A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL CONTROL GROUP DESIGN STUDY TO DETERMINE THE

EFFECT OF INTEGRATING CHARACTER EDUCATION INTO A HIGH SCHOOL

SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM THROUGH STORYTELLING

by

Russell L. Long

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to offer evidence for the development of student character through the integration of historical storytelling into a social studies classroom. A quasi-experimental study was conducted to determine the effect of character education through historical storytelling integrated into a United States history curriculum on student commitment to ethical goodness. The study took place in a public high school in Savannah, Georgia. Student commitment to ethical goodness was measured by a paired samples t-test on pretests and posttests taken by students. The overall study demonstrated that participants did not exhibit a statistically significant change in commitment to ethical goodness as a result of these treatments. There was no statistically significant change in either the experimental or the control groups.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a report on the inclusion of character education in a social studies classroom and its effect on student commitment to ethical goodness. The study began primarily as a result of the direct observation of a high school social studies teacher in an urban public high school. Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th President of the United States said, "To educate a man in mind and not in morals, is to educate a menace to society." One hundred years later, Roosevelt's words still ring true, and the need for character education is even greater in schools today. In fact, teaching children how to behave has become an albatross around the neck of public schools that do not have the authority to correct students, but cannot properly educate them without doing so. School systems have forgotten that teachers have the responsibility to develop not only the academic minds of their students, but their morals as well (Sherman, 2004). The question remains as to how educators can develop the morals of students while trying to focus on their primary task of academic training. That is the goal of this research.

This study provides a brief outline of the history of character education in American public education, including the erosion of character education in the public school realm in order to advance a moral relativist philosophy that denies absolute standards of right and wrong. The case is made for a focus on character education in public schools, and more specifically the social studies classroom. This was accomplished through the use of stories about historical figures that exemplify exceptional character from the prescribed state curriculum. Four lesson plans were developed from articles by Tony Sanchez to help educators incorporate character education into a social studies classroom. Students were given a pre and post-test to help determine the effects of these lessons on the students' commitment to ethical goodness. These results were then analyzed to determine potential growth in student character development.

Background

Throughout history most of the civilized world recognized the need to provide a model of character for young people to help them succeed in their respective societies. Traditionally, education throughout the world had two main goals: help children become smart and good (Lickona, 1991). The world's greatest thinkers have been advocates of forming character to help mankind focus on making the world a better place (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). The social and moral development of children has long been a goal of American schools as well (McClellan, 1999). In fact, teaching character was emphasized in American public schools prior to World War II (Sanchez, 2005a). Therefore, the concept of character education (or at least the importance of character in society) had been well established before the founders of America contrived to establish an independent republic in the New World, and remained a point of focus until the last Great War.

Problem Statement

It is a generally accepted truth that young people need role models and examples to follow in order to be successful and productive. In previous generations, American society promoted these role models and provided guidance young people needed for character development. Today, American society has seemingly lost its way as parents and schools are pointing their fingers at one another instead of jointly assuming the responsibility of developing character in young people (Sanchez, 2005a). While the adults are busy finding someone to blame, school children are entering society as adults without the proper moral development to achieve their goals. The current societal norm is not for schools to adopt a systematic approach in helping children with their character development, which leaves them deficient in the skills to be successful in life (Was, Woltz, & Drew, 2006).

The federal government has started to recognize the problem and distributed up to about $25 million annually in grants to state and local education agencies for the design and implementation of character education programs (Person, Moiduddin, Hague-Angus, & Malone, 2009). Unfortunately, this effort does not systematically address the needs of schools and has made little impact on the vast majority of public schools. Part of the blame should also fall on the shoulders of the character education community because there is little research focused on how character education affects student character despite the awarding of these grants.

Most studies in character education measure character from the perspective of school climate or self-reported moral behavior rather than student character (Rudd & Stoll, 2004). While these studies have shown a correlational improvement in student behavior, school climate surveys do not measure student character (Rudd & Stoll, 2004). There is a growing awareness among the character education community that better research is needed if the movement is to grow and remain relevant (Leming, 2000). This study seeks to address this gap by focusing on changes in student moral development during the research period. The study integrated character education into a United States History curriculum through historical storytelling and determined to measure its effects on student character as measured by the Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine whether a series (four) of character education lesson plans, implemented into a social studies classroom through historical storytelling, can positively affect student character. There is an epidemic of school-aged children graduating from high school without an understanding of the moral or ethical behavior necessary to succeed in American society. With educators being pressured to focus on standards-based exams and

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accountability, the emphasis in school is less on character and more on passing exams (Stiff-Williams, 2010).

Instead of shirking the responsibility to teach character to students, schools should actively train students to live ethically. Helping students grow morally is something schools can accomplish alongside of teaching academics. Teaching character and teaching academic content are not mutually exclusive of one another; in fact, an emphasis in the former will make it easier to accomplish the latter. Specifically, the following hypothesis will be tested: Character education integrated into a social studies curriculum can have a positive effect on student character development.

Significance of the Study

The era of high stakes testing has led many educators to narrow the focus of curriculum toward the content necessary for students to succeed on the various tests needed to be promoted to the next grade (i.e. Criterion Reference Competency Test [CRCT], Iowa Test of Basic Skills [ITBS], End of Course Test [EOCT], or the Georgia High School Graduation Test [GHSGT]). This new emphasis has pushed character and moral education to the back of the class and out of the curriculum (Sanchez, 2005a). A solution can be found by fusing character education with the instruction of mandated state standards (Stiff-Williams, 2010). The parents of future workers and the corporate world value education and honesty, yet students are consumed with narrow measures of academic achievement such as standardized test scores (Gray, 2010). Despite the recent focus on standardized exams, the issue of character education is still on the hearts and minds of educators, parents, and the community (Was et al., 2006).

Lickona (2004) argued that character education is necessary for people to be fully human, and the qualities and strength of good character have been ignored in schools for too long. The

need for character education is not something that can be ignored, because American school children need help to develop in this area. Students need to learn good character from somewhere, something, or someone, and education is a system that can be used to achieve that good character development (Gray, 2010). Schools are one of the few common influences for most school aged children in the United States besides the media, but the media is not much help in developing good character. Children are going to school, so the school systems have a responsibility to make schools more effective by meeting the needs of their students. The reality is that schools are better places when they promote a civil and caring community where they enforce the values of good character (Lickona, 2004). Character education is essential in building a moral society and to perpetuate democracy (Lickona, 2004). The recent focus on standards-based teaching has caused many educators to overemphasize cognitive development to the detriment of affective development, which is an emphasis of character education (Stiff-Williams, 2010).

There are disturbing trends in the rise of criminal and anti-social behavior, which are tell-tale signs that character education is necessary in schools today (Lickona, 1999). The 1980s brought about soaring juvenile crime rates and increasing gang activities in young people (Brooks & Goble, 1997). The Josephson Institute's "2010 Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth," a nationwide survey of 43,000 high school students, reported that one in three boys and one in four girls admitted stealing from a store within the past year; two in five said they sometimes lie to save money; and 59% admitted to cheating on a test during the last year (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2010). These issues provide a convincing argument for both the necessity of character education in public schools and the need for parents, teachers, and the community to be working toward instructing young people in character and morals (Was et al.,

2006).

Character needs to be taught in schools because it is the common denominator for young people, regardless of their economic, social, or ethnic background (Brooks & Goble, 1997). Educators must remember that they have two primary responsibilities to their students: to teach them to be smart and to teach them to be good. Teaching character should be just as important as teaching academics (Gray, 2010). When schools make teaching students to be good a priority, it will make teaching them to be smart much easier (Brooks & Goble, 1997).

Many parents, community leaders, and educators believe an emphasis in character education is necessary to help students become well-rounded and successful persons (Lickona, 2004). These same concerned community members point to rising violence in schools and society as a need to re-implement a focus on the development of character in young people (Sanchez, 2005a). The questions that need to be considered in regards to character and moral education are as follows: what is the role of character education in schools today, who decides when and where it is implemented, and in what ways is character education successfully quantified?

Research Question

The guiding research question for this study is as follows:

RQ1: Will character education implemented through historical storytelling into a social studies curriculum have a positive effect on student commitment to ethical goodness?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this quantitative control group pretest/posttest design is as follows:

H1: Students taking part in the character education treatment will show positive growth in commitment to ethical goodness compared to students that did not participate in the treatment.

The null hypothesis for this quantitative control group pretest/posttest design is as follows: **H0**: There will be no statistically significant difference in commitment to ethical goodness between students taking part in the character education treatment and those that do not.

Identification of Variables

The independent variable in this study was the character education lesson plans, designed to fit into the prescribed United States history standards. The dependent variable for this study was student character development. The character education lesson plans were developed based on standard character education lessons. The dependent variable was student responses measured by the Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale. The treatments and survey instruments were administered by an independent party and not the researcher. Due to the nature of the study, there were many variables outside the control of this study that affected student character development. The researcher had no input on which students were placed into the U.S. History classes. While participation in this study was voluntary, the willingness of participants was a variable that could have complicated outcomes.

Definition of Terms

An operational definition of character will be necessary to outline to goals of this study. Lickona (1991) contends that good character involves the ability to apply moral principles such as honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility when choosing right from wrong (as cited in Rudd & Stall, 2004, p. 154). Acting with character generally involves the ability to critically reason through a moral dilemma by applying moral principles to competing values, temptations, or social expectation (Rudd & Stoll, 2004). These values must be modeled, taught, and advocated by every invested member from school boards to students (Sanchez, 2005a).

Unfortunately, there is a lack of consensus for a standard definition on character

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education (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). The operational definition for the purposes of this study is that character education is a curriculum designed to create young people of good character who become responsible and caring citizens (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). This type of curriculum can either be separate from the academic curriculum or integrated as a supplement to the established curriculum. What Works Clearinghouse (2007) defined character education programs as "programs that deliberately attempt to develop students' character by teaching core values and that had most if not all of their lesson plans or prescribed activities directly related to instilling those values."

Research Summary

The study was a quasi-experimental control group pretest-posttest design. The study measured students' character development before and after treatment. Subjects were randomly assigned by the school into five United States History classes; four classes were chosen as the experimental group and the other was the control group. All four groups were given a pretest (Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale) that measured aspects of the students' commitment to ethical goodness. The character education lessons were administered to the experimental groups. Following treatment all four groups were given the Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale again as a posttest. The results of the pretest and posttest were then compared by a matched pairs t-test. This test was used to determine whether the differences in scores between the treatment and control groups were statistically significant.

The sample population consisted of high school students from an urban high school in Savannah, Georgia. The study evaluated over 120 students assigned to five United States History classes, taught by the same instructor. Students were between the ages of 15 and 18 years old.

<center>**Assumptions and Limitations**</center>

Assumptions

A major assumption for this study was that student responses to the assessments were genuine and honest, and that students provided sincere comments rather than what they believed the researcher wanted to see. The researcher also assumed that the responses of students were genuine, even though expressed attitudes are not always consistent with actual behavior (Was et al., 2006).

