

CHARACTER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES:
A HISTORY OF A MOVEMENT WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE
CHARACTER EDUCATION INQUIRY

by

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(Under the Direction of Ronald E. Butchart)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop a thorough historical analysis of twentieth century character education in American public schools, with special attention to the impact of the Character Education Inquiry (1928-1930) upon the curricula, pedagogy, and scholarly literature related to the character education movement. This work will also provide a comprehensive survey and critique of what presently passes for character education in the United States, building on the work of McClellan and Cunningham by examining the reputed decline in virtue in America's schools against a historical backdrop of societal changes. The goal of this investigation is to place contemporary advocacy in its historical context to more fully understand the problems and contradictions in the current character education initiative, while simultaneously surveying the positive place of character education today.

INDEX WORDS: Character Education, Curriculum Reform, Moral Education, Philosophy, Ethics, Character Education Inquiry

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my father who can witness this day with heavenly eyes, to my mother who has always been there for me and encouraged me to give my very best, and to my family both biological and extended for giving me the support to finish this chapter in my life.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE CHANGING FACE OF CHARACTER

Statement of the Problem

My interest in moral education began in the fall of 1994 when I accepted a teaching position at the Character Education Center in Gainesville, Georgia. While at the Center my duties included teaching a course entitled *Ethics* to public high school students as part of a released-time education program. The teaching material that was supplied to me by the Character Education Center (syllabus, lesson plans, no text, etc.) was sparse, and what I did have in hand reflected a values clarification theoretical model for ethical instruction. Believing that there were better approaches to ethical inquiry, I began to investigate both the history of moral education in America and the present-day literature on the subject. That study has continued to today, and what I have found thus far is a multitude of programs, theoretical frameworks, and approaches to what is currently labeled the *Character Education Movement* in America's schools.

My research to date reveals a picture of an American society facing many new challenges for sustaining moral communities. Increased geographic and social mobility, time pressures, and the weakening of social institutions are among the many factors that have made it difficult to keep up relationships of sufficient depth, stability, and continuity to achieve an authentic community. As well, these institutions find themselves having to compete with new forms of media: television, the computer, video movies, and the Internet, to name a few. In the last several decades many communities and schools have witnessed a corresponding increase in the range of behaviors that society at large no longer associates with immorality, while other have fallen beyond the pale. This increase in the level and tolerance of behaviors is considered by

Himmelfarb to be closely tied to evidence of a weakening of social institutions.¹ Many social theorists and researchers have concluded that changes associated with post-industrial society have resulted in increasing confusion, detachment, ambivalence, and deviance in society.² These factors have contributed to the view that there has been considerable moral decline in present-day societies. Schools may be one of the few social institutions in contemporary society that provide students the possibility for some degree of stable and meaningful participation in a community. As an educator, I am an ethical agent, and my ultimate place in this moral community needs to be an informed one that is supported by strong historical and social research.

The character education literature of the recent past provides a good basis for understanding the diversity of the Character Education Movement of the new millennium. Much research has gone into answering the questions, “Why is character education needed?” and “How can character be developed in the children of America?” Character education programs have been developed by a host of entities, with an almost equal number of theoretical approaches guiding their implementation. Although some assessment of existing programs has occurred, and attempts are being made to establish a rigorous program evaluation, at present only tentative conclusions have been reached regarding what works in character education. Historians of education have not been quiet in this area, providing a good basis for understanding the moral qualities of textbooks, the conduct of classroom management, the changing philosophy of moral instruction, and the resultant social implications of that character training. B. Edward McClellan, in particular, has filled in many of the large gaps in previous historical scholarship with his text, *Moral Education in America: Schools and the Shaping of Character from Colonial*

¹ G. Himmelfarb, *The Demoralization of Society* (New York: Knopf Publisher, 1995), 4.

² K. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 31.

Times to the Present. In this work, McClellan traced the shifting institutional responsibilities for moral education and documented the declining place of moral education in the twentieth-century school. As well, McClellan explored an important, broad study of character education undertaken in the first third of the twentieth century, the Character Education Inquiry (CEI). He noted the important role that the Inquiry played in the diminished significance of moral education, claiming the Inquiry “overthrew conventional theory and practice for all forms of moral education.”³

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop a thorough historical analysis of twentieth-century character education in American public schools, with special attention to the impact of the Character Education Inquiry (1928-1930) upon the curricula, pedagogy, and scholarly literature related to the character education movement. I will specifically look at the findings of Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May as presented in the Character Education Inquiry and subsequent educational literature that relates to moral education. Yale University psychologists Hartshorne and May, progressive students of character education, studied the behavior of some 10,000 schoolchildren given opportunities to lie, cheat, or steal. These studies were motivated by the successes being claimed by progressive-era researchers in the measurement of mental intelligence and moral aptitude. The Character Education Inquiry studies were conducted from 1925 through 1930. The researchers’ stated goal was to “develop an understanding of character as a personal and social phenomenon.”⁴ Craig A. Cunningham, in his text, *A Certain Reasoned Art: The Rise and Fall of Character Education*, provides a good overview of the Inquiry, its findings, and subsequent educational implications. My study will explore the history of

³ B. Edward McClellan, *Moral Education in America : Schools and the Shaping of Character from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 55.

⁴ Hugh Hartshorne et al., *Studies in the Nature of Character*, vol. 3 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), 4.

character education prior to the Inquiry, and examine how the Inquiry disrupted that moral educational practice, in terms of curricula, pedagogy, and scholarly literature. This paper does not speak to the question of how moral education was reflected in the average public school classroom, nor do the findings provide sufficient data for a full discussion in regard to the question of the reliability of the Character Education Inquiry. These questions are not irrelevant, but best researched and answered at a later date.

The literature on contemporary character education, although prolific, often argues from differing approaches to character with little sense of the movement's history. This research will provide a comprehensive survey and critique of what presently passes for character education in the United States, building on the work of McClellan and Cunningham by examining the reputed decline in virtue in America's schools against a historical backdrop of societal changes, and by investigating the present-day moral education programs that have returned to America's schools seven decades later, with instructional approaches that seemingly deny the findings of the Inquiry. The goal of this investigation is to place contemporary advocacy in its historical context to more fully understand the problems and contradictions in the current character education initiative, while simultaneously surveying the positive place of character education today.

Research Questions

The history of the current character education revival raises a number of questions that have important implications for school-based moral education. For example, how have Americans in the past practiced moral training? How has this training and practice been used to influence particular social groupings? What evidence did earlier practitioners have to indicate the efficacy of their practice? What has been the impact, both short and long term, of the

Character Education Inquiry upon moral education curricula, pedagogy, and scholarly literature since 1930? Have contemporary moral educators addressed, directly or indirectly, the conclusions the Inquiry reached? What are the implications of the answers to those questions for the integrity, impact, and viability of the contemporary Character Education Movement?

Although moral education has been a guiding principle closely attached to the formation of curriculum in American education, oftentimes educators have had great difficulty in reaching a consensus for what constitutes the appropriate pedagogy and curriculum for moral instruction. History remains the best approach for one to see the whole landscape of the present situation from a perspective that takes into account the past struggles and successes that make up the multifarious narrative of character education in America's schools.

Definition of Terms

It is impossible to discuss the changing face of character in American public schools without first understanding what comprises moral character. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, during the golden age of character education, Charles Germane defined character as "one's way of reacting to life situations.... character is the sum total of one's ways of responding that have become fairly well established or set."⁵ For present-day character proponents, the definitions are vast. The Character Education Partnership defines character as "knowing, caring about and acting upon core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others."⁶ This definition falls right in line with other traditional virtue-based character proponents such as Kevin Ryan, whose description of character contains a code of

⁵ Charles E. Germane and Edith Gayton Germane, *Character Education; A Program for the School and the Home* (New York: Silver, 1929), .x.

⁶ Marvin W. Berkowitz, Esther F. Schaffer, & Melinda C. Bier, "Character Education in the United States," *Education in the North* 1, no. 9 (2001): 3.

ethical behavior and list of values and character traits.⁷ Historically, character education has had a particular meaning and has been associated with traditional assumptions and approaches to fostering of virtues and traditional values. According to Nucci, in virtue-based moral theories, “moral right and wrong is typically defined in terms of the character of agents. Virtue is defined as an excellence or moral good that is related in some way to conceptions of human flourishing (eudaemonia) or the good life. In many virtue-based accounts, including Aristotle's, virtue is believed to be acquired by habit or practice.”⁸ Virtue-based character education usually contains a list of moral attributes that are both goal and descriptor of a person with character. For example, the philosopher David Hume identifies allegiance, public spirit, perseverance, secrecy, order, and chastity as virtues.⁹

Other proponents of character, however, approach character from a different perspective. Developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind defines character as the “ethical assessment of an individual,” which supposes an overall judgment of the moral worth of a person.¹⁰ In an article in *Moral Issues in Psychology*, Marvin Berkowitz defined moral development as the growth of “an individual’s capacity to function as an effective moral agent,” and later defines character as “an individual’s set of psychological characteristics that affect that person’s ability and inclination to function morally.”¹¹

⁷ Kevin Ryan, "In Defense of Character Education," in *Moral Development and Character Education: A Dialogue*, ed. Larry P. Nucci (Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Pub. Corp., 1989), 17.

