color (Kim et al., 1999). The collaboration with peers not only helped students with the scientific endeavors, such as assembling fossils, but with understanding and contextualizing racist attitudes about human origins. It was also discovered that the more abstract an issue was (such as politics), the lower the improvement between students' pre and post scores. Researchers believed that more time was needed for students to absorb and integrate the knowledge of abstract issues. Hence, by discussing these abstract issues, students can have more time to absorb such information.

The Influence of Teacher Practices the Encourage Cognitive Engagement

In this final quantitative study by Taylor, Pearson, Peterson & Rodriguez (2003), the research looked at methods that encouraged students to be in control of their own learning. The researchers investigated how teachers could create cognitive engagement in literacy, specifically with high-poverty students (Taylor et al., 2003).

The CIERA (Center for the Improvement of Early Reading achievement) School Change study was created to investigate the efficiency of a school-based reading improvement model. Taylor, et al. (2003) picked out four components of this model: Supporting higher level thinking; encouraging independent use of word-recognition and comprehension; student support stance during literacy and promoting active involvement. For the purpose of this focus on critical thinking, the focus is primarily on how teachers supported higher-level thinking.

The study by Taylor, et al. (2003) was done in the 2000-2001 school year. The nine schools that participated were all high poverty as 70- 95% of the students were on subsidized lunches. There were 67%- 91% of the students who were of minority groups. A total of 88 teachers and 792 students were participants. Out of the students, an even distribution of low, middle and high level reading ability were included in this study.

The observers of the study by Taylor, et al. (2003) were retired teachers and graduate students of a literacy program. They were trained in the CIERA Classroom Observation Scheme. The observation system was part note taking and part quantitative coding. Several steps were taken to ensure the validity of the codes. Each observer had to meet a standard of at least 80% agreement with a standard set of codes. There was a research team to compare codes of five-minute observations. The mean agreement among the research team ranged from 82% to 95% through the 12 observations.

Taylor, et al. (2003) noted that they observed little use of higher-level questioning related to text. They also saw that narrative text was more prevalent than informational text. Telling and recitation were common interaction styles. Modeling and coaching were much less prevalent. Telling was most common with the least accomplished teachers. Students were also assigned passive reading more often than active responding. “Even modest levels of occurrence of these key variables, such as coaching and modeling or higher-level questioning, were associated with substantial growth in student achievement” (Taylor et al., 2003, p.16).

Effective teaching practices were recorded as they related to student improvement. One such method was teachers teaching comprehension strategies instead of telling students information. Another tactic that led to greater comprehension was small-group instruction. It was also helpful when teachers furthered student responses by asking more questions and extending thoughts instead of merely accepting a short answer and moving on. One teacher who proved effective in improving students’ reading ability coached small groups of struggling readers as the rest of the class were engaged in other activities (Taylor, et al., 2003).

A limit of the generalizability of the study was that it “...involved schools that were engaged in a reform project that emphasized implementing researched-based reading practices” (Taylor et al., 2003, p. 21). Teachers also were provided with data concerning their school’s reading methods, which may have altered their implementation of the practices. Finally, the researchers’ observations were gathered from three hours in each classroom, which is not a prolonged and substantial engagement within the field. This would not provide a full picture of the reading instruction, however, the information

gathered brought forth many examples of effective reading practices.

The main finding of the study was that the more high-level questions a teacher asked, the more growth the students experienced. “At least two-thirds of the HLQ teacher emphasized character interpretation and connections to experience, and they focused more on thematic elements and student leadership in discussions than did LLQ teachers” (Taylor et al., 2003, p. 20). Hence effective teachers allowed active involvement in literacy activity, they expected students to hold their own discussions, and they used coaching instead of telling to bring about student responsibility in learning.

#### Culturally Relevant Education Summary

This final collection of research discussed one of the most important aspects of a democratic classroom, that it is a successful and authentic education for all. Neasdale, et al. (2005) found that children’s prejudice was influenced by in-group norms as well as by out group threat. The findings also indicated that whereas children do show intergroup biases, they appear to be predicated on the nature of the relations between groups rather than on race or ethnicity, per se. Hence classroom climate and norms established within the learning community can influence children’s prejudice and biases.