Limitations

It was difficult to correlate changes in character development in students to the treatment. The subjects were not representative of random sample or of American society. Student motivation for an honest assessment of character was difficult to ensure. Another limitation is that the study took place during only one semester, which reduced the sample population to the classes taught in that semester. Since this school is predominantly African American and in a low to middle class economic background, this sample does not represent a diverse economic or racial population size.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

What are the root causes of some of the internal problems that confront today's high schools? Why are schools failing to prepare students to be successful in society? The answers to these questions are subject to much debate in schools and communities around the country today. Perhaps the answers can be found in a serious reconsideration of the fundamental purpose of schools. Can educators and school systems provide a succinct answer to the question about the fundamental purpose of schools? If a quick survey were to be conducted of public education in America today, it would seem that the purpose of schools is to get students to pass standardized exams. However, most educational theorists would adamantly deny that the primary function of schools is to help students pass standardized exams. It is possible that public schools have lost their way, and the foundational purpose of education has been forgotten. Consider the fact that all civilized societies establish education systems to induct children into the culture and to transmit the society's way of life (Parkay, Hass, & Anctil, 2010). It is difficult to believe that school systems today consider one of their primary responsibilities to "induct" children into the culture and to convey American values. Yet a common characteristic of all civilized societies has been the creation of school systems to do just that.

Is the communication of American values still a primary goal of education? Some educators would argue that schools are still primarily responsible for passing on the values Americans hold as most important. Bennett, Finn, and Cribb (1999) contend that schools, especially elementary schools, hold the responsibility of transmitting the "common culture" to each new generation, the values that bind Americans together as a people. While schools may be responsible for transmitting a common culture of the values that bind Americans together, the emphasis in schools is elsewhere. It appears that the focus of the American education system for

the last few decades has become solely academic, while discarding discussions of societal right and wrong (Gray, 2010).

The problem, or rather a problem, with the standardized exam movement is that now the preeminent means to evaluate schools has become academic exams. Even though Americans of all backgrounds want schools to accustom children to America's common legacy (Bennett, Finn, & Cribb, 1999). It is still an expectation among most Americans that schools acclimate young people to the American way of life. The failure to do so only sets students up for failure as they attempt to become a part of the American social system as adults. The effect of this emphasis on only the academic demands of education has pushed many character education programs and social/emotional growth initiatives out of schools. Standardized exams do not measure cultural values or a society's way of life; they typically focus on a variety of issues included into a curriculum to appease special interest groups.

Character and the values of American society are no longer an emphasis in schools today because school systems recognize that they are evaluated only by student success on standardized exams. Despite this fatal flaw in the system, schools still hold that responsibility to communicate the cultural values and beliefs necessary for students to find success after school. Even though schools are focusing primarily on academics, character education can be integrated and taught alongside any state's standards based curriculum (Stiff-Williams, 2010). In fact, teaching character education as a part of the standards is the only option for schools as they seek to hold onto their foundational purpose of instilling the American way of life into the next generation and have academic success on standardized exams.

The function of public schools in character development is a contentious debate within education and among educators. Many parents, when asked what should be done to improve

schools, often cite discipline, control, education in manners and morals, and the creation of an atmosphere conducive to learning (Doll, 1996). The question for many educators is how schools, as public institutions, accomplish these goals. Doll (1996) purported that in the future, school personnel will need to become teachers of what is right and true, what is uplifting, and what is helpful to one's fellows. Schools will become instruments of social redemption as the social and cultural conditions continue to deteriorate, as many people believe they will.

While school systems and states scramble to place blame on some program or segment of the education community for failing schools and low test scores, the answer may be simpler than they originally believed. Educators need to consider the possibility that the failure of schools today is not in the teaching of academic content, but the failure to communicate the values necessary for academic success. The reality is that good schools teach children civic virtues (Bennett et al., 1999). Student growth in positive character traits such as honesty, integrity, and hard work would make the task of educating young people easier and possibly yield greater academic results. School systems should never lose sight of the fact that academic learning and the formation of character go hand in hand (Bennett et al., 1999).

<div align="center">**Theoretical Framework**</div>

A variety of concepts and theories helped to shape this study and the chosen treatments involved in the study. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1971), which contends that humans can develop new patterns of behavior by observing others, provided the framework for how others can learn character. Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development (1963) laid the foundation for quantifying and measuring moral development. Lastly, the writings of Tony Sanchez served as the basis for implementing character education into the curriculum through historical storytelling.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory

One of the theories that influenced the theoretical framework of this study was Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Social Learning Theory suggests new patterns of behavior can be learned by direct experience or by observing the behavior of others (Bandura, 1971). When subjects observe others, this information is coded and later serves as a guide for action. Bandura (1971) contended that almost all learning phenomena that are a result of experience can occur through observation of other people's behaviors and consequences. He further argued that the capacity to learn by observation enables man to learn how to behave without having to build up patterns through trial and error (Bandura, 1971). Social Learning Theory supports the notion that the observation of the moral decision making of men and women from history helps others learn to make moral decisions.

Bandura (1977) also asserted that most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling, and this modeling is more effective if the model has admired status. The historical figures selected for this study (George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Abigail Adams) are all well-known figures from American History, which should make the learning more effective because of their admired status in the curriculum. Bandura (1971) also believed that emotional responses could be developed observationally by witnessing the reaction of others when they are in a trial. The stories selected as part of the treatments for this study all involve the difficult moral choices made by these early American leaders during times of crisis. The goal of this study is to provide models of character for students to observe in the form of historical stories. It is hypothesized that these models and responses to different moral situations will aid in the growth of student moral development.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Another theory that had a significant influence on the theoretical framework of this study was Lawrence Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development. Kohlberg (1963) argued that the human ability to make moral judgments develops in a predictable way during childhood. He also believed there were specific, identifiable stages of moral development that relate to intellectual ability. Kohlberg (1963) contended that people progress through the stages of moral development by an increased knowledge about the perspectives of others and learning social norms. The treatments selected for this study offered the views of the historical figures as they worked through their moral choices and revealed the common values of American society during the period.

Kohlberg (1963) argued that moral reasoning had six identifiable developmental stages, through which people progress throughout their lifetime. While Kohlberg (1963) did not intend his stages to be a gauge of a person's morality, his work does conclude that moral judgments can be classified in logical terms. He used a series of stories of ethical dilemmas in which study participants could respond as to how the persons in the story should behave. Kohlberg's developed responses were then categorized into one of his six stages of moral development. Kohlberg's six stages of moral development are:

Type 1. Punishment and obedience orientation.

Type 2. Naïve instrumental hedonism.

Type 3. Good-boy morality of maintaining good relations, approval of others.

Type 4. Authority maintaining morality.

Type 5. Morality of contract and of democratically accepted law.

Type 6. Morality of individual principles of conscience. (Kohlberg, 1963)

Kohlberg's work on the six stages of moral development is an example of how morals and

character can be logically evaluated and quantified.

Sanchez's Character through Historical Storytelling

The last major influence on the framework of this study was the work of Tony R. Sanchez. Sanchez has written extensively on the role of character education in social studies. His articles were a major impetus behind the design and stated goals of this study. Sanchez (2006a) noted that social studies teachers are starting to rediscover how a focus on the men and women of history can play a role in teaching character. He also pointed out that effective social studies teachers meet the challenge of accomplishing the objective of including character education into the social studies curriculum by examining the character values within the discipline (Sanchez, 2006b). Sanchez and Mills (2005) pointed out that character education should be incorporated into social studies, as the social studies curriculum is by nature value-laden and therefore a natural foundation to communicate character.

Sanchez (2007) suggested the use of historical stories that include the moral choices of those figures to allow students to consider the decisions of these men and women in history. These historical stories also allow students to consider the issues associated with the major themes of social studies (Sanchez, 2007). Therefore the stories help accomplish two goals: they help students understand and reflect upon the ethical choices that were made, and they allow students to consider the issues associated with the historical events of the story. At the very least, Sanchez (2006a) continued, students have the opportunity in these stories to see that others faced the same dilemmas they do and still persevered by making the right choices.

Sanchez has also written several journal articles with the stories of various historical figures and their choices for educators to incorporate into their curriculum (Sanchez, 2005a; 2006a; 2006b). Three of the treatments developed for this study were adapted from articles

written by Tony Sanchez. The fourth treatment was developed from a chapter from *Tales Worth Telling* by Dr. Sanchez, with permission from the author.

Definition of Character Education

Vessels (1998) argued that "when we say that people have character, we usually mean that they are predisposed to do what is right or decent and to feel and think accordingly" (p.3). Character also "can encompass such moral and ethical values as respect, fairness, and caring-as well as responsibility, trustworthiness, and citizenship" (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007, p. 1). Another definition of character is that it is a complex set of psychological characteristics, formed in part by growth in cognition that enables a person to act as a moral agent (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004).

Traditionally character education has referred to the duty of the older generation to shape the character of the young through experiences that shape attitudes, knowledge and behavior (Berkowitz, 2002). The term can also be a general concept to describe the teaching of morals and values to children. Character education can incorporate any curriculum that focuses on moral development, social and emotional learning, life skills, civics, and conflict resolution. Another popular definition of character education from Thomas Lickona (1991) is the deliberate effort to help students understand, act upon, and care about core ethical values. Vessels (1998) offered the following comprehensive description of character education:

> an emerging approach to educational reform that is driven by a shared need to resolve social problems, a shared belief that school curricula and educational priorities do not reflect a responsiveness to student and societal needs, and a shared belief that schools can make the changes needed to produce students with the virtues and moral reasoning skills needed to resolve these problems and realize their full potential. (p.3)

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The term 'character education' is generally associated with any formal or informal program designed to teach children how to behave.

There are numerous character education models, but they can be subdivided into three categories: some integrate activities into social studies, English, and math; some create communities of students, teachers, and parents to foster respect and caring; and some use in-class stories, games, songs, and lastly, activity books to encourage the acceptance of other cultures (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007). At the heart of most character education is a curriculum designed to create young people of honorable character who become responsible and caring citizens (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999).

Character and Moral Development

Morals are generally defined as attitudes and beliefs that people hold that help them decide right and wrong. Morality is not a genetic trait, but is developed throughout childhood into adolescence and adulthood (Hawkinson, 2005; Hock, 2002; Kohlberg, 1963). The human ability to make moral judgments develops in a predictable way during childhood, and there are specific, identifiable stages of moral development that relate to intellectual ability (Kohlberg, 1963). It is important to understand that morals are developed and are not an inherent human quality. This concept is foundational in the field of character education and social/emotional learning.