⁸ For an extensive critique of virtue-based theories of morality see Helwig, Turiel, & Nucci, “Developmental Perspectives and Approaches to Character Education,” *Symposium conducted at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association*, Chicago, March 1997.

⁹ Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 36.

¹⁰ Diana Baumrind, *Child Maltreatment and Optimal Caregiving in Social Contexts*, *Michigan State University Series on Children, Youth, and Families 1* (New York: Garland Pub., 1995), 3.

¹¹ William Damon, ed., *Bringing in a New Era in Character Education* (Hoover Institution Press, 2002), 48.

Heslep refers to moral agency as well in his description of character, which involves virtuous actions linked with cognitive functioning.¹² Nucci deems the moral realm as a place of universals,¹³ while Lickona makes a clear distinction between universal and non-universal moralities.¹⁴ For example, Turiel identifies four major dimensions that separate universal morals from non-universal valuing: *alterability*—moral principles do not change, conventions are changeable; *contingency*—morality is not contingent on authority, social practice, or group agreement whereas social conventions are based on rules established by an individual or group; *generality*—morality and what is considered moral behavior is universal, whereas social conventions are specific to group or society; *seriousness*—moral transgressions are seen as more serious than social convention transgressions.¹⁵

For some, character is the extension of personality, whereas others see it as mainly behavioral. Hunter, in his book, *The Death of Character*, bemoans the psychological approach to character, contending that character is “very much social in its constitution.” He maintains that character reflects, even “incarnates,” moral culture.¹⁶ There are widely disparate perspectives on what constitutes character, and on this issue the differing perspectives greatly influence the approach to character education one takes as well as the delineation of successful outcomes.

To add to the confusion surrounding the issue of defining *character* is the ever-present problem of language. Even in the few paragraphs that this researcher has written in an attempt to define character, an astute reader can see the free interchange that has occurred between the

¹² Robert D. Heslep, *Moral Education for Americans* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995), 34.

¹³ Larry P. Nucci, *Education in the Moral Domain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 16.

¹⁴ Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character : How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (New York: Bantam, 1991), 21.

¹⁵ Elliot Turiel, *The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 67.

¹⁶ James Davison Hunter, *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age without Good or Evil* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 15.

terms *character education* and *morality*. *Character education* evokes multiple images in the American mind, with programs describing themselves as *character education*, *citizenship education*, or even *civic education*. The term of choice in Great Britain is *values education*. In Japan the popular term is *morality*.¹⁷ At the turn of the twentieth century in the United States the term of choice, *moral education*, which had dominated the religiously influenced landscape of the New World, was replaced by the more politically palatable term *character*. *Character* gave way to *values education* in the 1960's but was revived in the 1980's, signifying not only a return to character rhetoric, but more importantly, for many adherents, a return to the traditional practice and philosophy of educating for character.

The National Commission on Character Education has defined *character education* very broadly as "any deliberate approach by which school personnel, often in conjunction with parents and community members, help children and youth become caring, principled, and responsible."¹⁸ In the commission's report the term character education is not used to signify a particular philosophy, method, or program, but is an umbrella term that encompasses approaches as diverse as Piaget's cognitive developmental stages, Aristotle's Socratic questioning techniques, Dewey's progressive democratic practices, and Noddings's "ethic of care" in community building. It allows for many definitions and interpretations of character including definitions that are focused on right and wrong, and that are as interested with matters of "care" (i.e., mutual respect and cooperation), as with more traditional ethics (i.e., justice and fairness).¹⁹

¹⁷ Marvin W. Berkowitz, "Finding Common Ground to Study and Implement Character Education: Integrating Structure and Content in Moral Education," *Journal of Research in Education* 8, no. 1 (1998): 4.

¹⁸ Character Education Partnership, *Character Education: The Foundation for Teacher Education* (Washington, D.C.: CEP, 1999), 2.

¹⁹ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools : An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 16.

For this research, *character* will be regarded as the attributes or features that make up and distinguish the individual, the complex of mental and ethical traits making a person. *Having character* can be defined as possessing moral strength or exhibiting a strong sense of morality. *Morality* is simply a system of ideas of right and wrong conduct. What is deemed moral in a given society can then be regarded as one's conformity to established standards of good behavior or adherence to the moral code of society. Any working definition will show character is at least as much a function of the surrounding moral culture as it is a manifestation of the individual person. The term *character education* will be used in this study to describe the traditional moral educational pedagogy that is mostly didactic in approach and representative of what has been the fundamental historical method of moral training in American schools.

My intent is to provide a study that will constitute a thorough critique of contemporary character education through a historical examination of the character education movement in American public schools, with a particular emphasis on a pivotal moment in history when a single study disrupted the traditional practice of moral education that had been in place since the nation's birth. That examination will set the stage to understand the subsequent history of character education, giving particular attention to the last quarter century of practice.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS PRIOR TO 1925

Introduction

According to Felix Adler, in the late 1930's America was losing her moral principles. Adler commented on the moral climate of his day, stating, "students do not take any moral issues seriously.... their only principle is that there are no moral principles at all."²⁰ One could just as easily credit this quote as coming from Horace Mann politicking once again for the common school, or Daniel Webster pressing the need for both schools and moral education, or even a spokesman for the Moral Majority decrying the plight of America's moral-less schools of today. In order to gain a tenable position for understanding both the scope and significance of character education in the twentieth century, this brief history provides a substantive background, taking the reader up to the 1930's when the Character Education Inquiry studies were first released.

Moral Training in the American Colonies

After the War for Independence, leading political figures such as Thomas Jefferson in Virginia and Benjamin Franklin in Pennsylvania were strong supporters of schools. For these founding fathers the purpose of the school was to add to the intellectual capacities of an emerging nation. Along with the desire to increase the country's intellectual capital was the concern for the overall "moral character" of the larger society. Jefferson was especially concerned with the European immigrant population, including Anglo Americans, French Americans, German Americans, and Dutch Americans, as well as the existence of Native

²⁰ George W. Noblit & Van O. Dempsey, *The Social Construction of Virtue: The Moral Life of Schools* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 31.

Americans and African Americans. For Jefferson, and most revolutionary leaders, the idea of a multicultural society had the potential to detract from the homogeneity (and therefore “health,” for Jefferson) of a unified American culture.²¹ His solution was for there to be a mechanism put in place by which the immigrants would be converted to American values, principles, and morality. The vehicle for this Americanization, by design, was the school. Jefferson was not alone in his views regarding the purpose of education in America. According to Joel Spring, leading the efforts to create a dominant Protestant Anglo-American culture was the “often-called Schoolmaster of America, Noah Webster.”²² As Webster wrote in 1790,

Education, in great measure, forms the moral character of men, and morals are the basis of government. . . . It is much easier to introduce and establish an effectual system for preserving morals than to correct by penal statutes the ill effects of a bad system. . . . The only practicable method to reform mankind is to begin with children, to banish, if possible, from their company every low-bred, drunken, immoral character.²³

However, the establishment of schools as “an effectual system for preserving morals” was not the beginning of moral education for America’s children. The early colonists brought with them a strong commitment to the moral task of child rearing. This was especially evident among the Protestants from northern Europe. From the time of the first colonists in Massachusetts, Protestantism in its various forms had an influence on American life and culture.²⁴ The doctrine of original sin meant that every individual had to be trained to overcome

²¹ Lawrence W. Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture, and History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 109.

²² Joel Spring, *The American School: 1642-1996* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1997), 52.

²³ Noah B. Webster, *Education of Youth in the United States* (New Haven, Conn.: s.n., 1807), microfilm.

²⁴ B. Edward McClellan, *Moral Education in America : Schools and the Shaping of Character from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 1.

the inherent savage impulses through discipline, which often included corporal punishment. The student was to be indoctrinated, by force, if necessary into the norms of society.²⁵

The Puritans assigned primary responsibility for moral education to the family. Their sectarian laws required that families provide for the religious and moral instruction of children, parents teaching the laws and values of society while also teaching their child to read.²⁶

Historically, much of the importance of Protestantism lies in its radical redefinition of many aspects of social and moral life, the shifting of responsibilities from the larger aggregations to families. Such a transformation was essential in providing a moral and ethical justification for an economically driven push for more privatization. In this case particularly, one could witness the privatization of wealth, and the cultural task of pulling children out of the larger community in order to more precisely train them in the alternative codes of conduct expected of the new middle class. For this indoctrination, the Protestant Bible and the Westminster Catechism were the texts of choice. Scripture reading was a major force in the development of mass literacy in Europe and the American colonies, among Protestants. The catechism, however, was the most widely used pedagogical device for moral education. Through daily devotions and constant recitation of usually the shorter catechism, there was hope among parents that the doctrines of faith would be conveyed and remain strong in the lives of their children.²⁷

Families focused their educational efforts on their own children, but also had a responsibility to household servants and apprentices. The father carried the primary responsibility for instruction, which did not differentiate between the values to be taught to boys

²⁵ Marianne N. Bloch, *Governing Children, Families, and Education : Restructuring the Welfare State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 62.