Cooperative learning can help to establish equitable norms within the classroom and is also highly successful for the academic achievement of elementary students of color, according to Wilson-Jones and Caston (2004). The research of Vaughn (2002) also demonstrate similar results for students of color outside the United States. Finally, Slavin and Oickle (1981) indicate that cooperative learning had a substantial impact on the academic achievement for African American students in punctuation, capitalization and English usage.

Kim, et al. (1999) found that by utilizing a hands-on and cooperative learning multicultural education program, significant learning took place. Students indicated a growth of positive self-awareness and overcame previously held stereotypes about biological variation and human origins. By working with others to explore culture and origin from a historical and scientific perspective, students were able to understand and contextualize racist attitudes about human origins. In addition to exploring abstract and culturally relevant topics through cooperative hands-on learning, another strategy that results in positive growth is high-level questioning (Taylor et al., 2003). By asking students to interpret and connect to the experiences of others as well as expecting students to hold their own discussions, students took a greater responsibility in their own learning and developed greater empathy for others.

#### Summary

Chapter three was a review of the research about democratic classroom strategies. The findings of the studies were summarized and analyzed, based on the conclusions provided. The research was reviewed to examine successful strategies within the five major themes indicated. Chapter four outlines the summary of the findings from this chapter with respect to the five major themes within democratic classrooms; political socialization, moral development, classroom management, cooperative learning and culturally relevant education. Within chapter four, classroom implications and suggestions for future research are also considered.



## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

### Introduction

Chapter one examined the assertion that democratic classroom strategies are good teaching practices which stem from democratic principals and inform learning and teaching to create a diverse and equitable learning community within the classroom. Through analyzing democratic classroom strategies as found within the five major themes, provides a research base and critical lens to use as a starting point with which one can build a strong and just community in classrooms to support learning. Not only do all students deserve a just and equitable education, but this analysis provides the opportunity to collect and synthesize various perspectives on democratic classrooms to look for holistic strategies that will create effective learning in elementary aged students.

Chapter two explores the understanding that democratic classrooms come from a diverse background, one that is reinterpreted just as much as democracy itself is. Educators throughout history struggled with questions that continue to be debated today; what is the purpose of schooling? What should we teach? What does it mean to be American? Through this brief history of democratic classrooms, underscored is the political implications of education for democracy. These implications suggest that the narrow, and often ideologically conservative conception of citizenship embedded in many efforts to teach for democracy, reflects not arbitrary choices but rather political choices with political consequences. Democratic classrooms, as found connected to Social Studies curriculums, character education, democratic classroom meetings, group learning, and culturally relevant pedagogy, and many other directions, are heavily influenced by the history of diversity and the growth of democracy.

Chapter three reviewed the research of democratic classrooms. The research reviewed in chapter three was organized into five major themes: political socialization, moral development, classroom management, cooperative learning and culturally relevant education. Each of these studies were summarized and analyzed, based on the conclusions provided. The research was reviewed to examine successful strategies for learning within democratic classrooms.

Chapter four is the concluding chapter of this paper. This chapter revisits the research focus that democratic classroom strategies are good teaching practices which stem from democratic principals and inform learning and teaching to create a diverse and equitable learning community within the classroom. This chapter also uses a summary of the findings from the initial review in chapter three to provide specific effective democratic classroom strategies, implications for classroom practice and suggestions for further research.

### Summary of Findings

Classrooms in the United States hold every conceivable combination of cultures, values, and family structures. Democratic classroom strategies are good teaching practices which stem from democratic principals and inform learning and teaching to create a diverse and equitable learning community. However, these strategies are diverse primarily because the nature of their underlying beliefs about democracy and education differ. Thus, five themes are analyzed: political socialization, moral development, classroom management, cooperative learning and culturally relevant education. Though this range of perspectives that contribute to democratic classroom strategies provides sufficient focus for studying educational efforts with democratic aims, the concept of

democracy is broad and reaches far beyond educative purposes. However, this spectrum of research will provide a sufficient context to interrogate and integrate learning within democratic classroom strategies.