Rest, Turiel, and Kohlberg (1969) conducted research on how students respond to exposure of differing levels of moral development, based on previous research by Turiel (1966). Their study determined that students prefer concepts above their own level of moral development, thus students associated with and were influenced by statements that are above their moral level (Rest, Turiel & Kohlberg, 1969; Turiel, 1966). Students are challenged by and

feel a connection to examples of high moral character. Their findings also suggest moral development can be a means to connect students with the social studies content when the content involves moral dilemmas.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) asserted that most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling. When subjects observe others, they form ideas on how to perform new behaviors. A goal of this study was to provide models of character for students to observe in the form of historical figures from the history curriculum, and determine whether these activities aided in the growth of student character development. Bandura (1977) suggested that a person is more likely to adopt a modeled behavior if the model is similar to the observer or has admired status. Thus, using stories of moral conflict that involve well-known historical figures had a great impact on the students because of the admired status of the figures.

Why Character Education?

The question may be raised as to why schools need to teach character to young people. Why not let parents and family members bear this responsibility and allow schools to focus on academics? The answer to this question is not simple. Instead of making the case that many students are not learning character to the degree that is necessary to navigate through life, then the case should be made for a partnership between families and schools. School systems can work with family and community members to help young people learn the necessary values and morals to lead productive and healthy lives. It makes no sense to send young people into the world "having offered them only some timid, vacillating opinions or observations about conduct in the hope that in the course of their wanderings, they will stumble onto some more definite personal preferences that will become their 'values'" (Bennett, 1995, p. 11-12).

Bennett (1995) suggested that America needs to give children better tools to be

successful in this world. Public schools can be partners with parents and caregivers in the

development of character in children. The goal of character education is not to replace the role

of families in character development or to be the sole provider of morals for children; instead,

proponents of character education seek to play a part in helping children develop character.

The reality is that teaching children is a moral enterprise in and of itself (Buzzelli &

Johnston, 2001). Teachers are imbued with the great responsibility to help children grow both

academically and socially. The topic of character education is important to educators because

they recognize that they have a moral responsibility to foster the development of children as

human beings of character, and to educate students for full citizenship within a democratic

society (Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2005). Most educators have a varying degree of interest in

character development because they recognize the intrinsic component of their profession that

involves the character formation of children. Williams (2000) pointed out that often the unstated

goal of education is the development of caring and responsible citizens. Educators recognize this

unstated goal and desperately want tools to play a part in this endeavor.

Sanchez (2007) made the argument that many educators view as a primary goal of public

education that character education can help young people become effective citizens. Children

need schools to help them become competent academically and civilly; the failure to accomplish

either goal is to fail at both. Historically, the great civilizations of the world had one common

denominator, an academically competent citizenry. Once those citizens failed to be educated in

virtue of character, competent citizenry steadily declined (Sanchez & Mills, 2005). America

does not want to find itself in the same predicament as past great civilizations, and a return to

character education as a vital facet of the curriculum will contribute to that competent citizenry.

At the very least, character education can be a way to significantly decrease the moral decay of

society (Gray, 2010). If a competent citizenry is no longer a principal goal of education, then maybe growth in social and emotional learning in and of itself is an appealing ideal.

Unfortunately, some educators are in denial as to their role in the character development of their students. Moral instruction goes on at every school as teachers bring their own moral traits and dispositions to bear in the course of their teaching (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, & Sanger, 2009). Educators and education systems all communicate and emphasize the values and character traits they regard as most important. When schools and educators refuse to address issues of character and morality, then they are communicating clearly that those values are not important. Regardless of their stance on character education, schools have an unavoidable influence on student character (Schaps & Williams, 1999). Schools communicate and teach values whether they are willing to admit it or not. Systems that shy away from addressing student character are in denial, and the absence of an emphasis on character education leads to an absence of character. Good schools recognize that children are moral beings and should be addressed as such (Bennett, Finn, & Cribb, 1999).

It is generally understood that it is in the best interest of a democratic country and all of its citizens to teach character to children. Under a form of government that vests considerable power to its citizens, the state should have an interest in the development of civic competence and civic identity of its citizens (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe & Sanger, 2009). The common traits that are necessary to maintain order and promote the commonwealth include justice, equality, and respect; all standard aspects of a character education curriculum. Citizens of a democratic society are expected to behave responsibly, respect others' diversities, accept what is fair and just, and work toward the common good by helping others (Richardson, Tolson, Huang, & Lee, 2009). Public education as one of the few common denominators that most Americans

share is one of the few places children can be taught these traits.

A Brief History of Character Education

For most of recorded history, education has been first about developing character and only second about academic competence (Williams, 2000). Prior to the founding of the British colonies in North America, most of the civilized world recognized the need to provide a model of character for young people to help them achieve in their respective societies (Hawkinson, 2005). Education throughout the world "had two great goals: to help young people become smart and to help them become good" (Lickona, 1991, p. 6). Socrates made the same argument nearly 2,500 years ago when he said the mission of education is to help people become smart and good (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Therefore, the concept of character education, or at least the importance of character in society, had been well established before the founders of America contrived to establish an independent republic (Brooks & Goble, 1997).

The Founding Fathers of America also understood the importance of good character in the society of a government governed by its citizens. Within a democracy the people are responsible for ensuring a free and just society; this means the people, in some sense, need to be good (Lickona, 1991). For the founding fathers, democracy was only possible when individual citizens practice a certain degree of virtue (Bennett, Finn, & Cribb, 1999). It was the writer of the Declaration of Independence who said, "The steady character of our countrymen is a rock to which we may safely moor" (Jefferson, 1801). The values and morals of America were to the Framers the bedrock of democracy and the cornerstone of the success of the republic.

In his authoritative critique of American democracy, de Tocqueville (1831) wrote, "America is great because she is good, but if America ever ceases to be good America will cease to be great." De Tocqueville recognized the importance of good character to the success of

American democracy; in fact he noted that the 'good' character of America is what made the country great. Throughout American history, leaders involved in discussions on the purpose of schools have viewed character development as an important goal and necessary to be achieved if democracy is to survive (Vessels, 1998).

Character was a significant focus of education in America's schools from the founding era through the early 20th century (Dewey, 1934). Lickona (1991) argued that character and moral education continued to be a focus in education up to World War II; however, after the war, America had seemingly lost its innocence and turned to personal choice as a moral guide. According to Lickona (1991), Americans started to apply Darwin's evolutionary theory to moral law, which led to a view of morality as an evolving concept rather than a notion that is fixed or certain. Einstein's theory of relativity also caused Americans to adopt the attitude of "it's all relative to your point of view" (Lickona, 1991, p.8).

Vessels (1998) argued that character education started to decline in public schools in the 1930s as a result of several societal changes, including pluralism, growing individualism, and U.S. Supreme Court decisions that found school systems in violation of the First Amendment. By the 1950s and 1960s, most public schools had abandoned formal character education because they believed it could not be administered constitutionally, was not consistent with the beliefs of progressive education, or consistent with the views of various cultural and religious groups (Vessels, 1998). Regardless of which timeline is correct (Lickona or Vessels), it seems that character education was no longer a component of public education by the end of the 1960s.

After World War II, morality became a matter of personal choice, a private matter not subject to a public debate. Therefore the teaching of character and ethics was quickly pushed out of the public sphere in favor of a personalized focus on the autonomy of the individual. Even

areas of the country where educators attempted to hold on to the teaching of character found it became more complicated as society clamored for a separation between church and state (Prestwick, 2004). A variety of factors converged upon the American concept of public education, and character education soon ceased to exist as a standard curriculum objective in American schools.

The Impact of Character Education on Schools

The question on the lips of all effective educators is what will make their school(s) more effective in educating children and best prepare them for life after school? It is this question that makes this study about the effects of character education integrated into the social studies curriculum through historical storytelling important to the discussion of how to best teach children. The following are a sample of studies, mostly qualitative, that show the variety of ways character education can positively impact schools.

Character Education Improves Character

Society cannot expect children to be born with the same moral views and character as previous generations—these must be taught. Morality is not a genetic trait, but is developed throughout childhood into adolescence and adulthood (Hawkinson, 2005). School aged children spend more time in school than any other place outside of their homes. If morality is developed throughout childhood, then schools have a shared responsibility with the home to help develop character in children.

A study conducted in 2009 to investigate whether a character education curriculum, *Connecting with Others: Lessons For Teaching Social and Emotional Competence,* would help students with disabilities transition into inclusion classrooms found that participants had an easier transition into the classroom (Richardson, Tolson, et al., 2009). Special education students

along with their regular education peers participated in the curriculum designed to develop skills to facilitate socialization. The participants interacted with one another more than the students in classes that did not participate in the curriculum (Richardson, Tolson, et al., 2009). Even though student growth was only measured by teacher perceptions, the results indicate growth in the students' abilities to positively interact with peers.

The *Facing History and Ourselves* (FHAO) curriculum is a 10-week course designed to engage students of diverse backgrounds to foster perspective-taking, critical thinking, and moral decision making. A study to consider the impact of the curriculum on almost 400 eighth grade students found that the participants showed increases in relationship maturity and decreases in racist attitudes and self-reported fighting behavior (Schultz, Barr, & Selman, 2001). The study also found that there was a significant difference between the participation and comparison groups on the post-test civics measure (Schultz et al., 2001). The results of the FHAO study suggested the curriculum had a significant impact on the character development of its participants when compared to the control group.

The *Unique Minds School Program* (UMSP) is a character education program designed to promote cognitive-social-emotional skills, including student self-efficacy, problem solving, social-emotional competence, and a positive classroom climate, with the dual purpose of preventing youth behavior problems and promoting academic learning (Linares et al., 2005). A two year study on the effects of the program on fourth and fifth graders found students in the intervention showed gains in student self-efficacy, problem solving skills, social-emotional competencies, and math grades (Linares et al., 2005).

Character Education Improves School Climate

Character education programs can have a greater impact on schools and students beyond

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growth in student character. Many proponents of character education and social and emotional learning contend that these programs also have a significant impact on school climate. Comprehensive character education programs, when implemented by fully committed faculty, can "transform schools morally, socially, and motivationally, and create caring communities with students and adult members who are intrinsically motivated to do what they should for themselves and others" (Vessels, 1998, p.4). Schools that set out to make character education a vital aspect of their mission often experience substantial changes in school climate as a result of those programs.

Many researchers in character education have argued that character education programs have a positive effect on student behavior and also improve school climate (Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2008; Schultz et al., 2001). A report that summarized three large scale reviews of character education programs that emphasize social and emotional learning found that these programs had a profound effect on student behavior and school climate (Payton et al., 2008). The report showed that participants exhibited improved attitudes about self and others, connection to school, and positive social behavior; along with reduced student conduct problems and emotional distress (Payton et al., 2008). Schools with these types of programs report an improved school climate, which in turn makes the task of educating children easier.

Lessons on character eventually spill out of the classroom and affect a school's atmosphere as well. A well-designed character education program that focuses on social and emotional learning enhances social-emotional competencies, reduces internal and external disorders, and improves academic performance (Greenberg et al., 2003). Students, teachers, and administrators often report a positive change in school climate after the implementation of character education programs. A positive school environment is important for all schools to be

successful, and character education initiatives can help schools accomplish their goals.