²⁶ David E. Purpel & Kevin Ryan, eds., *Moral Education ... It Comes with the Territory* (Berkeley, CA.: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1976), 198.

²⁷ James Davison Hunter, *The Death of Character : Moral Education in an Age without Good or Evil* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 32.

or girls. Schools, where they existed, reinforced the family's moral instruction. Their materials were laden with religious and moral imagery, but their primary purpose was to teach the skills of literacy. Churches, on the whole, prior to the age of the Sunday school, did not have a major role in the task of moral education of the child, but supported the instructional role of the parent in the family along with the community at large.²⁸

Other communities outside the New England area were likewise concerned with the moral education of their children. However, they were not as dogmatic in their application of the Puritan model. Several factors influenced the moral instruction that occurred in the southern colonies. In contrast to the more established New England colonies, high mortality rates and miserable health conditions combined with the time constraints associated with rural existence to greatly impact the quality of moral instruction of southern children. The middle colonies resembled New England more than the South. The work of the Quakers, Moravians, Dutch Reformed and others rivaled the Puritans.²⁹

Because they tended to live on scattered farms or plantations rather than in communities, the southern colonists often lacked the informal associations of community life that would many times offer support to the values children learned at home. The same limitations affected moral instruction in frontier settlements. Despite these obstacles, most colonists remained deeply concerned about the education of their children. Everywhere, settlers expected the family to be the primary provider of moral values. Everywhere, they believed that morality and religion were

²⁸ B. Edward McClellan & William J. Reese, *The Social History of American Education* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 5.

²⁹ Robert Morse Crunden, *A Brief History of American Culture* (Armonk, N.Y.: North Castle Books, 1996), 29.

closely linked, and everyone almost always chose the catechism as the primary tool for moral instruction.³⁰

In the wake of the American Revolution, many Americans believed the time was ripe to reform many basic institutions. Education, in the sight of many, was in need of change, and during the 1780's Noah Webster was at the forefront of the movement to remodel the American educational system. As a young man Webster was concerned with the moral education of America's children. The texts that educators used were, to Webster, "old and unsuitable for revolutionary America, written more often than not by Englishmen."³¹ Webster saw all this in the early 1780s and set out to change it. His impact upon American education cannot be overestimated. It rests primarily in his *Spelling Book*. This little book, which taught millions of Americans to spell, sold more copies and influenced more young lives than any other secular book in American history. Webster, however, wanted far more than just to teach Americans how to spell. His texts were designed to educate the masses to be virtuous.³²

On several occasions during his career, Webster recorded his thoughts on the purposes of education. As a young man caught up in the world of revolutionary America, he saw education as a means of severing cultural ties with England and as a way of establishing a uniquely American character. This American character, however, according to Merle Curti, "appropriated a system, which attached great value to the acquiescence on the part of the poor in their poverty, and at the same time promised ultimate success to those who would practice the virtues of frugality, industry, and submissiveness to moral teachings and to God's will."³³ As he grew

³⁰ B. Edward McClellan, *Moral Education in America: Schools and the Shaping of Character from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 9.

³¹ Richard J. Moss, *Noah Webster, Twayne's United States Authors Series* 5 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 24.

³² Noah Webster, Ruth Warfel, and Harry R. Warfel, *Poems* (College Park, Md.; H. Lefraw, 1936), 335.

³³ Merle Eugene Curti, *The Social Ideas of American Educators* (Paterson, N.J.; Pageant Books, 1959), 32.

older, education became for Webster less an agent of change and more a tool of social control. Early in his career Webster made little room in his curriculum for religion, but later, especially after his own conversion in 1808, he included more and more religious and moral training in his ideal education for America's young people.³⁴

During its life as America's spelling book, Webster's work was altered to fit local conditions and historical changes. In 1863, for example, educators in Georgia obtained a copyright for the *Speller* and produced their own version entitled, *The Elementary Spelling Book Revised and adapted to the Youth of the Southern Confederacy*, which was interspersed with Bible readings on domestic slavery.³⁵ Through all the various editions, the basic structure of Webster's book remained the same. The *Speller* first introduced the student to the letters of the alphabet and the sounds of these letters. After the student had committed the alphabet to memory he moved on to tables of nonsense syllables of two and three letters, and eventually to words and phrases. In most editions the first sentences a student read were, "No man may put off the law of God," and "My joy is in his law all the day." In many editions Webster attached a "catechism" to the text.³⁶

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, America, still a young country, witnessed an increase in social and geographical mobility. Yet these changes, according to McClellan, "occurred within a stable hierarchical society, where a sense of mutual obligation governed the relationships of social classes, and informal networks of people who knew each other over long periods of time, supplied a mechanism to preserve the basic values of the

³⁴ Moss, *Noah Webster*, 25.

³⁵ Webster, *Poems*, 71.

³⁶ Daniel A. Cohen, "The Origin and Development of the New England Primer," *Children's Literature* 5 (1976): 771.

society.”³⁷ The landscape of the country was changing, yet the American culture of values and virtues would stay intact (at least for the present), having been ingrained on the hearts and minds of each child, dictated by the family, and affirmed by the community.

The early 1800s brought economic changes in the nation that helped to foster a change in the instructional assignments for moral instruction. Increasingly, men left their homes and went into the marketplace, leaving the women at home to lead, train and nurture the children and family. Americans began to ascribe to women such moral characteristics as piety, purity and domesticity. The special role of the mother came to be highly celebrated as women were given the primary role of moral instructor in the family. This was a redefinition of gendered educational responsibility in the family, which turned 1700 years of ideology and theology on its head. Public education was soon to follow. By 1890, eighty percent of the elementary teaching force was female.³⁸

The transformation of the female into the primary moral guide was a profound shift that had great implications for the story of moral education in America. The vast change underneath this phenomenon essentially distanced men, and the work of the market, from moral judgment. Moral education was now removed to a narrow view of something that was “women’s work,” and that was concerned with the “moral” life of the children, not with men, and certainly not with the larger moral operations of the society. What was rapidly becoming the central social activity, the only authentically sanctioned, sanctified, and honored activity, was activity within the (masculine) public marketplace, while moral education was moved to the periphery, the (female) private sphere, which thereby, arguably, made moral decision-making increasingly a

³⁷ McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 10.

³⁸ Rush Welter, *American Writings on Popular Education; the Nineteenth Century* (Indianapolis,: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), 158.

matter of private, peripheral concern, while the central, masculine, marketplace activity was removed from serious moral scrutiny. So, in Victorian America, one could focus on the slightest sexual peccadillo, while ignoring the theft of land from Native Americans, the virtual re-enslavement of southern blacks, and the rapacious behavior of the Robber Barons.

As American culture progressed, many social critics began to question the abilities of some mothers to take on the critical task of the moral education of their own children. The problem, for these critics, was that middle class children were, supposedly, getting the right training, but hordes of poor and working class children apparently were not being adequately educated. So while some mothers might still be doing the job, most apparently were not.³⁹ Thus, the responsibility for moral instruction began to shift outside the home. Parents were increasingly willing to give more responsibility for moral instruction to both schools and churches. Churches were now being entrusted with the responsibility to teach the catechism, and the creation of the Sunday school in 1817 (taught largely by women) provided moral instruction for orphans and delinquent youth.⁴⁰ The movement of moral education into Sunday Schools was a part of moving it into private, cloistered settings where it had only to do with private morality, not with the sorts of civic virtue that Jefferson and Franklin had envisioned. The modern church and Sunday School, both with strong feminine overtones, emerged simultaneously as a result of the same set of material forces.⁴¹ The task of moral education was being taken up by women and churches, while the major moral force of the community – the marketplace – was freeing itself more and more of any obligation to the nurture of the next

³⁹ M.E. Sadler, ed., *Moral Instruction and Training in Schools, vol. II* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1908), 260.

⁴⁰ Donald G. Davis et al., *Reading for Moral Progress : 19th Century Institutions Promoting Social Change* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1997), 10.