### Political Socialization

Within the theme of political socialization in elementary education research, several successful strategies emerge for learning within a democratic classroom community. Meixel and Haller's (1973) results established that schooling may heighten children's beliefs that as adults, they will be able to influence the political process, but that these beliefs result from generalizing similar beliefs about the school itself and from specific factual knowledge concerning the political process. In the research by Bickmore (2001), a further look at the functioning of schools helped to isolate specific elements that were required in the political socialization process of elementary students. Successful democratic functioning schools included critical reflection, decision-making, and autonomous action by the students.

From the research by Obenchain (1998), several more democratic elements found within classrooms were analyzed. In classrooms where democratic classroom strategies were present, such as providing student choice, shared responsibility, shared decision-making, and deliberate opportunities for student civic participation, students were beginning to accept more responsibility for their immediate community. This assertion points to the climate that the teacher set in the classroom (allowing and encouraging students to become important stakeholders in decisions that are important to them) as the cause. Schultz (2007) also demonstrated the success of the above democratic classroom strategies within an urban elementary school.

Finally, the research of Epstein and Oyler (2008) isolated several more basic justice-oriented classroom practices utilized within a case study urban classroom. These strategies included student-led decision making, the discussion of multiple viewpoints including interviews, the building of content, conceptual, and socio-historical understandings of identified problems, the development and utilization of activist or community organizing skills, building community advocacy through ties of solidarity with others, and student reflection and evaluation of their process and outcomes.

### Moral Development

Within the theme of moral development in elementary education research, several successful strategies emerge for learning within a democratic classroom community. One character education program studied by Leming (2000) indicated that by utilizing an overarching curriculum, that is, one that integrates character education with academics, students demonstrate higher levels of ethical understanding. Through the combination of literature organized around seven universal ethical values (courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty and love), specific lesson plans and continual revisiting of subject matter, students also demonstrated decreased racial/ethnic prejudice, ethnocentrism and improved conduct.

The curriculum used in the study by Leming (2000) focuses on the “fixed” values product or outcome of the program. Alternatively, Andrews and Martin (1995) focus on a social values curriculum that is a blend between a product approach and a process approach. The successful strategies researched were: learning classroom routines, Dialogue Journals (students write daily reflections on experiences in their own lives related to discussions in class from current events or literature. Teachers and classmates

can write back in response to ideas and thoughts), working in learning teams (students work collaboratively on chosen topics), literature circles, read-alouds, action research projects, and school/community projects. Overall, the students showed an increase in decision-making skills, communication, cooperation, and moral thinking skills as observed through field notes, recordings and student work.

Further research of a similar social skills program by Richardson, et al. (2009) revealed positive results for the socialization and integration of students with and without disabilities as well. The specific strategies used for teaching were storytelling, bibliotherapy, relaxation, modeling, coaching, behavior rehearsal, role playing, verbal mediation, creative expression, creative visualization, cooperative learning, and transfer learning (Richardson et al. (2009). Modeling was also supported by the research of Sieber, et al. (1970) as positively influencing students ability to express uncertainty. Finally, in the research by Klockow (2008), social interaction and dialogue is also supported as promoting moral development as a democratic classroom strategy. Throughout the research, various strategies emerged: establishing norms; having a voice; expectations; reflection; and accountability. These strategies allow for the student to develop not only individually, but become more socially capable of maintaining a democratic learning community.

### Classroom Management

Throughout the research regarding classroom management, the researchers found various approaches and results from classroom management strategies which influence its impact on democratic classrooms. To start with, Dunbar and Taylor (1982) found that although children at various grade levels perceive the teacher similarly in the area of

formal authority, they view the teacher's informal authority less positively as they move through the elementary grades. First-graders are more likely to give enthusiastic compliance to their teachers, while sixth-graders must be shown by the actions of their teachers that their teachers are helpful, keep promises, and do indeed like their students (Dunbar & Taylor, 1982). Furthermore, Larkin (1975) asserts that there are positive relationships between the task orientation of the teacher and classroom morale. Thus, not only does the age of the student influence the classroom climate, but how the teacher legitimates their power also matters. Larkin (1975) indicates that teachers should try to remain task oriented, focus on the needs of their students and utilize high levels of expressiveness to maintain high classroom morale.