Character education programs not only improve student character and school climate, but can also have a positive impact on the character of the teachers in regards to their responsibilities as teachers. Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, and Sanger (2009) found that support for character education within a school served as a form of encouragement for the teachers to consider their moral disposition in relation to their work as teachers. These educators, as a result of their exposure to character education, became better mentors and role models for their students.

Character Education Improves Academic Performance

There are numerous studies that show a relationship between character education and improved academic performance (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006; Greenberg et al., 2003; Hawkins, Guo, Hill, Battin-Pearson, & Abbott, 2001; Twemlow et al., 2001). A study of middle schools in California found that academically successful schools had four characteristics in common: a clean and secure physical environment; the promotion of and the modeling of fairness, equity, caring, and respect; their students contributed in meaningful ways; and the promotion of a caring community and positive social relationships (Benninga et al., 2006). Notice that the most successful schools involved in this study did not have a particular type of student, teachers with certain types of degrees, or a higher socio-economic status. The common characteristics among these schools were that they promoted and modeled proper character, and that it was a vital aspect of their programs (Benninga et al., 2006). The study also found that California schools with character education programs generally outperformed schools without character education programs on state standardized exams (Benninga et al., 2006).

A study on the effects of the Peaceful Schools Project character program on elementary students suggested a correlation between character education and academic success (Twemlow et

al., 2001). These researchers determined that character education, in this case an antiviolence intervention program, showed not only a reduction in discipline referrals but also increases in scores on standardized exams (Twemlow et al., 2001). This study indicated that schools that implemented the Peaceful Schools Project character program had greater gains on standardized test scores than students in comparison schools (Twemlow et al., 2001).

Another study of middle and high school students who participated as elementary school students in the Seattle Social Development Project scored better on achievement exams than students who did not participate in the study (Hawkins et al., 2001). The Seattle Social Development Project is a social skills training program and intervention model designed to increase student bonding (Hawkins et al., 2001). Not only did participating students score higher on achievement exams, but they also had higher course grades than students not associated with the Seattle Social Development Project (Hawkins et al., 2001). In addition, the results for this study suggest that a program similar to the Seattle Social Development Project can have positive long-term effects on school bonding (Hawkins et al., 2001).

Character Education and Students with Disabilities

There is also considerable evidence that character education can help students with disabilities be successful both academically and to foster better peer relationships. Peer alienation accounts for a significant amount of conduct problems, delinquency, anxiety, and depression among students with a disability (Murray & Greenberg, 2006). The intended goals for many character education programs that focus on students with disabilities are to help those students with peer relationships and to cultivate a sense of belonging. Character education initiatives that focus on social and emotional learning have proven to be successful in helping students with inappropriate social and emotional behaviors to improve those behaviors

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(Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, Sassu, LaFrance, & Patwa, 2007; Filter et al., 2007).

Character education implemented into a school can lead to a better overall school environment, and help students with disabilities succeed in an inclusion classroom (Richardson, Myran, & Tonelson, 2009). Programs that emphasize social and emotional learning assist students with disabilities and students without disabilities get along and deal with the anxiety that exists in many classrooms, especially with the recent emphasis on high stakes testing. For many students with disabilities, their stress and anxiety may be elevated as they struggle more than their non-disabled peers with the expectations of an inclusion setting. Social and emotional learning helps students with disabilities confront the frustrations and anxieties they experience as they attempt to interact with their peers and master the standards of the class (Chafouleas et al., 2007; Filter et al., 2007).

In 2008, Payton et al. published a report that summarizes the results from three large-scale reviews of research which found that elementary and middle-school students in character education programs that focus on social and emotional learning demonstrated higher school grades and improved standardized exam scores for students with emotional and behavioral problems. Participants in these character education programs that emphasize social and emotional learning also showed improvement in grades and standardized exam scores in student populations that are ethnically and socioeconomically diverse (Payton et al., 2008). For many school systems, one area of weakness on standardized exams is the results of the students in lower economic classifications and students with special needs. It is a difficult task balancing needed accommodations and ensuring mastery of content for students with disabilities. Character education programs have shown to help students with disabilities have greater success in inclusion classrooms.

Richardson, Tolson, Huang, and Lee (2009) published a study that sought to investigate whether the character education program, *Connecting with Others: Lessons for Teaching Social and Emotional Competence*, would enable students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms develop skills to assist in socialization with their peers. This program consisted of 30 lessons designed to be integrated into the academic courses and to focus on six skill areas: Concept of Self and Others, Socialization, Problem Solving/Conflict Resolution, Communication, Sharing, and Caring/Empathy. This curriculum was designed for K-8 students, and according to the findings of Richardson, Tolson, et al. (2009), it has proven to be successful in yielding positive results on student behavior in all of the six skill. The researchers determined that the evidence provided suggested growth by the students in the skills areas and a greater ability to positively interact with their peers (Richardson, Tolson et al., 2009). The study concluded that both students with disabilities and general education students showed significant gains in all six areas of social and emotional learning after participating in the Connecting with Others program (Richardson, Tolson, et al., 2009).

Another study published in 2005 on the impact of the Unique Minds School Program (UMSP) on students with and without disabilities determined positive results for students (Linares et al., 2005). The UMSP is a teacher-led program designed to promote cognitive-social-emotional skills, including student self-efficacy, problem solving, social-emotional competence, and a positive classroom climate, with the dual purpose of preventing youth behavior problems and promoting academic learning (Linares et al., 2005). In the two year study with fourth and fifth graders in New York City, researchers compared the treatment group with a comparison group and found students in the intervention showed gains in student self-efficacy, problem solving skills, social-emotional competencies, and math grades (Linares et al., 2005). Eight

percent of the students participating in the treatment were students with disabilities, and the results showed positive gains for those students as well (Linares et al., 2005). The study concluded that the program may not only alter the downward trajectories in social-emotional functioning of the participants, but also positively affect academic grades (Linares et al., 2005).

Evidence-based Studies

There are a variety of studies on character education that suggest character education has a positive impact on student character, school climate, and student achievement; however, most of these studies only consider attitudinal changes among students as perceived by researchers and school officials. While these studies suggest positive changes in student behavior and a correlational change in school climate, there is still a need to determine the exact effects of character education on student character (Was et al., 2006). Many character education studies rely on surveys from teachers and administrators as part of their instruments to determine the success of their programs. While surveys and attitudinal reports are valuable sources of evidence for the success of character education initiatives, more quantitative studies on the effects of these programs are needed. Higgins-D'Alessandro (2005) argued that there is a need for evidence-based studies in character education to help researchers understand the ways these interventions are effective and the ways they can be improved.

Character Education through Social Studies

School systems and educators would be wasting a great opportunity if they failed to use the state curriculum to develop values and ethical awareness (Lickona, 1991). Moral content can be easily incorporated into the classroom by exploring the moral issues within the academic curriculum (Fenstermacher et al., 2009). One of the most natural subject areas in which to infuse character and to develop ethical awareness is social studies. The study of social studies and

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specifically history helps individuals develop democratic values, attitudes and beliefs, and realize how these affect their interaction with others (Hoge, 2002). Social studies includes the study of the democratic values and attitudes and beliefs of American society, and unlike any other subject, allows the individual recognize how his or her choices affect the lives of others. The study of history has long served the purpose of teaching about right and wrong (Bennett et al., 1999).

Going back to the age of Plutarch, the study of history was to emphasize the moral character of historical figures and to provide exemplary models of character and virtue for the reader (Hawkinson, 2005). The same method has been employed throughout history to model moral and virtuous character, and can also be used to instruct students today. Character education can be taught in schools today as it was in American public schools during the 19th century, as it is still utilized successfully in foreign schools through historical figures (Brooks & Goble, 1997). Social studies programs that not only focus on famous people, places, and events, but also on civic virtue have a profound impact on young people:

> The study of history does more than help make intelligent voters. It also teaches youngsters who we are as a people. It instills a sense that each one of us is part of this common enterprise we call the United States. Consciousness of a shared past is a fundamental basis for social cohesion: it ties together members of any group, whether it be family, school, town, or nation. The long winter at Valley Forge. The Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk. Neil Armstrong planting his foot on the moon. These events connect us with a common heritage. They are part of the fabric that makes us all American. (Bennett et al., 1999)

Social Studies educators have always known that good character and the "right" values are an

integral component of effective citizenship (Sanchez, 2006b). When teachers choose to focus on developing values and ethical awareness through the state curriculum, then they have accomplished more than one goal. Vessels (1998) suggested there are seven learning modes in which students acquire personal and social principles, including "exposure to virtuous models with whom children and adolescents can identify" (p. 49). History standards offer those examples of virtuous models with whom students can identify.

Social studies teachers can effectively include developmental goals for student character growth into the social studies curriculum. According to Ladenburg and Ladenburg (1977), in order to accomplish this goal the history teacher must:

1. Incorporate in his own thinking a definition of history as an active living process rather than an inert and cold listing of events, which can be translated into a model combining traditional subject matter goals with developmental aims.

2. Broaden the concept of a moral dilemma to include the resolution of complex historical and philosophical issues.

3. Develop units that achieve these dual objectives to serve as examples for others to use, imitate, and improve (Ladenburg & Ladenburg, 1977, p. 113).

Social studies teachers can follow the model set forth by Ladenburg and Ladenburg (1997) to help students develop character and ethical awareness using any state curriculum.

Character Education and Storytelling

Telling stories as a means to teach character is a proven and time tested means to communicate values. Sherry Norfolk, a professional storyteller, believes that storytelling is the most effective of all character education strategies (Vessels, 1998). The nature of a story, when paired with the presence of values, provides a dynamic source for moral guidance (Cates, 2008).

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Stories communicate cultural values in a way that is meaningful to children (Leming, 2000).

Vessels (1998) argued that "if we want children to hear and understand and practice the truth

about the moral way to think, feel, and behave, then we need to tell stories and not preach to

them" (p. 112). Stories provide an opportunity for adults to communicate and encourage proper

character in a positive manner.

Stories transcend cultural and societal norms, thus they can be used to reach all children.

In many ways, story is universal and its importance goes beyond mere enjoyment—it is character

molding (Cates, 2008). Teachers do not need to be perfect at telling stories; in fact children

often immediately relate to and respect adults who tell them stories (Vessels, 1998). The right

story can be a valuable tool in communicating and teaching character to children. Stories that

communicate moral and cultural values with children can be important moral influences

(Bennett, 1995). Children enjoy stories and can have their character shaped by stories that

convey values.

One of the many challenges for educators today is engaging students in the curriculum

and content. Thankfully, storytelling is highly engaging and stimulates the imagination of

children, something teachers should take advantage of (Egan, 1986). When lessons are full of

lively, challenging accounts (stories), students are not likely to be bored (Bennett et al., 1999).

An engaging story is a great means to capture a student's attention and help him or her focus on

the goals for the day.