⁴¹ Ellis Ford Hartford, *Moral Values in Public Education: Lessons from the Kentucky Experience* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 31.

generation of children, and from any need to take any considerations into account beyond the central imperative of capital accumulation.⁴²

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the majority of families still continued to teach traditional values, and most parents still held to a Christian world-view. The task of moral instruction, though, had become a private enterprise, and there was a strong confidence in the corrective power of “community life.” The inclusion of the female Sunday School teacher and public school instruction helped pave the way for an overall softer moral tone. This was not necessarily a rejection of religion or of traditional values, but rather a more moderate approach to moral instruction. The influence of the Enlightenment, which was thrust upon American culture via the educators’ interpretations of the writings of John Locke, had a similar impact upon the child rearing manuals of the day, softening the view of how one perceived the nature of the child.⁴³

The importance of early moral education quickly became a point of debate in the early nineteenth century. Moral training, which had earlier extended well into adulthood, now had the time-frame limitations of childhood placed upon it. As young Americans began to pursue the possibilities of livelihood outside the geographical confines of their own community, parents and educators began to see the idea of a slow, measured, lifelong practice of moral instruction as inadequate. Adapting once again to societal changes, moral education shifted away from the central thrust of the society, narrowing its scope to church and home. Instruction was aimed at young children, with application of moral principles being placed primarily on personal action,

⁴² E. Ann Kaplan, *Motherhood and Representation : The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 17.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 33.

not public virtue, and, by implication, exempting politics and the market activity from its scrutiny once again.⁴⁴

As parents contemplated the possibility of sending their child into the outside world, they gave moral instruction a place of preeminence it had lacked in previous years. If parents failed in the early years to instill a sense of proper values, there was a sense that the opportunity for their child would be lost forever. This belief in a proper and fading time of instruction was greatly supported by the politician and educator Horace Mann. “The germs of morality,” wrote Mann, “must be planted in the moral nature of children at an early period of their life.”⁴⁵

Mann was a pioneer in the reform of the American public educational system. Born in Franklin, Massachusetts, he was a graduate of Brown University and became a successful Boston lawyer in 1823. In 1827, Mann entered politics and became a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives where he served until 1833 when he became a member of the Massachusetts Senate. It was during his senate term that he drafted and passed legislation called the “Education Bill of 1837.” This bill mandated a powerful state board of education and secretary of education. With his political clout, Mann was appointed the first secretary of the newly formed State Board of Education, leaving that position only to serve in the Congress where he had an impact on educational reform for decades to come.⁴⁶

Mann suggested a sharpening of the lines of institutional responsibility for moral education. Whereas earlier, informal methods and casual patterns of community control were seen as satisfactory moral influences, now a time-intensive, specialized process was needed. Assisting the teacher, the emerging science of pedagogy began to offer some justification for this faith in

⁴⁴ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1976), 23.

⁴⁵ Horace Mann, "Untitled Editorial," *The Common School Journal* 1, November (1838): 6.

⁴⁶ Joel H. Spring, *The American School, 1642-2000*, 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 67.

education as a cure for moral diversity. The theory of mental discipline, supported by an emerging faculty psychology, suggested that the person was made up of faculties such as reason, emotion, self-control, and chivalry. It was Mann's belief that these faculties could be trained through rigorous discipline, i.e. through practice.⁴⁷

Together with the Christian idea that children were inherently depraved, faculty psychology led to a pedagogy that stressed endless repetition of routine tasks. As well, there was a sense that the moral lessons the child would learn must be accessed through practice, with the student's impulses subverted to the dictates of the teacher. To those who believed in faculty psychology, the mind, the conscience, and the heart were separate entities that needed specific training through practice. Following the logic of this new psychology, teachers worked hard to instill moral character through constant repetition of lessons that emphasized the positive values of society, depending upon gentle encouragement rather than harsh penalties.⁴⁸

As faculty reasoning gained strongholds in the forums of education, extreme demands were placed upon the institutions of both family and school to fulfill the now urgent task of moral education. To teach these values in the home, mothers turned from the traditional catechetical approach and sought out new literature that specifically had children in mind as the audience. Formal moral instruction at home usually consisted of a story time where mothers would read such books as T. H. Gallaudet's *Child's Book of the Soul*, Lydia Sigourney's *The Boy's Book*, or the stories of Peter Parley. Combined with Bible reading and the availability of Sunday school tracts, mothers had an abundance of resources to choose from.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Hunter, *The Death of Character*, 52.

⁴⁸ Thomas W. Gutowski, *The High School as an Adolescent Raising Institution: An Inner History of Chicago Public Secondary Education, 1856-1940* (1978), microfilm.

⁴⁹ McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 21.

In regard to curricula, textbooks occupied a place of central importance sometimes overshadowing the abilities of the teacher. A qualified teacher many times was graded more on her moral character, if she had a good heart and common sense, and less on her ability and knowledge of the curriculum. The teacher was to reinforce the moral lessons of the text, which required little explanation. If the teachers could simply insure that the textbooks were read, educators felt proper moral instruction would be provided.⁵⁰ Moral lessons permeated textbooks, readers, spellers, and even arithmetic books. Although Webster's Spellers and Readers were still popular, it was the McGuffey Reader that had the greatest impact in the classroom at this time in history.

First published in 1836, the McGuffey Readers rode the wave of western expansion. After the Civil War the Readers were standard schoolbooks in thirty-seven states. Ohioan William McGuffey wrote the McGuffey Readers. They were a series of seven books with stories and poems. From "The Character of a Happy Life," by Sir Henry Wotton in McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader:

How happy is he born and taught, that serveth not another's will; Whose armor is his honest thought, And simple truth his utmost skill!

A poem from McGuffey's First Eclectic Reader:

*Children who may read my lay, This much I have to say;
Each day and every day Do what is right. Right things in great or small; Then, though
the sky should fall, Sun, moon, and stars and all, You shall have light.⁵¹*

⁵⁰ Ibid., 25.

⁵¹ William Holmes McGuffey, *McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader* (New York: American Book Company, 1896), 17.

The lessons in the Reader were designed not only to teach children reading and grammar, but also to help them to develop good moral behavior. Ironically, even as the *schoolmarm* took over the classroom and the female replaced the male as the bestower of morality, the presence of a female character in the Reader was rare. Joel Spring highlights this exclusion in his *History of the American School*, noting that while thirty-five percent of the stories McGuffey deal directly with morality, less than eight percent center on the *character of girls*. The virtues most characterized in the Reader were the “love of nature,” emphasizing the beauty that comes from God, and “charity,” emphasizing the virtue of industry and prosperity.⁵² The McGuffey Readers, with their emphasis upon moral character and the development of virtue, made for an ideal tool in the Common School system of education.

The Moorings Have Been Loosened:
The Impact of Diversity, Psychology, and Evolution

Waves of immigration in the 1820s and 1840s helped to create a more diverse national landscape. Immigration once again became the educational whipping-boy in a bid by Mann and others to reform America’s schools. In what had been a country made up of homogeneous communities, the teacher had relied on the Bible and scripture-infused primers as classroom texts. Instruction was given to pupils who, for the most part, possessed a common religious and ethical foundation. Gradually the religious semblance of early American communities began to alter. For these self-proclaimed protectors of Protestant Anglo-American culture, it was the influx of Irish Catholic immigrants that presented the greatest danger to the common ground of ethics and values that had for decades defined and united the nation. This fear was fueled even more by the growing numbers of enslaved Africans and the racial violence occurring in the

⁵² Spring, *The American School, 1642-2000*, 157.

northern cities between freed Africans and whites. As America changed, these educators saw the Common School as a cure for the problems associated with increasing diversity. Joel Spring describes the sentiment of the time in this manner:

Many New Englanders hoped the common schools would eradicate these “savage” cultures. The sensuous and emotional rhythms of African and Indian drums, and the incense and ritual of the Irish Catholic Church were a stark contrast to the stiff, repressed, and self-righteous way-of-life of white New Englanders. With the possibility of a multicultural society existing in North America, many European Americans hoped the common school would assure that the United States was dominated by a unified Anglo-Saxon culture.⁵³

“Common” education became a political tool where the emerging middle class sought to preserve a lifestyle that appeared to be in danger. The school was envisioned as a means of maintaining class differentiation and of safe-keeping middle class morals and values.⁵⁴ Without the traditional class structures, and without any national church, national identity and security would depend, as Mann put it, upon “voluntary compliance with the laws of reason and duty.” Intelligence and morality, for Mann, became the foundational stones, which by design would produce a consensus of community offsetting the potentially dangerous ignorance and the moral diversity characteristic of a nation of immigrants.⁵⁵

The answer to the continued rise of crime and hostility that was indicative of the day, as Mann stated in his Twelfth Annual Report, was not in the law but in moral education. “This is one experiment,” he stated, “that has not been tried.”⁵⁶ Mann’s experiment placed the school as the central institution for the control and maintenance of the present social order. The *common* education the child would receive in the common school would be a common *moral education*

⁵³ Joel Spring, *The American School*, 79.

⁵⁴ Charles Bidwell, "The Moral Significance of the Common School: A Sociological Study of Common Patterns of Social Control and Moral Education in Massachusetts and New York, 1837-1840," *History of Education Quarterly* 6, Fall (1966): 61.

⁵⁵ Henry C. Johnson, *The Public School and Moral Education* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980), 36.

⁵⁶ Spring, *The American School, 1642-2000*, 110.

based upon the Bible and common Christian virtues (as long as they were Protestant Anglo-American virtues), with the expected result being the elimination of crime and corruption in society.