Researchers Beattie and Olley (1977) indicate other positive influences on classroom climate are the use of teacher praise, acceptance of pupils' ideas and absence of criticism to obtain measures of warmth within the classroom. Similar to these findings are those of Chiu and Tulley (1997). They assert that regardless of grade level, gender, or academic achievement, the most preferred teacher discipline method was the Confronting-Contracting approach. This approach emphasizes student participation and joint decision-making. Most students at these age and grade levels would likely consider an approach that granted them the voice in decisions that directly affect them an attractive one.

Within a democratic classroom, the focus on friendships and unity or cohesiveness with others must be maintained, because according to Lewis (1996), that is where the will to solve conflicts originates. Lewis (1996) also maintains that predominantly group oriented lessons, work time and playtime contributes as well. The

findings of the researchers Harrist and Bradley (2003) further indicate that students liked each other more at the end of the school year when a whole-class intervention strategy was utilized. This allowed all students to utilize a relative level of responsibility in maintaining their own classroom climate. This level of self awareness and responsibility for the classroom climate is also supported by the research by Gathercoal and Nimmo (2002). They also assert that in order for students to become responsible citizens they must be given responsibility within the classroom.

### Cooperative Learning

This body of research explores the use of cooperative learning strategies to promote learning in an equitable and democratic way. Cooperative learning is the most endorsed learning method by students regardless of ethnicity or gender (Ellison et al., 2005). Students preferred cooperative learning significantly more than competitive and individualistic learning. Johnson, Johnson, and Taylor (1993) also found that high ability students in the cooperative learning method had higher achievement than their high ability peers in the traditional method. Cooperative condition students performed better on the test and the academic self-esteem was higher than that of the individualistic condition students. They also felt a greater sense of cohesion and morale. Interestingly, the results also indicated a higher level of reasoning in the cooperative learning group.

Researchers Slavin, Leavey and Madden, (1984) also found significant differences in achievement favoring the cooperative learning condition. Math achievement, behavioral ratings and student attitude all increased within the cooperative learning condition. Maheady, et al. (2006) found similar results with a cooperative learning and incentives program for urban sixth graders as well.

Smith, et al. (1982) found significant achievement for the academically handicapped, regular and gifted students who utilized cooperative learning. Smith, et al. (1982) also found that the cooperative learning method increased peer acceptance for all three groups of students as well. Box and Little (2003) found that using small group cooperative instruction and advanced organizers improved the self-concept of students, and the academic achievement in social studies. Finally, Emmer and Gerwels (2002) found that when cooperative group work was used, accountability was important. When teachers reviewed work soon after it was completed it helped to keep students on task and promoted engagement and the completion of assignments. Another important finding in this study showed that student engagement was lessened if teachers did not interact with student groups during cooperative group work.

#### Culturally Relevant Education

This final collection of research discussed strategies within one of the most important aspects of a democratic classroom, that it is a successful and authentic education for all. Neasdale, et al. (2005) found that children's prejudice was influenced by in-group norms as well as by out group threat. The findings also indicated that whereas children do show intergroup biases, they appear to be predicated on the nature of the relations between groups rather than on race or ethnicity, per se. Hence classroom climate and norms established within the learning community can influence children's prejudice and biases.

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Kim, et al. (1999) found that by utilizing a hands-on and cooperative learning multicultural education program, significant learning took place. Students indicated a growth of positive self-awareness and overcame previously held stereotypes about biological variation and human origins. By working with others to explore culture and origin from a historical and scientific perspective, students were able to understand and contextualize racist attitudes about human origins. In addition to exploring abstract and culturally relevant topics through cooperative hands-on learning, another strategy that results in positive growth is high-level questioning (Taylor et al., 2003). By asking students to interpret and connect to the experiences of others as well as expecting students to hold their own discussions, students took a greater responsibility in their own learning and developed greater empathy for others.