Character Education through Historical Storytelling

One effective means to incorporate character education into a standard curriculum is

through historical storytelling (Sanchez, 2005a). Educators, especially secondary educators,

need some means to incorporate storytelling into their given curriculum. Of the major subject

areas in school curriculum, social studies offers a wide variety of opportunities to tell stories about the men and women from the standards. Historical stories that contain moral conflict not only engage students in the content and allow them to reflect upon the values of the story, but true stories showing people making difficult decisions will also help students gain a deeper understanding of American history (Lockwood & Harris, 1985).

Many historical stories tell of individuals who have made personal decisions that involve truth, integrity, honesty, and loyalty (Sanchez, 2006a). These stories will also help students understand that others before them have faced the same problems that they do, and that by making the right choices, they persevered (Sanchez, 2006a). Appropriate historical stories also prove that the values of good character are not restricted to a particular time or place and will counteract the tendency to elevate historical figures into mythical heroes (Sanchez, 2005a). Historical stories that center on moral conflict engage students in the curriculum, allow them to reflect upon the choices that were made, and prove that good character is not restricted to one time or place.

The biography of George Washington, written by Weems in 1800, was intended to bring out Washington's virtues, and became a primary text for many school children for the next one hundred years (Cunliffe, 1998). There is relatively little known about Washington's childhood, therefore Weems created various stories to illustrate young Washington's honesty and integrity. Weems' goal was to provide examples of virtuous character from the childhood of America's founding father for school children to follow. Even though the stories about Washington as a child were made up by Weems, most accepted the stories as a part of the biography because they believed those stories to be consistent with Washington's character (Cunliffe, 1998). For educators in the 19th century, what mattered most about the biography was not necessarily the

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historical events of Washington's life, but the character traits he exhibited through his life. Along with *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1791), which was believed to instill in students a sense of prudence and hard work, Weems' biography became the seminal history text for school children up until the early 20th century (Cunliffe, 1998).

The goal of citizenship education traditionally has been to promote ethical standards to help perpetuate a democratic society; this can be accomplished through providing students with authentic, historical models who embody those values (Sanchez, 2005a). Many of these historical models are featured in the social studies curriculum; however, their moral choices are not the stories that are told. An important aspect to consider in the integration of character into learning standards is to focus on decision making (Stiff-Williams, 2010). To successfully teach character through historical storytelling, the stories that are told need to focus on the difficult moral choices made by leaders of the past. Intelligent citizens need to recognize the moral choices of others and think carefully about them (Lockwood & Harris, 1985). When students are presented with the moral dilemmas of these historical figures they have an opportunity to consider the choices and the consequences of those choices. Stories that include the moral decision making of men and women from history also allow students to contemplate their own moral choices.

Teaching Character

Many educators and schools systems are reluctant to implement character education into their schools and curriculum. Some are unwilling to approach the subject because they are not comfortable communicating standards of right or wrong, or they do not feel as though they are in a position to communicate those values. What many educators need to understand is that education is a moral practice, and teaching, by nature, is a moral enterprise (Gray, 2010). Once

educators recognize that teaching is a moral practice then they can begin to address the moral values they want to communicate. The teaching of ethics and character are already imbedded in classrooms and schools everywhere, and since it is already imbedded in classrooms it must be found, highlighted, and developed further (Puka, 2005). Teaching character is a deep-seated facet of every enterprise or attempt to educate young people, and it is the responsibility of teachers to develop those values.

One characteristic of being an educator that seems to have been lost over the last few decades is the teacher's role as a model for proper behavior. In the past, teachers have had a responsibility to model ethics and morality to and for their students (Sherman, 2004). The responsibility to model ethics and morality to and for students still exists, even if it is not an expectation today in the age of accountability and standardized exams. In fact, there are three broad goals of teaching that standardized exams have difficulty measuring: (a) advancement of literacy; (b) deepening the ability to think clearly; (c) fostering moral development (Sherman, 2004). Collectively all three of these goals are associated with the capacity to lead a full life; however, without any one of these three, the potential for a full life is diminished.

Many parents, community leaders, and educators believe an emphasis on character education is necessary to help students become well-rounded and successful persons (Lickona, 2004). These same concerned stakeholders point to rising violence in schools and society as a need to re-implement a focus on the development of character in young people (Sanchez, 2005a). By integrating character in the social studies classroom through historical storytelling, teachers can provide examples of good character directly from the content standards, and can easily teach students these characteristics by focusing on persons from history (Sanchez, 2005). With pressure on educators to cover the curriculum, teachers who want to engage their students in

moral discussion have to build it into the prescribed curriculum (Lickona, 1991).

Summary

Throughout history, education has been first about developing character and only second about academic competence (Williams, 2000). However the trend and purpose of education in America today is not focused on developing character. The goal of education today is primarily academic growth, and the absence of character education has made that primary goal nearly impossible. Children learn behavior through direct experiences and observing the behavior of others (Bandura, 1977). Schools can teach character by providing children with the opportunity to observe the behavior of men and women from history through historical storytelling (Sanchez, 2005). Historical stories that focus on the moral choices of others engage students in the curriculum, allow them to reflect upon the choices that were made, and prove that good character is not restricted to one time or place.

There is considerable evidence that character education can have a positive effect on student character development, school climate, and academic achievement, especially at the elementary and middle school level (Richardson et al., 2009; Payton et al., 2008; Benninga et al., 2006; Greenberg et al., 2003; Hawkins et al., 2001; Schultz et al., 2001; Twemlow et al., 2001). Character education has also proven to be successful in helping students with inappropriate social and emotional behaviors to improve those behaviors (Richardson, Myran, & Tonelson, 2009; Chafouleas et al., 2007; Filter et al., 2007). Despite these results, character education is being squeezed out of many schools because of the pressure to achieve on standardized exams. Schools and school systems are generally judged only on the results of their academic performance on standardized exams; therefore schools are shelving character education to dedicate more time to academic leaning.

Even though schools are becoming increasingly focused on academic learning there is still an expectation by parents and community members that schools also teach children character. Historical storytelling offers schools the opportunity to accomplish both goals: help students achieve academically and develop good character. The teaching of character does not have to be sacrificed for the sake of academics.

Character education could become a permanent feature in schools once again if it "generates solution ideas that are shown to be philosophically, scientifically, and technologically sound and effective" (Vessels, 1998, p.4). Even though there are a variety of studies that suggest positive changes in student behavior and a correlational change in school climate, there is still a need to determine the exact effects of character education on student character (Was et al., 2006). These qualitative studies rely on surveys from teachers and administrators as part of their instruments to determine the success of their programs. While surveys and attitudinal reports are valuable sources of evidence for the success of character education initiatives, more quantitative studies on the effects of these programs are needed. The need still exists for evidence-based studies in character education to help researchers understand the ways these interventions are effective and the ways they can be improved (Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2005). Schooling today must be about both character and academic competence, focusing on achieving a balance between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains (Williams, 2000). This study will help achieve that balance and address the gap in the literature by examining how character education implemented into a high school social studies curriculum affects student character development.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

How does the implementation of character education into a United States history curriculum affect student character development? The purpose of this study is to determine whether the integration of character education into a United States history curriculum will have a statistically significant effect on student character development.

In the western world, one of the main reasons for studying history had been to provide students with positive role models, teaching students the behaviors that society deemed most necessary. While schools have moved away from that model in social studies classrooms, character can be incorporated into current state standards. Teachers can institute character education into a social studies curriculum by focusing on the character traits of historical figures in their lessons.

Design

This study was quasi-experimental and consisted of a pretest/posttest control group design. This study was designed with a pretest and posttest to measure student commitment to ethical goodness before and after treatment. The study measured changes in student commitment to ethical goodness as a result of the treatments. This research design was chosen because it allowed the researcher to determine changes in student commitment to ethical goodness and the impact, if any, the treatment had on the subjects. A similar study was conducted in Illinois in the 1995-1996 school year to evaluate the Heartwood literature-based character education curriculum (Leming, 2000). Without a pretest it would be difficult to measure development and therefore conclusions would not be valid.

The chosen instrument for this study was the Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale (CEG) developed by Narvaez, Bock, and Vaydich (2008). The CEG is a 15-item, 3-factor self-

report scale developed for use in measuring the effectiveness of character education programs in increasing ethical focus and motivation. The scales measure three sub-factors: moral locus of control, ethical goodness, and ethical self-regulation. Pilot studies to establish the validity of the CEG with students in Minnesota obtained Cronbach alphas of .83 (n = 73), .87 (n = 412). Pretest data from Minnesota Community Voices and Character Education project (when it was called Ethical Identity) obtained Cronbach alphas of .86 (Anderson, Narvaez, Bock, Endicott, & Lies, 2004).

The reliability of the CEG was established in a study that included a sample of 806 students, grades 6-8, from a public middle school in a mid-sized Midwestern metropolitan area, and produced a Cronbach alpha of .86 (Narvaez, Turner, Khmelkov, Vaydich, & Mullen, 2008). A similar study to establish reliability was conducted with a second sample of 370 students, grades 5-8, from six Catholic schools in the same middle-sized Midwestern metropolitan area an alpha of .82 (Narvaez, Turner, et al., 2008).

For this study, subjects were assigned to one of five United States History classes. Then four of the five classes were randomly selected as the experimental sections. The fifth class was designated as the control group. Both groups were then given the pretest CEG. Once all participants were given the CEG scale, the four designed treatments were given to the experimental groups as part of their U.S. History curriculum. Following treatment, all groups were given the posttest CEG.

A series of lesson plans (four) were adapted from four articles by Tony Sanchez that were designed to be examples of integrating character education into a social studies classroom through historical storytelling. The lessons were aligned with the appropriate Georgia Professional Standards curriculum for United States history. These lesson plans were adapted, in

part, based on the guidelines and suggestions offered by Brooks and Goble (1997) in *The Case for Character Education*, and Lickona's (1991) *Educating for Character*.

The four lesson plans focused on the role of John Adams in the trial of the British soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre, the political life of George Washington, the home life of Abigail Adams, and the life of Benjamin Franklin. The lessons (treatments) involved the teacher or another student reading a narrative about the historical figures. The teacher then facilitated a discussion on the events, while considering the ethical dilemmas of these figures. The students then had a work session in which they had an activity that allowed them to reflect on the moral decisions of the historical figures. After the last treatment, students were given the CEG scale again as a posttest survey to determine whether their commitment to ethical goodness had changed as a result of the lessons (treatments).

Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question for this quantitative control group pretest/posttest design was a follows: **RQ1**: How does character education implemented into a social studies curriculum affect student commitment to ethical goodness?

The hypothesis for this quantitative control group pretest/posttest design was as follows: **H1**: Students taking part in the character education treatment will show positive growth in commitment to ethical goodness compared to students that did not participate in the treatment. **H0**: The null hypothesis for this quantitative pretest/posttest design was as follows: There was no statistically significant difference in commitment to ethical goodness between students taking part in the character education treatments and those that do not.