During the period of the common school, the role of the teacher was paramount in this moral enterprise, being molded as the conveyor of knowledge to strengthen the mind and raise the intellectual powers of the ignorant child. Even more so, though, the teacher was seen as a moral overseer, and the future of the child would be rightly shaped or malformed in the classroom. The Boston School Committee defined the teacher's obligation as moral, spiritual, and intellectual:

Taking children at random from a great city, undisciplined, uninstructed, often with inveterate forwardness and obstinacy, and with the inherited stupidity of centuries of ignorant ancestors; forming them from animals into intellectual beings, and.... From intellectual beings into spiritual beings; giving to many their first appreciation of what is wise, what is true, what is lovely, and what is pure.⁵⁷

Along with defining "what a teacher should be" in their statement, the Committee also clearly defined "how they perceived the child to be." The view of the disenfranchised attached to this form of modern education created a hierarchy of moral aptitude, the immigrant placed well down the ladder along with the Native American and African American.

Thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the means to promote virtue and character had shifted dramatically. Moral education moved away from the central thrust of the society, narrowing its scope to church and home. Instruction was aimed at young children, with application of moral principles being placed primarily on personal action, not public virtue, and, by implication, exempting politics and the market activity from its scrutiny. The task of moral

⁵⁷ Barbara Finkelstein, "Pedagogy as Intrusion: Teaching Values in Popular Primary Schools in Nineteenth-Century America," *History of Childhood Quarterly* 2, Winter 1975 (1975): 353.

education was being taken up by women and churches, while the major moral force of the community – the marketplace – was freeing itself more and more from any obligation to the nurture of the next generation of children, and from any need to take any considerations into account beyond the central imperative of capital accumulation.

Darwin, Marx, and Racial Education

During the period from 1850 to 1880, the idea of the child as depraved and the belief that morals and good character were absolutes, which were dictated to humanity by the Christian religion, slowly eroded. The writings of Charles Darwin and Karl Marx began trickling down to the educational theorists touting that human systems of thought and behavior evolved as the result of contingent and, for Darwin, random events, rather than in accordance with the higher purposes of God. Social philosophers of the day took Darwin's biological theory of evolution and applied it to the economics of an American industrial explosion. A social and economic mantra of *survival of the fittest* was the result. A huge increase in national economic growth supported the concentration of wealth and inequity in public policies.⁵⁸ American morals were turned upside down, and what had been vice became virtue. Albert Jay Nock described this shift in moral perception in his memoirs, recounting his Pennsylvania boyhood, "The most successful (or rapacious) businessmen were held up in the schools, the press, and even the pulpit, as the prototype of all that was making America great.... 'Go and Get It!' was the sum of the practical philosophy presented to America's young manhood by all the voices of the age."⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Kevin P. Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath*, (New York: Random House, 1990), 59.

⁵⁹ Albert Jay Nock, *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man* (Delavan, Wis.: Hallberg Pub. Corp., 1994), 39.

Some educators also applied Darwin's theory regarding man's evolution to the matters of race and culture. For example, the Hampton Institute adopted a military atmosphere and a program of industrial training and moral instruction. The significance of Hampton, compared to other boarding schools, was that it sought to "uplift" not one, but two races simultaneously-- the Blacks and the Indians (which is how the African American and Native American were referred to at Hampton). Founded in 1868 by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the educators at Hampton instructed both Blacks and Indians in understanding the idea of the "scale of civilization." The basic concept of this scale was that all the various races could be placed on a continuum of culture, and the level of civilization that their particular race had acquired would determine their place on that continuum. Viewed as a vertical ladder, the top rung represented the highest level of civilization (the White race), and the bottom rung represented savagism (the Native Americans). The goal of each race was to continue to move up the ladder of civilization. Thus the evolutionary progress of Darwinism was placed in a social growth context. In this way Science was the basis, and scapegoat, for blatant racism. It was Armstrong's belief that the moral "duty" of the upper level race was to assist the lower "despised races" as they made the tortuous climb to becoming civilized.⁶⁰

The *scale of civilization* provided both a comparison of the races, and a rationale as to where each race fit in the grand scheme, thus justifying the history (and continued making of history) of the Anglo-Saxon's manifest destiny. The White race was shown to be virtuous by having civilized the differing people groups of the North American continent. The virtuous Black and Indian would be those who pursued a higher level of civilization, thereby accessing

⁶⁰ David Wallace Adams, "Education in Hues: Red and Black at Hampton Institute, 1878-1893," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (1977): 171.

the Anglo-Saxon world. All this civilizing was accomplished through Armstrong's industrial education.

Looking through the lens created by Armstrong, the Black man could better understand how enslavement was actually a good event in the history of his people in that it instilled in Blacks the capacity to perform disciplined labor, and thereby moved them higher on the *civilized scale*. For the Indian there was a new perspective on the annihilation of the buffalo (which Armstrong called "a good fortune of historical circumstances"). According to Armstrong, the destruction of the Indian lifestyle forced an entire race to integrate into a higher culture of civilization (Anglo-Saxon), and thereby they were moved out of savagery. The Hampton Institute was a testimony to how, once again, education could be used as an instrument for social mobility, with social control being ensured. Thus, with the elevation of the Black and Indian, the simultaneous guaranty of White control would remain.⁶¹

Armstrong's Institute, however, was not the only approach to moral education of the lower races by educators in the late 1800s. Less than a hundred miles away from Hampton, Virginia, one of Armstrong's most vocal critics, Caroline F. Putnam, established the Holley School in the same year that Armstrong founded Hampton. Her fundamental concerns were the development of intellect and political power among the African American. In contrast to the industrial education taught by the Hampton Institute, Putnam presented students with an academic curriculum steeped in political discussion and rich in the history of the black struggle for freedom. Black students at the Holley School were taught that the enslavement of their race was not the *good event* that Armstrong put forth at Hampton. Instead, it truly was the cruelest form of man's inhumanity to man. An ardent defender of the rights of all peoples, Putnam

⁶¹ Ibid., 164.

worked tirelessly for reform in voting rights in the face of expanding disfranchisement and Jim Crow laws. She demanded racial equality for African Americans at a time when few voices were speaking to this cause.⁶²

During the middle to late nineteenth century, within the public school setting as well, we find similar examples of moral education being propagated within a far from moral setting. In the state of Georgia, the State Superintendent of Schools, M. L. Brittain, directed that “there should be a definite purpose on the part of every teacher to have character training as an important feature of the school work.”⁶³ Although at first read this seems a noble charge, the African American schools in the rural South during this time period faced several obstacles with the Superintendent’s character education program. Consider this argument: two important factors to think about in any educational setting are the questions of *mode* and *message*. In the case of public school education we would look at the role of the teacher as the disseminator of knowledge. Especially in the guise of character educator, the “character” of a teacher would make or mar the message being delivered to the class. In a research study conducted in southern rural communities, W. E. B. DuBois found a troubling hiring practice in the African American schools of Dougherty County:

The superintendents are paid very little, and this has led in some cases to hiring a teacher who will help increase the income of the superintendent. For instance, a man is put down for \$30 a month as a teacher of a school. It is not always certain if he had made a contract with somebody, either the superintendent or somebody else, to pay a part of it for the privilege of being appointed. The result is that worse men get appointed....⁶⁴

⁶² Ronald E. Butchart, "Mission Matters: Mount Holyoke, Oberlin, and the Schooling of Southern Blacks, 1861-1917," *History of Education Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (2002): 5-6.

⁶³ Marion Luther Brittain, *The Blue Book of Character Stories*, 2d ed. (Atlanta: Byrd Print. Co., 1920), 9.

⁶⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois, Dan S. Green, & Edwin D. Driver, *W. E. B. Du Bois on Sociology and the Black Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 157.

These “worse men” would be the teachers of character in the African American school. DuBois was rightly bothered in this, as the practices of these superintendents would speak volumes to the community, compared to the small text of moral attributes presented in the classroom.

The second problem with character education at that time, and in that setting, deals with the moral lessons being transmitted --the *message*. The Superintendent’s choice of curricula for the character education programs in all Georgia schools was *The Blue Book of Character Stories*, which was also written by Brittain. The book contained a collection of stories illustrating eighty virtues and vices. These stories were to be read by the instructor as a means to establish “high ideals in the minds and hearts of our future citizens.” The first tale in this text is *The Conduct of a Gentleman*. A noteworthy ideal for a male in the South at this time, however, the Superintendent chose the historical figure Robert E. Lee as the person who exemplified this character quality of *being a gentleman*. The text was supposedly designed to be appropriate character education for all school children in a state that had the largest African American population in the Union. Although other stories in Brittain’s book mentioned the determination of Demosthenes and the kindness of Jeanie Deans, the message is clear as to whom the Superintendent had in mind when he referenced, “our future citizens.” Brittain’s *Blue Book* boasted eighty moral stories, with only one containing a female reference exemplifying a virtue, and there was no mention of any American minorities in the text.⁶⁵

A Change is on the Horizon

The changing religious and ethical tide that was sweeping across the country near the end of the nineteenth century prompted other curricular alterations for the teaching of character. Two events, which occurred in Chicago, were indicators of how deep these changes would become.