#### Classroom Implications

Although John Dewey promoted democracy in education, this has been difficult to achieve throughout United States history (Slavin, et al., 1985). The research utilized throughout this paper has offered many strategies that are conducive to learning in an equitable and democratic manner. The underlying goals within the context of political socialization are aligned with those of democratic classrooms. In a democratic society, citizenship participation is based on informed decision making. Not only do schools hold the potential to develop realistic political expectations in its elementary school students,

but they also develop political efficacy (Miexel & Haller, 1973). However, Bickmore (2001) cautions with her research that each element of citizenship education is critical. Citizens can not just be informed, they must know what to do with that knowledge. Thus, she asserts a balance of *building* and *modeling* a democratic community, as well as inclusive critical reflection and authority sharing. To do this however, the cultural and political goals must be explicit and agreed upon by all individuals included in the democratic classroom community (Bickmore, 2001). The teacher of a democratic classroom must be clear about their overarching goals and work towards a goal-alignment with other administrative powers within the school to create a unified message to the students, parents and community and more effective learning.

Within the classroom, Obenchain (1998) discovered with her research that by providing many opportunities to use the democratic and community-focused knowledge, skills, and attitudes in and outside of the classroom in a structured, deliberate and repeated manner, the classroom community strengthened and become responsible to each other. Some other aspects that Schultz (2007) emphasized in his classroom are a student-determined real-life curriculum, freedom and trust within the classroom. From these strategies, motivation, academic achievement and sense of social justice all increased. The strategies described by Schultz (2007) strongly embodied democratic principals; freedom, respect, active participation, equality, trust, and social capitol. These democratic foundations not only fostered responsible, participatory and justice oriented learning, but they also brought forth tremendous academic and emotional learning, as well.

Finally, in the research by Epstein & Oyler (2008), the basic justice-oriented classroom practices utilized within the case study included student-led decision making,

the discussion of multiple viewpoints including interviews, the building of content, conceptual, and socio-historical understandings of identified problems, the development and utilization of activist or community organizing skills, building community advocacy through ties of solidarity with others, and student reflection and evaluation of their process and outcomes. The classroom in this case study demonstrated that people can understand and address social problems in their complexity when they are explored in collaboration with others and all voices are valued.

Overall, the political socialization literature and research was intended specifically for civic or citizenship education purposes. However, through teaching about democracy, the methods have become innately democratic in their nature. Thus, these strategies utilized within this research in effect mirrors the structure of our society at large (to the best of its abilities within a system of schooling). Democratic management teaches students to critically think through situations, weigh options, review expectations held by their community and by themselves, and to make good decisions.

But a democratic society is not only based on social equity—its citizens are also expected to behave responsibly, respect other people's diversities, accept what is fair and just, and show concern for the common good by helping others. The several character education programs looked at within this paper suggest that any curriculum that focuses on the affective and the cognitive qualities of a person, must cut across all aspects of the daily classroom life (Leming, 2000). Furthermore, there must be a meaningful context for the thinking through and daily application of the democratic learning that has been discussed, examined, debated, and instigated (Andrews & Martin, 1995). As Kohlberg and Lickona (1987) furthers, without choices in the classroom and the opportunity to

discuss the dilemmas inherent in any problem-solving approach to controversy, children cannot connect a first-hand experience with the meanings of trust, the purpose of honor, or the usefulness of loyalty.

Similar conclusions were found in the study by Richardson, et al. (2009). Though the sample was specialized, the findings indicated that the social skills the students with disabilities developed from this integrative approach resulted in positive social experiences both in the school and community. This can yield a sense of self efficacy or a feeling of being in control of ones own emotions.