Participants

The subjects of this study were over 120 students from an urban high school in

Southeastern Georgia. The students were classified as either ninth, tenth, eleventh or twelfth

grade, ranging from the age of 15 to 18.   Based on the most recent data, 88% of the school

population is African American, and 71% of the school was eligible for free or reduced meals

(Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2011). The school also had 14% of their population

classified as students with disabilities (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2011).

Students were randomly assigned to United States History classes by the guidance counselors at

the school. The teacher designated one of the classes randomly to be the control group.

Setting

The setting of this study was a public high school in southeastern Georgia. The treatment

was administered in a United States History classroom in the school by a certified Social Studies

teacher. The United States History courses were taught in the Fall of 2013, with the treatments

administered throughout the semester. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the

school system and the school administrator.

Instrumentation

The Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale (CEG) was given to students prior to the

designed lesson plans (treatments) and afterwards as a posttest. Permission was obtained from

the students' parents or guardians so they could participate in the study. An official letter was

sent home with the students to explain the nature of the study and to obtain parental permission.

All experimental treatments were administered by the same instructor.

The Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale was administered to the class by the teacher

of record, anonymously from the researcher, so the researcher would not be aware of names

associated with the questionnaires. The teacher assigned numbers to the students to allow the

researcher to compare pre and post surveys. The random assignment of numbers to the

participants during the experiment helped ensure a degree of objectivity to the conclusions. The Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale was utilized in an attempt to assess student understanding of the prescribed values taught in the lesson plans. The Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale was administered to students as a pretest before the treatments and a posttest after the treatments to determine the effect, if any, on student commitment to ethical goodness.

The guidelines prescribed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed throughout the study. Permission was obtained from the IRB before any letters were sent home or any of the treatments were performed.

Procedures

The researcher submitted the proposed research to IRB, and upon approval from the IRB executed the research. IRB approval can be found in the appendices. The researcher obtained permission from the school administrators, teachers, and parents to conduct the experiment. A letter was sent home with students outlining the purpose and procedures of the study to gain consent for students to participate. Once permission was given by all parties, the teacher administered the pretest prior to the delivery of the treatments. Throughout the semester, the teacher implemented the character education treatments to the students. At the end of the semester, the Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale was administered as a posttest.

Prior to the administration of the treatments, the teacher/storyteller was instructed on the mechanics of the stories to be told for this treatment. The teacher was instructed to make sure the story was not read to students, but that the teller should remember the story and tell it as a conversation with the class. Another guideline was to allow students to interrupt the story with questions, to ensure understanding and engagement. The teacher was also encouraged to include a few visuals during the course of the story to help students stay focused and engaged.

The results of the pretest and posttest were compared to determine the impact of the character lesson plans (treatments), if any, on student commitment to ethical goodness.

Data Analysis

A matched pairs t-test was used to compare student responses before and after treatment. The t-test served to identify differences between the experimental and control group responses on the instrument. The t-test was run on student responses to the pretest and posttest CEG results. The results were analyzed to determine whether the results were statistically significant. All data was entered into Microsoft Excel, and all statistical analysis was conducted at a 0.05 alpha level.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect, if any, of character education through storytelling integrated into a U.S. History curriculum on the commitment to ethical goodness of participants. The emphasis on standardized testing of the last decade has pushed many character education programs out of schools, but the need for character development still exists. This study sought to include the teaching of character into the prescribed state curriculum. Methodology for this quantitative study was detailed in Chapter Three, along with a description of the treatments involved with the experimental group. A description of the instrument used for this study, The Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale, was also given to determine the effect of the treatments on participants. The following hypothesis was tested for this study: Character education integrated into a social studies curriculum can have a positive effect on student character development.

The research for this study was guided by the following question: Will character education implemented through historical storytelling into a social studies curriculum have a positive effect on student ethical focus and motivation? In order to answer this question, treatments were designed from resources published by Tony Sanchez. Four different treatments were adapted from his work to be implemented into the Georgia Professional Standards United States History curriculum. An instrument was chosen to measure growth in student commitment to ethical goodness before and after the treatments. A matched pairs t-test was used to analyze the results to determine whether changes in student responses were statistically significant.

The researcher wanted to test the following hypothesis for this quantitative control group pretest/posttest design:

H1: Students taking part in the character education treatment will show positive growth in character development compared to students that did not participate in the treatment.

H0: The null hypothesis for this quantitative pretest/posttest design was: There will be no statistically significant difference in character development between students taking part in the character education treatment and those that do not.

One of the most important components of this study was the need to find an educator at a local high school with a passion for character education and a willingness to facilitate this study. Fortunately, the researcher found an educator with the skills to implement this study and desire to see the effect of this study on students. The facilitator for this study was a highly qualified social studies teacher, with five U.S. History classes. His excitement and determination to see this research take place was vital to the success of the study.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

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The study took place in the Fall of 2013 in five U.S. History classes, all taught by the same teacher. Participants from all five classes were given consent forms, along with a summary of the study. Once consent forms were collected, all participant students were given the Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale a pretest. Four classes took part in the treatments and were part of the experimental group. The fifth class was chosen to be the control group that would participate in the pretest and posttest, but not the character education treatments. The treatments were incorporated into the Georgia Professional Standards U.S. History lessons for the experimental group. The goal was to implement these lessons as a natural part of the curriculum, rather than treat them as a secondary curriculum. Once the treatments were given, a posttest was administered to both the experimental and control groups.

At the beginning of the study there were 128 students that would participate in either the

experimental or control group. Of the total number, 19 students were designated for the control

group and 109 for the experimental group; however, a variety of factors reduced the total number

of scores reported to 12 control group scores and 76 experimental group scores. Most of the

students participated in all aspects of the study either as control or experimental, but there were a

few factors that led to some scores not being reported accurately. Of the seven students from the

control group whose scores were not included, two subjects failed to answer every question on

the pretest, and five did not take the pretest or posttest. There were a total of 33 experimental

group students who did not have complete scores to report for the study. Of the 33 students, 11

failed to fully answer the all of the questions in the pretest or posttest. Another 22 students failed

to take either the pretest or the posttest survey.

Unfortunately the researcher was not surprised by the large number of incomplete or

missing survey results with the transient nature of the student population in this particular school

system. In fact, it was rather encouraging to see so many submitted results, which is a testament

to the teacher of record's efforts to get them all completed. The missing or incomplete results

from every participant are probably standard for a study of this type in this school environment.

Results

The paired samples t-test was run on Microsoft Excel 2010. Two separate t-tests were

run for this study, one for the results of the control group (12 results) and another for the

experimental group (76 results). Listed below in Table 1 are results of the paired samples t-test

for the experimental group.

Table 4.1

*Paired **Samples t-test** Results for Experimental Group*

Calculation	Results
Mean Difference	-0.80263158
Standard Deviation of Difference	7.198184469
Standard Error of Deviation	0.825688386
T alpha half 95% CI	1.992
Lower Confidence Interval	-2.44740284
Upper Confidence Interval	0.842139686
P Value	0.334137613
t Stat	0.972075655

        The results of the paired samples t-test show no statistically significant differences in the means of the pretest and posttest of the experimental group for several reasons. First of all, the *p* value (0.3341) was higher than the significance level (0.05), therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. Secondly, because the test statistic (t Stat 0.9721) does not fall in the critical region, then the null hypothesis was not rejected. Third, because 0 falls within the confidence interval (-2.447, 0.842) the null hypothesis was not rejected.

        All three of these reasons suggest the results failed to reject the null hypothesis, and therefore the results between the means were not statistically significant. Even though the mean of the posttest of the experimental group was lower than the pretest, which suggests positive growth in student commitment to ethical goodness, those results were not statistically significant.

However it should be noted that the mean difference of the experimental group (-0.8026) was greater than the control group (-.5833), although not enough to be statistically significant. Listed below in Table 4.2 are the results of the paired samples t-test for the control group.

Table 4.2

Paired Samples t-test Results for Control Group

Calculation	Results
Mean Difference	-0.58333333
Standard Deviation of Difference	5.91543948
Standard Error of Difference	1.707640288
T alpha half 95% CI	2.2009
Lower Confidence Interval	-4.34167884
Upper Confidence Interval	3.175012177
P Value	0.739087038
t Stat	0.341601997

The results of the paired samples t-test for the control group also show no statistically significant differences in the means of the pretest and posttest scores. The first results to consider are that the *p* value (0.7391) was higher than the significance level (0.05), therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. Secondly, because the test statistic (t Stat 0.3416) does not fall in the critical region then the null hypothesis was not rejected. Third, because 0 falls within the confidence interval (-4.341, 3.175) the null hypothesis was not rejected.

These results suggest the null hypothesis was not rejected, and therefore the results between the means were not statistically significant. Even though the mean of the posttest of the control group was lower than the pretest, which suggests positive growth in student commitment

to ethical goodness, those results were not statistically significant.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Summary of the Findings

The results of the paired samples t-test for both the experimental and control groups were statistically insignificant. Neither group had a statistically significant decrease in means from the pretest to the posttest, even though the means were lower on the posttest for the experimental and control groups. It was the hope of the researcher that the results would prove to be statistically significant, but that was not the case. Despite these results and the fact that the hypothesis was not proven, another similar study could show different results.

Discussion of the Findings

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) was one of the theories that helped shape the framework for this study. According to Social Learning Theory, new patterns of behavior can be learned by observing the behavior of others (Bandura, 1971). The theory also argued that learning through observation is more effective when the models have admired status. One of the goals of this study was to provide opportunities for students to observe the moral decision making of important figures from United States history, in an attempt to influence the behavior of the students. Four treatments were developed based on telling the stories of the moral choices made by George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Abigail Adams. These four figures were chosen because they are all prominent figures in U.S. History and would retain an admired status because of their roles in the founding of the United States. Even though the results of the study determined no statistically significant difference in the results of the instrument, all four treatments included compelling models of the moral decision making of these individuals.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development (1963) also had a significant influence on the

theoretical framework of this study. Kohlberg (1963) maintained that there are six identifiable developmental stages of moral reasoning, which can be classified in logical terms. Since moral reasoning is an identifiable concept that can be classified, this study sought to provide quantitative evidence for the effectiveness of character education. The Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale (Narvaez, Bock, & Vaydich, 2008) was chosen as the instrument for this study in the attempt to quantify one aspect of students' moral reasoning, in this case, their commitment to ethical goodness. The instrument seemed to be a good measure of the participants' ethical thinking. The survey was short and easy to understand; therefore, it should not have been confusing for the participants. No reports were given from the facilitator concerning students having a hard time understanding the expectations of the scale.