⁶⁵ Brittain, *The Blue Book of Character Stories*, 13.

In 1875, the city of Chicago banned required reading of the Bible in public schools. Without the Scripture as a guide, teachers had lost the traditional source of their authority for moral instruction and character building. This was followed in 1880 by a ban on all corporal punishment in Chicago schools.⁶⁶ The increase of legislation and practice against the Bible in public schools eventually spread to other places outside the Chicago systems. However, even in states with legal prohibitions, some communities continued to follow traditional practices of Bible reading and school prayer well into the middle of the twentieth century. It finally took the involvement of the Supreme Court, declaring school sponsored prayer illegal in 1962 (*Engel v Vitale*) and Bible reading over the school intercom unconstitutional in 1963 (*School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v Edward Lewis Schemp* 374 U.S. 203), to set the issue of separation between church and state to rest.⁶⁷

The movement to remove force as a form of discipline in the classroom dates back to the 1820s and 1830s, led by conservative reformers who were motivated by a sense of virtue in their curative efforts. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, many urban schools, like the Chicago system, had either banned corporal punishment, or strongly dissuaded the use of force in classroom management.⁶⁸ The reduction in the traditional techniques of coercion and exhortation undermined the school's traditional effectiveness in moral indoctrination. Without the authority of the Bible, corporal punishment, or traditional regimentation, teachers looked for new ways to secure the obedience of their children. The trustees of Lake View High School in

⁶⁶ Craig A. Cunningham, "A Certain Reasoned Art: The Rise and Fall of Character Education in America," In *Character Psychology and Character Education*, eds. Daniel K. Lapsley & F. Clark Power (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 205.

⁶⁷ Michael W. LaMorte, *School Law: Cases and Concepts*, 6th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999), 46.

⁶⁸ Ronald E. Butchart & Barbara McEwan, *Classroom Discipline in American Schools: Problems and Possibilities for Democratic Education* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 21.

Chicago, for example, urged their teachers in 1875 to use “appeals to the nobler principles of human nature” rather than corporal punishment.⁶⁹

This was agreeable with many early progressive educators, such as William Torrey Harris and Granville Stanley Hall, who were urging an end to these traditional pedagogical techniques. American education in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century period was shaped to a large extent by the educator and philosopher William Torrey Harris. As early as 1888 Harris was being called “the most potent influence upon the public school system and the teachers of America.”⁷⁰ Harris emerged on the education scene faced with a different American public school than Webster or Mann had witnessed. American society was rapidly changing into a predominantly urban society, which was dotted with schools that were taking shape out of the incorporation of millions of immigrants. The common education of a pluralistic society, as vast as the landscape of America itself, presented a daunting task. Harris’ achievements, however, speak volumes as to how he met this overwhelming charge. As U.S. Commissioner of education he introduced art, music, and scientific studies into the public school curriculum.

Harris fought for the establishment of the high school as an educational concept, made the individual school library a normal tool of education, and brought about the formation of the kindergarten as an integral part of public education. Even more so, he developed a philosophy of moral education that matched the changing times that were occurring across the American social landscape.⁷¹ Harris’ philosophical wanderings took him far from his Calvinist’s roots, which had been the framework he used to decipher his readings in the early years. It was Locke’s *Essay on*

⁶⁹ Gutowski, *The High School as an Adolescent Raising Institution an Inner History of Chicago Public Secondary Education, 1856-1940*, microfilm.

⁷⁰ F. H. Kasson, "William Torrey Harris, LL.D His Intellectual Growth and His Educational and Philosophic Work," *Education*, vol. 8 (June 1888): 619.

⁷¹ C. M. Perry, and H. R. Evans, *The St. Louis Movement in Philosophy: Some Source Material* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), 51.

the Human Understandings that initially challenged Harris' youthful view of innate ideas.⁷² His study of Phrenology, with its claim to "find a natural basis for an inventory of the powers of the mind, and consequently an ideal standard of perfect development which would serve as a basis for criticism of all human views and actions," in Harris' words, set him on the reformist's path.⁷³

Classroom management for the progressive educator involved a whole new construct regarding the authority of the teacher; as Ronald Butchart has argued, "authority did not arise from a moral psychology of love, or familial nurture, but from a professional psychology of expertise, detachment, scientific study, and hierarchical professional-client relationship."⁷⁴ As a progressive, Harris' idea regarding classroom management was that the more active classroom, and the child's direct access to the curriculum, would create a new pedagogy of discipline that could be divorced from the constraints of Protestant dogma. The teacher would be freed from constant correction and instruction, and thereby be more attuned to the discovery (and removing) of the stress, anxiety, and frustration that had elicited the misbehavior. During this progressive era, traditionally acceptable aims of moral education, usually stated in terms of personal salvation before a judging God, were being rejected as too sectarian. "Character" became the preferred response to the need to fill education's moral void. As a seemingly secular concept, character offered two advantages for moral educators. First, unlike the state of a child's soul, character was taken to be open to dispassionate analysis. Therefore, it had an air of objectivity. Second, character was taken to offer a universally acceptable educational goal: everyone wanted

⁷² M. J. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes* (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 97.

⁷³ Willam Torrey Harris, "Books That Have Helped Me," *Forum* vol.3 (April 1887): 141

⁷⁴ Butchart, *Classroom Discipline in American Schools*, 31.

their children to have “good character,” and educators believed that this agreement could somehow bridge the ideological differences of America’s new pluralism.⁷⁵

In the last twenty years of the nineteenth century a new picture of moral training developed in the classroom with teachers emphasizing explicit instruction in proper behavior. In 1893, the educator Felix Adler published a book that exemplified the emerging ideas of this end-of-the-century period. Adler’s *Moral Education of Children* was edited by the Harris, who also wrote the book’s preface. Harris and Adler dealt explicitly with the dilemma of teaching moral character without being able to appeal to religion for sanctions:

Notwithstanding the fact that the school is efficient as a means of training the moral habits, it is as yet only a small influence in the realm of moral theory. The cause of this is the divorce of moral theory from theology. All was easy so long as ethics was directly associated with the prevailing religious confession. The separation of church and state, slowly progressing everywhere since the middle-ages, has at length touched the question of education.⁷⁶

The problem posed by this divorce between religion and education was for the teacher to deliver to the student the subject matter of morality, but not to deal with the sanctions of that morality on the traditional theological plane. For Adler and Harris, what had been solid grounding for the teaching of cardinal virtues in the public classroom now became a watered down supportive belief for any moral instruction. The teacher was required to give the student a clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong, but without the traditional moral basis for instruction. Teachers would discuss why the right things should be done and vice versa, but could not put the reasons in explicitly theological terms. Therefore, an explanation for why one should not steal was no longer tied to punishment from God as a result of breaking one of the Ten Commandments. What would be presented instead was a defined social response to

⁷⁵ McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 48.

⁷⁶ Noblit and Dempsey, *The Social Construction of Virtue*, 31.

stealing, based on the violation of others' rights to property, and protection of one's right to property. Once again, the schools responded to changes in society by changing their attitudes toward and practices of moral education.⁷⁷

Character Education and Social Adaptation

Americans near the turn of the twentieth century were conscious of being at a crossroads in regard to who they were and who they were becoming. The Spanish-American War raised a sense of America's potential military might. The debate about isolationism prior to the country's entry into World War I revealed a national consciousness regarding the role of the United States in world affairs. The changing nature of many American communities brought with it a disturbing sense of identity loss in regard to the image of America that had been built up during the first 150 years of the nation. A series of major labor strikes-- Homestead in 1892, Pullman in 1894, and others-- signaled a growing discontent and a militant mindset on the part of American workers (labor unions grew fourfold between 1897 and 1904). The situation was made worse by the sheer size of the turn-of-the-century corporations, which had grown to such proportions that the simple direct control methods of one boss supervising the company was no longer viable.⁷⁸

The response of many corporate leaders to this reality was a restructuring of the labor force, creating a need for supervisors, office workers, and foremen. The expansion of education for this corporate segment was spurred on by a desire to discipline a newly created middle management sector in society. As well, corporate America still saw the need to Americanize a growing Asian American immigrant population, and again, schooling was seen as a way of

⁷⁷ Tianlong Yu, *In the Name of Morality: Character Education and Political Control* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 29.