Dialogue is a critical aspect of democratic classrooms, but for moral development and learning to occur, students must reason and explore their uncertainty through dialogue (Kohlberg, 1987). However, classroom norms can inhibit the safety and security needed to do this. As Sieber et al. (1970) asserted, students were more likely to express uncertainty if the classroom norms indicated it as a socially positive practice. Thus, the classroom norms determine the level of dialogue and critical thinking that occurs (Klockow, 2008). Both the students and teacher must use the power of dialogue to construct negotiated meanings about their democratic classroom community with each other.

Democratic classrooms must be operated by both teacher and students. This is supported, in part, by Dunbar and Taylor (1982). Their findings indicate that the older children get, the more autonomous they become and must be shown by the actions of their teachers that their teachers are respectful and will keep promises. Teachers who were warm and involved in their students learning, experience a more cohesive classroom climate (Larkin, 1975). Beattie and Olley (1977) also find that in classroom climates

where teachers are warm, utilize praise, and demonstrate an acceptance of pupils' ideas, they have associated the use of democratic procedures. This results in less control over student activities and the encouragement of student initiative. Overall, this is also an approach that students prefer (Chiu & Tulley, 1997). By emphasizing student participation, joint decision-making and student-voice in decisions that directly affect them, student engagement will increase, and so will learning.

Conflict has been an ongoing theme in research pertaining to democratic classrooms. Primarily because a democracy encourages discussion and deliberation in a safe and respectful environment. By focusing on encouraging social relationships, unity, and cohesiveness with others as well as the teacher, the will to solve conflicts will emerge (Lewis, 1996). This can be accomplished predominantly through group oriented lessons, social work time and play time. However, the norms that support respectful dialogue and conflict resolution must be supported, even if it means intervening and asserting a, “you can’t say you can’t play” rule, to emphasize and maintain a focus on social inclusion and community (Harrist & Bradley, 2003). Through a non-punitive, democratic approach to classroom management and school discipline, students will become responsible for their own actions and consciously strive to do *good* for societies' sake (Gathercoal & Nimmo, 2002).

The research on the use of cooperative learning in upper-elementary classrooms implies a positive effect to engagement, achievement and attitudes within learning. As Ellison, et al. found in their study, cooperative learning was the most endorsed and preferred method of learning by students regardless of ethnicity or gender (2005). Furthermore, in another study by Johnson, Johnson and Taylor (1993), students benefit

socially from cooperative learning methods. They measured self-esteem (belief that one is competent and worthwhile), cohesion (students belief that members of their class liked each other and were friends), cooperation among group members (students feelings about working cooperatively), and individualistic efforts (how well the students liked working individualistically). They found that high-ability students reported and demonstrated higher levels of motivation, academic achievement and positive outlooks.

When comparing cooperative learning methods to traditional methods of instruction, findings show that students learn significantly more through cooperative learning methods than traditional methods (Slavin, Leavey & Madden, 1984). In addition, when incentives were used within the NHT method of cooperative learning, (Maheady, et al., 2006) found that eighty-three percent of students received their highest grades. As they explained, incentives are simply a community recognition of a job well done in the form a variety of team certificates that are publicly displayed.

Cooperative learning was also shown to benefit many learning levels, from gifted, to the 'regular' ability level, to handicapped students, within the same classroom. This particular study also found that the cooperative learning method increased peer acceptance for all three groups of students as well. (Smith, et al., 1982). Coupled with advanced organizers, Box and Little (2003) demonstrated that jigsaw cooperative methods can positively impact academic achievement and self-concept.

The final study indicated that the teachers behavior is an important part of the success, or failure, of specific lessons (Emmer & Gerwels, 2002). Their research found that when teachers reviewed work soon after it was completed it helped to keep students on task and promoted engagement and the completion of assignments. Another important

finding in this study showed that student engagement was lessened if teachers did not interact with student groups during cooperative group work.

As a socially situated method of learning, cooperative learning replicates democratic principals through maintaining all members of society (student-citizens) have equal access to power and that all members (student-citizens) enjoy universally recognized freedoms and liberties. One of those freedoms especially crucial to cooperative learning is an open space for deliberation and communication. In this way, in classrooms that focus on learning through cooperative democratic principals, not only does more effective learning take place but a commitment to our democracy and society on a whole is modeled to our future citizens and learning is promoted in an equitable and democratic way.