The last major influence on the theoretical framework of this study was a series of articles by Tony Sanchez (2005a, 2006a, & 2007). Sanchez (2007) suggested educators can include stories of the moral decision making of historical figures into their lessons to help teach character. He contended that the inclusion of these stories accomplishes two goals: to help students understand and reflect upon the ethical choices that were made, and to allow them to consider the issues associated with these figures (Sanchez, 2007). The four treatments adapted for this study are based on works by Sanchez and attempt to use storytelling as a means to share with students the moral decision making of some of U.S. history's most prominent figures. Despite the statistically insignificant results of this study, the researcher still contends that these treatments could be effective in the right environment and if they were a consistent part of the curriculum.

This study was an attempt to add to the literature that suggested character education can have a positive impact on the character of students. Richardson, Tolson, Huang, and Lee (2009)

determined that the character education curriculum, *Connecting with Others: Lessons For Teaching Social and Emotional Competence*, helped participants socialize and interact with one another more so than students who did not participate in the program. A 2001 study of the *Facing History and Ourselves* curriculum found that participants showed increases in relationship maturity, along with decreases in relationship maturity and self-reported fighting behavior (Schultz et al., 2001). Linares et al. (2005) found that participants in a study on the effectiveness of the *Unique Minds School Program* (UMSP) showed gains in student self-efficacy, problem solving skills, social-emotional competencies, and math grades. All three of these studies suggested that the character education programs involved in the studies had a positive impact on the character growth of participants. However, these studies relied on qualitative data as reported by teachers and school administrators. This study hoped to provide quantitative evidence that character education can improve student character.

The literature reviewed for this study also found a variety of studies that found character education programs can have a positive impact on school climates (Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2008; Schultz et al., 2001) and can improve academic performance (Benninga et al., 2006; Greenberg et al., 2003; Hawkins et al., 2001; Twemlow et al., 2001). These studies also considered qualitative data to come to their conclusions along with ancillary results that were correlational, but probably not a direct result of the character education programs. This study focused on potential changes in student character rather than the impact of the treatments on school climate or academic gains.

The studies examined in the literature review suggested that character education has a positive impact on student character, school climate, and/or academics. Even though there is also a variety of qualitative or correlational data that support the positive impact of character

education on school climate and student character, there is still a need for studies to determine the exact impact of these programs on student character (Was et al., 2006). While these studies have shown a correlational improvement in student behavior, school climate surveys do not measure student character (Rudd & Stoll, 2004). Researchers need evidence-based studies to understand in which ways these character education interventions are effective and can be improved upon (Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2005). Unfortunately this study was not able to accomplish its goals in providing quantitative evidence that character education can positively impact student character growth.

The results indicate that the character education lessons and activities did not have a statistically significant impact on student commitment to ethical goodness as was hypothesized by the researcher. In fact, the results of the paired samples t-test for the experimental and control groups yielded similar results. Changes in student responses in the experimental group and control group were a little lower, from the pretest to the posttest, but not enough to be statistically significant. Results for neither group showed a statistically significant change in results, thus the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Participants responded to a fifteen item pretest and posttest instrument called the Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale. Designated participants in the experimental group then took part in four separate treatments concerning the stories of moral dilemmas of important figures from U.S. History. The control group participants did not take part in the treatments, but were taught U.S. History by the same teacher as the experimental group. The researcher noted that the changes in the results of both groups from the pretest to the posttest were not statistically significant.

Even though the results were not statistically significant and showed little positive

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changes in student commitment to ethical goodness, the teacher responsible for implementing the treatments suggested students enjoyed the unique treatments. The teacher stated that students seemed to enjoy the activities associated with the treatments and that some responded positively when asked about the activities. The teacher also stated that he enjoyed breaking up the curriculum with these activities and hoped to incorporate more character education activities into the classroom.

Implications

The implications of the study are that four treatments, taught essentially on four separate occasions over one class period each time, are not sufficient to have a statistically significant impact on a student's commitment to ethical goodness. A goal of the researcher was to implement character education into a U.S. History curriculum with minimal interference on the state mandated standards, therefore only four treatments were chosen. Unfortunately, it appears that the inclusion of only four lessons was not enough to yield statistically significant positive results.

Administrators that want to incorporate character education into their schools through the curriculum must understand that based on these results, four treatments taught over four class periods are not enough to improve student character. The implementation of character education into the curriculum will need to be more extensive than the treatments outlined in this study. A good place to start for administrators would be to encourage one department or a select group of teacher leaders in the school to begin the process of including character education through storytelling into the curriculum. Once the pilot groups of teachers have been able to master using stories in the curriculum to teach character, then they can provide training and guidance to the rest of the staff.

Administrators need to offer professional development opportunities for educators so they can learn how to best include character education into the curriculum through storytelling. Workshops and professional development courses should be made mandatory for any teacher who teaches a class in which it is an expectation that they will include character education. School administrations should also expect evidence of character education in the lesson plans of the teachers after the training sessions. Administrators should also seek to find the necessary resources for their teachers to include character education into their lessons. Two great social studies resources are *Tales Worth Telling* by Tony Sanchez (2013) and *Reasoning With Democratic Values* by Alan Lockwood and David Harris (1985).

Educators face similar challenges to those of administrators concerning the implementation of character education. Not every teacher is good at telling stories, and training or workshops can help teachers grow in their storytelling abilities. Therefore any educator attempting to use stories as a means to teach character should seek professional development of some kind to grow as a storyteller. Educators should also recruit other teachers to participate in teaching character when it is not mandated by the school or administration. The effect of the lessons will be even greater when they are reinforced and supported in other classes throughout the school.

Teachers should also seek to find resources to help them include character education stories into their classes. They should not feel the need to "reinvent the wheel," but rather they should seek to find character education resources that focus on storytelling, or find books of stories related to their subject to use. In addition to the two resources mentioned earlier by Sanchez and Lockwood & Harris, teachers should also consider *The Moral Compass* by William Bennett, *Character for Life* by Don Hawkins, *Under God* by Toby Mac and Michael Tait, and

Living Under God also by Mac and Tait. Creating character education lessons that center on a well told story is not an easy task, and a variety of resources will make the process much easier for teachers.

Limitations of Study

There are several limitations to the study that must be considered when evaluating the results. First, as mentioned in the previous section, four treatments were not enough for students to properly consider their own commitment to ethical goodness as they reflected on the moral decisions of others. The amount of time students spent on the treatments was no more than four hours, and this time was spread out over one month. It is possible that the inclusion of more treatment stories of moral dilemmas could have allowed students more opportunities to consider their commitment to ethical goodness.

Another limitation of the study was that of the sample population. Only two-thirds submitted completed pretest and posttest responses. Of the 128 participants, only 88 results were reported, which is a result of incomplete data on 40 participants' results. Over thirty percent of the results were incomplete, for a variety of reasons including a change of schedule and moving out of the school district. The researcher would have preferred to have a larger percentage of the sample population results, given that the sample population was not large to begin with.

A third limitation to the study was that it was conducted at only one school, with a limited number of subjects from that school. The researcher intentionally chose to limit the sample size at the school to only those students that were taught by the teacher implementing the study. This action aided in establishing some internal validity to the results since the same teacher would be administering the treatments in the same manner with all of the experimental group members. A larger sample population from multiple schools, quite possibly from multiple

school districts would be more advantageous to validating the results.

Recommendations for Further Study

Even though the study did not yield the intended results, this is the type of study that is needed in research on character education. There are not enough studies in character education that consider the impact of the curriculum on student character or that attempt to incorporate character into the prescribed standards. Therefore, several recommendations can be made for future studies of this nature.

The first recommendation for further study would be to conduct a study of this nature at different sites with a variety of participants. Conducting the study at various locations with a variety of students would allow the researcher to determine differences in results, if any, among participants from different locations, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic background, or even school type. This would also afford the researcher the opportunity to examine whether treatments of this nature are more effective with one group over another.

Another recommendation would be to develop more treatments beyond the four developed for this study. The stories that were told in relation to the treatment were only a small focus of the curriculum and more treatments may have given students more opportunities to reflect on their own character along with the character of the historical figures. Depending on the length of time devoted to a future study, it would be fitting for the researcher to consider adding more treatments to the study.

Something else to consider for future study would be to shorten the time in between treatments. A goal of the study was to incorporate the character education treatments into the curriculum as a natural part of the lesson plans. This presented a problem in that there would sometimes be a week or two in between the treatments. For future studies, the researcher may

consider incorporating all of the treatments into a two week period as part of a review of the state standards. This would afford the participants less time in between treatments so they may build more quickly on their ethical identities.

Lastly, a future study should consider an additional test on the difference of the means of the two groups. An additional test would allow for another comparison of the experimental and control groups. This test would be a statistical test of the difference of the means of two unmatched populations with unknown population standard deviations. A test of this nature would be beneficial in the event that one result was statistically significant and the other was not.

Further studies of this nature may consider a new instrument to measure student character development. The Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale (CEG) was a reliable scale and was not difficult for students to understand, however it may not have been the best instrument for a study of this nature. Future researchers may want to consider the Defining Issues Test-2 (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 1999), a questionnaire designed to measure Kohlberg's stages of moral development. The instrument involves four moral dilemmas, followed by 12 statements in which the subjects are to rank from greatest to least importance. Since the treatments involved stories to communicate moral choices, the DIT-2 may prove to be a useful instrument for similar studies.

<div style="text-align:center">Reflections on Research Results</div>

The results of the research failed to yield the desired results, but the lessons learned from the study can be improved upon for further research. Suggestions for further research will help guide future researchers as they seek to determine the most effective methods to help student character growth. A foundation has been given for future studies of this nature, as well as

character education lesson plans for educators to utilize in the classroom. Hopefully, at the very least, educators with an interest in character education will use lessons like those created for this study to incorporate more character education into the classroom.

Quantitative studies are not common for studies in the field of character education. Most assessments of character education programs rely on qualitative data such as surveys of educators and administrators. Regardless of this trend, in order to gauge the effectiveness of character education initiatives on improving character, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding quantitative evidence for the effectiveness of character education on improving character. Despite the results of this study, there is still a need to determine the exact effects of character education on student character, as noted by Was et al. (2006). It is the hope of this researcher that proponents of character education will continue to conduct evidence-based studies in character education to help researchers understand the ways these interventions are effective and the ways they can be improved (Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2005).

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MORAL PSYCHOLOGY LABORATORY

Providing tools for ethical character development

Guide for using the Commitment to Ethical Goodness scale

For Elementary and Secondary School Students

_____

VERSION 2.0

Purpose of the Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale

The Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale (CEG) is a 15-item, 3-factor self-report scale developed for use in measuring the effectiveness of moral character education programs in increasing ethical focus and motivation. Ethical focus is one of four psychological factors involved in moral functioning identified by Rest (1983; Narvaez & Rest, 1995).

Construction of the Ethical Identity Scale

Initially tested as part of a battery of items examining ethical identity, duty and citizenship in elementary school students, fifteen items hung together as one factor we termed "ethical identity" at first, and now "commitment to ethical goodness." For most items, respondents complete a 5-point Likert-type scale (always agree to never agree). Two items, from an original duty scale, have their own response choices.