⁷⁸ Steven Tozer, Paul C. Violas, & Guy B. Senese, *School and Society: Educational Practice as Social Expression* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 119.

explicit social control, producing new forms of discipline and motivation to match the needs of commercial enterprise.⁷⁹ Many parts of the country reacted in negative ways to a huge rise in Asian immigrants, especially in the western states. The response in a few segments of the country was the segregation of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean children. The establishment of separate schools for Japanese children in the San Francisco school district in 1906 developed into an international incident, resulting in President Theodore Roosevelt threatening the school system with federal action if segregation did not end.⁸⁰

A graphic illustration of this Americanization process on the corporate level could be found in The Ford Motor Company's "English School," which was established for the immigrant workers who were employed at their automotive plants. If these workers wanted to take advantage of the profit-sharing plan offered by Ford, they had to enroll in the company's English School. The purpose of the school, according to a Ford company spokesman, was "to impress upon these men that they are (or should be) Americans and that former racial, national, and linguistic differences are to be forgotten."⁸¹

At the same time that a call for expansion of education was being sounded by those who ran corporate America, educators were attempting to restructure their framework of moral instruction in light of the demands of a distinctly modern society. In response to these social changes, schools began to teach the new cultural, academic, and vocational skills that were demanded by the workplace. The position of moral instruction in the curriculum changed drastically. Success in the productive system of modern society depended more on technical expertise, specialization, and interpersonal skills than on the traditional notion of a good worker

⁷⁹ Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America : Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 184.

⁸⁰ Joel Spring, *The American School*, 178.

⁸¹ Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind*, 111.

who had character. Outside the workplace, the neighborhood community was fragmented by the onslaught of technical advances such as the automobile, radio, and television. The invention of these novel possibilities created a whole new emphasis upon leisure time and recreation. As historian Thomas Bender noted, “What had been a seamless web of community life broke into segments.... whereas work, family, and town once supplied mutually reinforcing personal orientations, they became crosscutting sources of identity.”⁸²

Robert H. Wiebe described the American plight as follows:

As the network of relations affecting men’s lives each year became more tangled and more distended, Americans in a basic sense no longer knew who or where they were. The setting had altered beyond their power to understand it, and within an alien context they had lost themselves. In a democratic society who was master and who was servant? In a land of opportunity what was success? In a Christian nation what were the rules and who kept them? The apparent leaders were as much adrift as their followers. For lack of anything that made better sense of their world, people everywhere weighed, counted, and measured it.⁸³

As educators struggled to meet the challenges of a changing modern society, two divergent responses emerged. One such response has been labeled the Character Education Movement, seen as a traditional virtue-based approach to the teaching of moral principles in the school system. Set against this traditional approach was a group of educators and philosophers who took a progressive scientific approach to moral instruction basing their pedagogical theories on data created from empirical studies of character.

The Character Education Movement

In 1917, at the Detroit meeting of the Department of Superintendents of the National Education Association, it was announced that a certain businessman had provided a \$5000 prize

⁸² Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*, Clarke A. Sanford-Armand G. Erpf Lecture Series on Local Government and Community Life. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 114.

⁸³ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York,: Hill and Wang, 1967), 42.

for the National Morality Codes Competition. This competition sparked interest among various educators: seventy educators spent a year writing codes, and fifty-two actually submitted plans. The competition was won by an Ohioan, Professor William J. Hutchins. This competition brought to light the fact that very little was known about educating children in morality or character.⁸⁴

In 1918 the same donor put up a \$20,000 prize, to be awarded by the National Institute for Moral Instruction (later the Character Education Institute), to “the best method of character education in public schools.” The director of the Institute, Milton Fairchild, stated, “this is by far the largest award ever offered in education.”⁸⁵ The competition caused educators in almost every state to expend considerable energy on developing character education programs. Speaking at the 1918 NEA convention, Fairchild raised the flag of the new moral education movement:

The basis of the life career for each child is character, interpreted in a broad sense, and this basis must be furnished by education. I like the term ‘character education’ much better than ‘moral education’ because it is not subject to misunderstandings and is a broader term. The term ‘character education’ suggests and implies the unfolding of the child’s better self by the processes of growth and under the stimulation and guidance of the teacher. The purpose of character education should be for the growth of the child out of its weaknesses and crudities and superficialities of character into strength, depth, breadth, and harmony of character.⁸⁶

That this was more than one anonymous businessman’s concern is suggested by the widely distributed Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education circulated by the NEA’s Educational Policies Commission in 1918. The Seven Cardinal Principles included health, citizenship, command of the fundamental processes, vocational efficiency, worthy home

⁸⁴ Cunningham, "A Certain Reasoned Art," 209.

⁸⁵ Milton Fairchild, "Character Education," *A Paper Presented at the National Education Association Annual Conference*, 1918.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

membership, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character. The seventh principle, “ethical character,” was considered paramount, being promoted as the fundamental concern for all teachers in all subjects.⁸⁷ According to David Tyack:

The *Cardinal Principles* reflected both the generalized anxieties of the Progressive era of the early twentieth century and the extraordinary faith of reformers that schooling could ameliorate social ills. They pointed to the major changes in the larger society: the development of the factory system, which subdivided labor, and eroded the apprentice system; the presumed atrophy of traditional socialization of children by parents in urban settings, where families no longer lived and worked in the same place; and the arrival of masses of immigrants unfamiliar with American institutions.⁸⁸

During most of the nineteenth century, moral education was a fundamental task of schools in America. Moral lessons were integrated into the entire school life through character-infused texts, such as the McGuffey reader and Webster speller. Both the Christian scriptures and traditional Protestant morality were taught in classrooms, blended with the concept of good citizenship. To create good citizens, many values such as punctuality, a good work ethic, orderliness, and docility became daily instructional themes, especially in the elementary schools. Significant changes began in the latter part of the nineteenth century as the nation faced the demands of a modern society coping with emerging industrialization, increased urbanization, and a swell in immigration that dramatically transformed the American landscape. The needs of a modern society spurred on the efforts of schools to produce a more solid intellectual training regime. As a result, less attention was given to religious-based moral teaching in what was becoming a more secular school environment. At the same time, however, many bemoaned the present state of affairs. The character education advocates sought to preserve traditional values

⁸⁷ Johnson, *The Public School and Moral Education*, 51.

⁸⁸ David B. Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia : A Century of Public School Reform* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 51.

in the secular schools through the teaching of specific virtues and the development of good character.

The 1920's represented the Golden Age of character in American public schools. The Iowa Plan, which won the Character Education Institute's competition, was joined by plans for character education from many other states and local school districts. By the end of the decade most school systems had instituted some form of regulation or law requiring that students participate in programs on character development. However, in the midst of this new reign of "character," another contrasting view of moral education was developing among the progressive education proponents.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ H.C. McKown, *Character Education* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1935), 40.

CHAPTER III

THE CHARACTER EDUCATION INQUIRY

Introduction

With the rise of public secondary education around the 1900s, there was a shift in rationale for schooling. Whereas the explicit social control function of the elementary school had been established by a curriculum and policy that was standard and uniform, the high school displayed a more progressive individualization of the curriculum. In doing so, the high school provided the instruction and atmosphere “thought necessary for higher education, and to prepare children for the duties of life.”⁹⁰

With this change was a direct shift from the need to impose homogeneity to the social needs of the individual. Social control was not abandoned as an aim, according to Elizabeth Vallance, “it simply shifted its visibility as the goals of education came to be phrased in terms of individual development *within* the social content.”⁹¹ A more progressive mindset toward the child, curricula, and pedagogy began to saturate the curriculum and policy of the day. This shift could be seen in a statement made by the 1918 Committee on the Reorganization of Secondary Education: “education in a democracy.... should develop in each individual the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits and powers whereby he will find his place and use that place to shape both himself and society toward ever nobler ends.”⁹²

By the end of the decade, serious differences of opinion had arisen on a number of issues about character. The most divisive of these issues was related to the “transfer of training” debate about intelligence, which had raged during the early years of the century. Character education

⁹⁰ David B. Tyack, *Turning Points in American Educational History* (Waltham, MA: Blaisdell Pub. Co., 1967), 309.

⁹¹ Elizabeth Vallance, *Business Ethics at Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 23.

⁹² Tyack, *Turning Points in American Educational History*, 390.

advocates and progressive psychologists, such as Edward L. Thorndike and Mark A. May, argued over whether character was something that could be trained in terms of general traits such as honesty or courage, or something that consisted of specific habitual responses to specific situational stimuli. Much work in this area at the time was being done by Thorndike, who had begun to oversee a number of empirical studies on character which were financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Foundation.⁹³ Also coming out of this progressive research were the studies of Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May, known as the Character Education Inquiry.

In 1911 Thorndike published his findings regarding human character as it related to genetic endowment. According to Thorndike's research, moral character, intelligence, and social worth were all tied closely together and biologically rooted. In his own words: "to him that a superior intellect is given also on the average a superior character."⁹⁴ This study, and a host of others that had their grounding in evolutionary genetics, posted findings that showed moral inferiority and low intellect among immigrants, African Americans, and Native Americans. The call from these researchers was for segregated classrooms and appropriate differentiated curriculum in order to provide adequate instruction based upon "proved differences in individual interests and capabilities."⁹⁵

In 1913, Thorndike published more research regarding the question of child development. In his work, *Educational Psychology*, he articulated a position that "original tendencies could be classified, analyzed, and eventually trained if only they were operationalized in terms of specific

⁹³ Bowles and Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America : Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*, 197.