Within a democratic classroom, or a democracy for that matter, one of the most fundamental principals at its foundation is the rights and freedoms its participants enjoy. This is exemplified in such aspects such as an equal power distribution, an equal access to said power and an equal exchange of thoughts and ideas. Unfortunately, democracy is not inherent in any institution. As the research by Neasdale, et al. (2005) has demonstrated, social norms directly influenced the level of prejudice the participants expressed. At a very young age, these children had already learned the concept of the 'other' (Valenzuela, 1999, Perry, 2002), and this prejudice affected their social grouping and biases. Again, specific democratic norms must be established and upheld through the school year by the democratic classroom community to maintain a culturally relevant education.

Though this paper has addressed successful cooperative learning methods as a

strategy for democratic classrooms and learning, cooperative learning is also a highly successful method for a culturally relevant education. Overall, when students work with their peers, they are discussing, challenging, extending, synthesizing and analyzing their ideas. They are doing this through the input of others. Cooperative learning fosters non-passive learners. In the research of Wilson-Jones and Caston (2004), not only is cooperative learning the preference for students of color, but it also increases achievement for elementary students of color in mathematics and language arts (Vaughn, 2002, Slavin & Oickle, 1981).

Another aspect of culturally relevant education that should be found in democratic classrooms is an emphasis on dialogue (Kim et al., 1999). Finally, in the Taylor et al., (2003) study, the main finding of the study was that the more high-level questions a teacher asked, the more growth the students experienced. Through character interpretation and connections to experience, the class focused more on thematic elements and student leadership in discussions. These findings exemplify culturally relevant pedagogy in that the teachers in the study asked for critical, active thinking by students instead of direct instruction and passive learning. By asking higher level questions, teachers continually manifest their high expectations as well as welcome discussion for all students.

Since democracy must not be delinked from any avenue of human life (Dewey, 1916/1944), it must be integrated in all aspects of educational institutions such as schools. As stated previously, culturally relevant education is a collection of pedagogy, curriculum and practices that rests on several propositions: students must experience success, students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and students must



develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the existing order (Ladson-Billings, 1992). By utilizing research from culturally relevant educational practices, democracy becomes the axiom upon which learning and teaching are based, promising educational equality and equity for all.

Overall, as a teacher within a democratic classroom, by allowing the space and opportunity for students to engage in what concerns them most, it will grow the social consciousness by promoting democratic practices and citizenship, and will also result in effective learning and active participation in the development of their own learning. A democratic curriculum promotes socially responsive citizens because the freedom that exists is guided by an strong commitment to working with human beings to reach the full measure of their humanity. When classrooms are constructed this way, learning emerges from the students' own questions about the world, is driven by their own problem-posing and inquiry processes, and is geared toward taking meaningful action in the world. Teachers who nurture democratic classrooms avoid being forced into mediocrity or the standardization of their teaching practice, and forego the practical philosophizing that gives teaching its strength.

#### Further Research

There has been little empirical research on the outcomes of democratic classrooms on learning and academic success. Particularly on methods related to culturally relevant educational practices. For this reason, it was necessary to explore related areas of literature. However, the educational community and society on a whole would benefit from a research-based exploration of the impact of democratic classroom strategies on the process of learning in elementary students. This could be done by

selecting specific strategies such as high level of student-choice within the classroom, or shared decision making opportunities and comparing the academic outcomes of students to those who do learn within the same democratic classroom climate.

Another gap that has appeared within the body of research available is the lack of followup research. It would be helpful to understand how each democratic classroom strategy impacted the development of the student. Did the students in the Japanese schools continue to mediate and solve their own social conflicts in the Lewis (1996) study? Did the students within the Epstein and Oyler (2008) study continue to work within their communities and progress towards social activism as the researchers suggest will happen? How do the students who are researched in many of the studies interact with their communities, and society today? Are they informed citizens? None of the research showed any followup to the conclusions drawn by the researchers.