Description

The 15-item scale (formerly called "**Ethical Identity;**" Anderson et al., 2003; Narvaez et al., 2004) measures three sub-factors: moral locus of control, ethical goodness, and ethical self-regulation Items include "It doesn't matter whether you are good or bad" and "Being a good person at school is important to me." Participants respond using a Likert-type scale (1=Always agree, 5= Never agree). Item scores may be added, forming summary scores which range from 15 to 75. Alternatively, mean scores may also be used when item data are missing (computing appropriate means for subjects with missing item data). One may also use the subscales as separate scores (used in Mullen et al., 2005)

Reliability and Findings

Pilot studies with middle school students in Minnesota obtained Cronbach alphas of .83 (n = 73), .87 (n = 412). The pretest data from Minnesota Community Voices and Character Education project (when it was called Ethical Identity; alpha=.86; Anderson, Narvaez, Bock, Endicott, & Lies, 2004; Narvaez, Bock, Endicott, & Lies, 2004) Commitment to Ethical Goodness was correlated with Concern for others (.39), Community Bonding (.44), Citizenship (.67), Ethical Assertiveness (.59). In subsequent analyses, school climate was positively related to Ethical Goodness ($F(1, 278)=53.44$, $p<.001$, $\eta2=.16$).

In another study (Narvaez, Turner, Khmelkov, Vaydich, & Mullen, 2008), there were two samples. The first

sample included 806 students, grades 6-8, from a public middle school in a middle-sized Midwestern metropolitan area (alpha=.86) The second sample included 370 students, grades 5-8, from six Catholic schools in the same middle-sized Midwestern metropolitan area (alpha=.82). Contrary to expectations, there was no difference in mean scores for the public and Catholic school samples. See Table 1 for means and standard deviations.

In the public school sample, CEG was correlated with empathy (r=.32), not cheating (.26), perception of mastery goal structure (.51), perception of performance goal structure (.16), student bonding to school (.57) and perception of climate (.51). In the Catholic school sample, CEG was correlated with empathy (.48), not cheating (.43), perception of mastery goal structure (.40), student bonding to school (.63) and perception of climate (.43).

The hierarchical regressions for Commitment to Ethical Goodness (Model 1: demographic variables; Model 2: add learning climate variables; model 3: add social climate variables) indicated that it was predicted in both samples by student bonding to school. In the public school sample, being female, being younger, perception of mastery goal structure and more positive views of teacher-created climate were also predictive. In the Catholic sample, only bonding to school was a predictor.

Table 1. Commitment to Ethical Goodness Means and Standard Deviations by School Sample (Public, Catholic) from Narvaez et al. (2008)

Public			Catholic		
Overall	Males	Females	Overall	Males	Females
(n=802)	(n=375)	(n=427)	(n=370)	(n=190)	(n=180)
3.95 (.47)	3.86(.48)	4.02 (.43)	3.99 (.41)	3.92 (.43)	4.05 (.38)

Permission and Publishing

NOTE: When you publish any reference to this scale, please cite this guide.

Before publishing test items, you must have a permission letter from us describing your study and where it

will be published.

So we can collect a database of the scale, <u>we would appreciate a copy of your data</u>, whether or not you publish it. We will credit you with your work in this guide.

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R=Reverse Coded in bold

Being a good person at school is important to me.

People at school think I'm a good person.

Being a good person at home is important to me.

People at home think I am a good person.

I know what it means to be a good person at home.

I am a good person at home.

I am a good person with my friends.

I agree with most of my friends on what it is to be a good person.

R It doesn't matter whether you are good or bad.

R I do what my friends do.

I have rules for myself that I follow.

R I behave badly.

R When things go wrong, it's other people's fault.

How often do you do a good job on your homework?

How often do you tell the truth?

EGS

1. Being a good person at school is important to me.

| Always | Usually | Agree | Rarely | Never |
| agree | agree | half the time | agree | agree |

2. People at school think I'm a good person.

| Always | Usually | Agree | Rarely | Never |
| agree | agree | half the time | agree | agree |

3. Being a good person at home is important to me.

| Always | Usually | Agree | Rarely | Never |
| agree | agree | half the time | agree | agree |

4. People at home think I am a good person.

| Always | Usually | Agree | Rarely | Never |
| agree | agree | half the time | agree | agree |

5. I know what it means to be a good person at home.

| Always | Usually | Agree | Rarely | Never |
| agree | agree | half the time | agree | agree |

6. I am a good person at home.

| Always | Usually | Agree | Rarely | Never |
| agree | agree | half the time | agree | agree |

7. I am a good person with my friends.

| Always | Usually | Agree | Rarely | Never |
| agree | agree | half the time | agree | agree |

8. I agree with most of my friends on what it is to be a good person.

| Always | Usually | Agree | Rarely | Never |
| agree | agree | half the time | agree | agree |

9. It doesn't matter whether you are good or bad.

| Always | Usually | Agree | Rarely | Never |
| agree | agree | half the time | agree | agree |

10. I do what my friends do.

Always	Usually	Agree	Rarely	Never
agree	agree	half the time	agree	agree

11. I have rules for myself that I follow.

Always	Usually	Agree	Rarely	Never
agree	agree	half the time	agree	agree

12. I behave badly.

Always	Usually	Agree	Rarely	Never
agree	agree	half the time	agree	agree

13. When things go wrong, it's other people's fault.

Always	Usually	Agree	Rarely	Never
agree	agree	half the time	agree	agree

14. How often do you do a good job on your homework?

Always	Usually	Half the time	Rarely	Never

15. How often do you tell the truth?

Always	Usually	Half the time	Rarely	Never

Ethical Identity Scale (n=9)

I am a good person at home.

I am a good person with my friends.

Being a good person at school is important to me.

People at home think I am a good person.

I agree with most of my friends on what it is to be a good person.

Being a good person at home is important to me.

I behave badly.

People at school think I'm a good person.

I know what it means to be a good person at home.

Moral Locus of Control (n=3)

It doesn't matter whether you are good or bad.

I do what my friends do.

When things go wrong, it's other people's fault.

Ethical Self-Regulation (n=3)

I have rules for myself that I follow.

How often do you do a good job on your homework?

How often do you tell the truth?

Appendix B: Lesson Plans (Treatments)

Treatments have been removed from appendix. For more on treatments see:

Sanchez, T. R. (2005). The story of the Boston Massacre: A storytelling opportunity for

character education. *The Social Studies*, *96*(6), 265-269.

Sanchez, T. R. (2006). The man who could have been king: A storyteller's guide for

character education. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, *30*(2), 3-9.

Sanchez, T. R. (2012). *Tales worth telling: Stories of selected heroes/heroines who define

us as American*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Sanchez, T. R. & Mills, R. (2005). Telling tells: The teaching of American history

through story-telling. *Social Education*, *69*(5). 269-274.

Sanchez, T. R. & Stewart, V. (2006). The remarkable Abigail: Storytelling for character

education. *The High School Journal*, *89*(4), 14-21.

Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter

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June 27, 2013

Russell Long
IRB Approval 1599.062713: Integrating Character Education into the Social Studies through Storytelling

Dear Russell,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

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Appendix D: Approval from Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools

April 17, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

Mr. Russell Long has requested and been granted permission to conduct research within the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System on the following topic:
Integrating Character Education into a Social Studies Classroom through Storytelling.

This permission has been granted by the office appointed by the Superintendent of schools to review all requests for research to be conducted within the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System. Mr. Long has fulfilled the application requirements and provided the documentation necessary to ensure that we understand the scope of research and the methods used to collect and present findings.

All prospective researchers must note that district approval does not guarantee school participation. The school principal will make the final determination on whether research activity may proceed at the school.

Should you have any questions regarding Mr. Long's research approval status, please feel free to contact me at

Thank you,

Kristy Collins Rylander
Savannah-Chatham County Public School System
Office of Accountability, Assessment, & Reporting

Office of Accountability, Assessment, & Reporting

Appendix E: Approval from Dr. Narvaez to Use CEGS

Darcia Narvaez
Tue 6/26/2012 8:58 PM

To: ☐Long, Russell;

You replied on 6/27/2012 1:27 PM.

Hi, Russell,

The planned use of the measure sounds fine. You can download it in the guidebook for it at my website (like below) under Tools for researchers and educators. There are other measures there that might be of interest, like Citizenship or Community Bonding.

Let me know your findings so I can cite them in the guidebook.

Best wishes on your work!

Darcia

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~~~~~~~~
Darcia Narvaez
Professor
Department of Psychology, University of Notre Dame

Appendix F: Approval from Dr. Sanchez to Use Treatments for Study

Sanchez, Tony
Wed 4/4/2012 6:27 PM

To: ☐ Long, Russell;

You forwarded this message on 5/8/2012 10:59 AM.

Hi Russell:

Thank you for your kind words. It's most flattering to hear that other educators are interested in my work. Of course you may use and modify my stuff for your needs. After all, that's why we do research: so others may build upon it. One of the major reasons I'm involved in character education via the stories of American heroes/heroines is so dissertation topics such as yours might be pursued. So go for it!

From your brief description, I believe your proposal is not only admirable but necessary for the field. You are also correct about the measuring instrument: finding the appropriate one is key and creating your own Likert-type instrument is the best route. But you'll want to be careful about an attitudinal survey in order to precisely measure what you truly want to measure. Existing surveys that I have seen- admittedly few- have not impressed me to the point of pursuing such a study myself, but have you come across any that you could modify and tailor to your needs for a pre-post measure? But if I may further advise, the teachers to be utilized need to be effective storytellers. There is a crucial difference between storytelling and lecturing, and the former will be vital to your study.

In any case, I would be glad to advise you along the way. To that end, this may be of interest for your study: I'm in the process of completing a book about the hero concept in American history, the storytelling strategy as a vehicle to teach the value of heroes, and seventeen stories of selected American heroes/heroines written for social studies teachers to tell their classes, all of course intended to promote character education. The four subjects of my previous articles are among that group but I have since revised and expanded each of their stories for the book. A study on how those stories affect the character education of our students sounds like what you intend to measure. Granted, seventeen stories instead of four constitute a bigger "bite" than you originally planned, but at least it may also give you more choices to use.

Please feel free to contact me anytime and good luck.
Tony Sanchez

Appendix G: Permission from Dr. Narvaez to Publish CEGS

Darcia Narvaez
Wed 4/23/2014 5:45 PM

To: ☐ Long, Russell;

You replied on 4/26/2014 4:39 PM.

That is fine. Good luck finishing up!

Darcia

Long, Russell   mark as unread
Wed 4/23/2014 4:54 PM
Sent Items

>> Dr. Narvaez,
>>
>> I have included a copy of the Guide to the Commitment to Ethical Goodness Scale in the appendix of my dissertation. If you would like me to take it out please let me know. I wanted to make sure I have your permission to publish in my dissertation before it is finalized. Thank you.
>>
>> Russell