### Conclusion

Chapter one examined the reasons for a review of the professional literature regarding democratic classroom strategies within elementary education. It explained the assertion that democratic classroom strategies are good teaching practices which stem from democratic principals and inform learning and teaching to create a diverse and equitable learning community within the classroom. It introduced the conflict within the field of professional literature and history within the topic. Chapter one also introduced the five major themes of research utilized as a framework for this research focus. Not only do all students deserve a just and equitable education, but this analysis provided the opportunity to collect and synthesize various perspectives on democratic classrooms to look for holistic strategies that will create effective learning in elementary aged students.

Chapter two explained the understanding that democratic classrooms come from a diverse background, one that is reinterpreted just as much as democracy itself is.

Educators throughout history struggled with questions that we continue to debate today; what is the purpose of schooling? What should we teach? What does it mean to be American? Through this brief history of democratic classrooms, underscored are the political implications of education for democracy. Democratic classrooms, as found connected to Social Studies curriculums, character education, democratic classroom meetings, group learning, and culturally relevant pedagogy, and many other directions, are heavily influenced by the history of diversity and the growth of democracy.

Chapter three reviewed the research of democratic classrooms. The research reviewed in chapter three was organized into five major themes: political socialization, moral development, classroom management, cooperative learning and culturally relevant education. Each of these studies were summarized and analyzed, based on the conclusions provided. The research reviewed in the political socialization section found that political socialization strategies such as student reflection, discussions of multiple viewpoints, and decision making can result in the acceptance of shared responsibility for a learning community. The research reviewed in the moral development section found that through utilizing strategies such as modeling behavior, social interaction and dialogue with others and being held accountable, higher levels of ethical understanding and decreased racial/ethnic prejudice take place. In the classroom management section, the research suggested that by utilizing strategies such as remaining task oriented, utilizing teacher praise and focusing on friendships and unity, students will develop the will to solve their own conflicts and monitor the classroom climate more effectively.

Within the cooperative learning body of research, some results from utilizing cooperative learning were higher academic success, engagement, reasoning, self esteem, peer acceptance, and so on. Finally, the research reviewed in the cultural relevant education section found that through utilizing strategies such as creating equitable classroom norms, interpreting and connecting with the experiences of others, the prejudices and biases in students become exposed and replaced by real experiences. Chapter four is the concluding chapter of this paper. This chapter revisits the research focus that democratic classroom strategies are good teaching practices which stem from democratic principals and inform learning and teaching to create a diverse and equitable learning community within the classroom. This chapter also uses a summary of the findings from the initial review in chapter three to provide specific effective democratic classroom strategies, implications for classroom practice and suggestions for further research.

The title for this paper, *The Butterfly Effect*, is a phrase coined by mathematician and meteorologist Edward Lorenz. Its meaning refers to the notion that a single flapping wing from a minute insect can create small changes in the atmosphere, which can ultimately impact weather conditions across the globe. In other words, small changes in the initial condition of a system can lead to a chain of events that will produce large-scale alterations to the system. Overall, democratic classroom strategies create effective student-citizens by providing opportunities to understand and analyze the interplay of social, economic, and political forces and to develop skills and commitments for working collectively to improve society. Small daily interactions and experiences can turn those opportunities into greater good, for oneself and ones learning community.

All students, have the right to success in a truly democratic classroom - not just an opportunity to learn, but an active exercise of culture, language, and ethics, in order to explore their own individual autonomy and ideals in relation to a growing sense of how others speak, judge and evaluate. In a democratic classroom, "success" means both discovering and making standards, rather than merely living up to them. "Failure" means being left out of the most essential aspects of democratic life.

*“No one can predict precisely the common world of possibility, nor can we absolutely justify one kind of community over another. Many of us, however, for all the tensions and disagreements around us, would reaffirm the value of principals like justice and equality and freedom and commitment to human rights; since, without these, we cannot even argue for the decency of welcoming”*

*(Greene, 1993, p. 194).*

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