⁹⁴ Edward L. Thorndike, *Educational Psychology*, vol. 3 (New York: Teachers College Columbia University, 1913), 32.

⁹⁵ Russell Marks, *The Idea of IQ* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 72.

behaviors.”⁹⁶ In response to his findings, which gave empirical evidence for the measurability of moral aptitude, a host of educators began to develop their own supporting evidence through multiple character studies. The most noteworthy of these studies was the Character Education Inquiry (CEI).

A foreshadowing of the significance of the final CEI report could be seen in a paper presented by Mark A. May at the Mid-West Conference on Character Development that was held in Chicago in February of 1928. At that time, the CEI research consisted of data from close to two hundred test the Inquiry was conducting. In his paper, May concerned himself with “the major contributions to character education of certain types of psychological and sociological investigations.”⁹⁷ After presenting a number of significant findings from the three years of testing that had already occurred, May stated that, “results thus far obtained point to many changes that will have to take place in our entire education system before the aims of character education can be fully realized.”⁹⁸ Speaking specifically to the traditional virtue-based approach of Character Education that had influenced school policy in a large degree over the last decade, May boldly claimed,

It is a matter of much concern to character education which of these is correct. If character is an aggregate or even an integration of traits of honesty, loyalty, self-control, obedience, and the like, then the task of character education is to develop these traits by whatever method seems best. This is the conventional theory and is the one on which most of our character education is now built. But if... conduct is in all cases specific and a function of the circumstances, then character education becomes a much more difficult task. It is most difficult mainly because we cannot assume transfer of training from one situation to another. Habits are specific, and they transfer only to situations that have elements in common.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Thorndike, *Educational Psychology*, 289.

⁹⁷ Mark A. May, “What Science Offers on Character Education,” In *Proceedings of the Mid-West Conference on Character Development*. The Chicago Association for Child Study and Parent Education (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), 7.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

May concluded his paper by stating that “what character education needs most is a firm scientific foundation. This foundation is rapidly being laid. The cornerstone of scientific method has already been put down. The bricks are the facts, and the mortar, the hypotheses or theories that hold them together.”¹⁰⁰ At the same conference that May presented his scientific based findings and challenge, the majority of the other papers that were shared had a more conventional moral theory basis. May, in fact, was not a part of the majority voice that was being heard at this time. One such paper, presented by William Kilpatrick, professor of philosophy at Teachers College, Columbia University, stood in stark contrast to Mark May’s attack on the concept of building particular character traits into children, and thereby developing character.

The pervading idea at the time, in regard to character traits and building character, was that a significant role of the teacher is that of developing positive character traits into their students. As these desirable traits are built into the child, a consistency of character develops, which operates throughout the child’s connections to community. In other words, as the child develops honesty in the classroom, that character trait of honesty becomes a conduct that carries itself into the other areas of the child’s life. Ironically, both May and Kilpatrick were at Teachers College, and both scholars had a progressive background, Kilpatrick having worked with John Dewey and Edward Thorndike. As in all approaches to educational praxis or philosophy, progressive thinkers come from a variety of backgrounds and will oftentimes disagree among themselves in regard to certain aspects of education. In this particular instance,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 45.

Kilpatrick still considered the concept of building character traits, and that transfer of training, as an integral part of any successful moral education program.¹⁰¹

In his paper, Kilpatrick discussed the need to improve character education, stating that “discipline in the old-fashioned sense of punishment is a small part of character building.” To Kilpatrick, and the majority of educators present, character consisted of virtues and traits that could be “built” into a child. The debate for these educators was not whether character could be built, but rather, what is the best way to build that character in the child?. Kilpatrick argued in his paper that, “with regard to honesty and other desirable characteristics... we wish to build these characteristics in our children so that when the time comes the appropriate conduct will carry itself. That is what we mean by character.”¹⁰² The Mid-West Conference on Character Development was strongly influenced by the virtue-based character education movement, but the question of transfer of training and the seeming impotence of the traditional approach to character training was soon to be a central theme of educational discourse for years to come.

Hartshorne and May’s Inquiry into Character

Again, in regard to the Character Education Inquiry, this paper is concerned with the impact that the study might have had on the educational discourse, curricula, and pedagogy associated with traditional virtue-based character education, and not with the issue of the reliability of the CEI research. However, to better understand the magnitude and import of the Inquiry, a brief history of the CEI is necessary.

¹⁰¹ William Kilpatrick, *Remaking the Curriculum* (New York: Newson and Company, 1936), 111.

¹⁰² William Kilpatrick, “Discipline and Character.” A Paper Presented at the *Proceedings of the Mid-West Conference on Character Development*, February, 1928. The Chicago Association for Child Study and Parent Education. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), 225.

Hartshorne and May's Character Education Inquiry was conducted from 1925 through 1930, with results published in 1928, 1929, and 1930. The study, funded by John D. Rockefeller, was conducted under the joint sponsorship of the Religious Education Association and the Institute for Social and Religious Research. According to Galen M. Fisher, then executive secretary for the Institute, the question of how to evaluate the results of moral education objectively had been a point of discussion for years within both the Religious Education Association and the Institute.¹⁰³ This discussion finally yielded an assembly of twelve specialists in religious and general education and in psychology who gathered in New York on January 6, 1923. The result of their conferring was a report to the Institute that suggested a study be conducted with the following recommendations:

- Study the actual experiences of children which have moral and religious significance and the effects for periods of time of the moral and religious influences to which children, youth, and adults have been exposed.
- Apply the objective methods of the laboratory to the measurement of conduct under controlled conditions.
- Engage one or more full-time investigators and associate with them advisers and assistants.
- Secure collaboration by various institutions and groups.
- Make the results of the study available in both technical and popular forms.¹⁰⁴

In the spring of 1924, the Institute appointed Dr. Hugh Hartshorne, then Professor of Religious Education at the University of Southern California, and Dr. Mark A. May, then Professor of Psychology at Syracuse University, to serve as co-directors of a research project that would inquire into character education with particular reference to religious education. At the

¹⁰³ Hugh Hartshorne et al., *Studies in the Nature of Character*, vol. 1 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), v.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., vi.

same time, Teachers College, Columbia University, agreed to appoint the two researchers to their faculty and undertake the project under the Division of Psychology of the Institute of Educational Research, which was directed by Professor Edward L. Thorndike. In addition, the college set up an advisory board to provide the investigators with “effective advice and counsel” as they conducted the Inquiry. The original agreement with the college called for a three-year study, to begin September 1, 1924. However, after a review of the study was conducted in June of 1926, funds were allocated for a continuation of the Inquiry for two additional years.¹⁰⁵

The Scope and Method of the Inquiry

The researchers’ stated goal of the Inquiry was to study the moral functioning of children, looking at the social behaviors of those children as individuals in relation to the ideas, purposes, motives, and attitudes that relate to character and character training. In addition, those aspects of individualized character were to be studied in relation to the group life within which the observed and tested behaviors took place. The focus of the Inquiry reflected the suggestions of the Religious Education Association and Institute, as well as the researchers’ own thinking of behavior as “a function not only of the group but of the self which is becoming enlarged and organized within itself as well as integrated with its groups in the processes of social interaction.”¹⁰⁶ With this theoretical position, the focus of investigation became twofold: the child operating as an individual who is capable of moral decision-making and in doing so develops character (integration), and that same individual whose behavior tendencies both impact and are impacted by a connection with a particular community.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., vii.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 7.

Hartshorne and May classified their work as involving the following areas of interest: mental content and skills; desires, opinions, attitudes and motives; social behavior; and social-self-integration as it relates to self-control. In determining the initial course to take in the Inquiry, the researchers desired to select as units for study the modes of conduct that were “not only significant in living but also susceptible of [to] precise measurement and experimentation.” They decided first to investigate “deceitful and honest behavior,” measuring the amount of deceptiveness characterized by students in a variety of situations. In this way, they were hoping to determine the relation between the tendency to deceive and other measurable factors, such as age, intelligence, cultural background, gender, and emotional stability. Another type of behavior that was studied in the Inquiry related to charity, which the researchers eventually labeled as “service.” This study contrasted the work that an individual would do for self to work that the individual chose to do for others. The final behavior they studied was “self-control,” dealing specifically with an individual’s tendency to continue an approved act while resisting the tendency to engage in an interesting but disapproved act. The approach for each of these studies dealt primarily with character as expressed through an individual’s behavior, but the researchers recognized that “in making this abstraction [approaching the study of character by dealing with behaviors] for purposes of investigation we are not belittling the significance of motives, but are merely insisting on the necessity of knowing the tendency, under any motive, for the overt responses made in certain situations. The problem of motivation is not irrelevant, but it is another problem.”¹⁰⁷

The report of the study, *Studies in the Nature of Character*, was published in three volumes: *Volume 1, Studies in Deceit*; *Volume 2, Studies in Service and Self-Control*; *Volume 3,*

¹⁰⁷ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 5.

Studies in the Organization of Character. The scope of the Inquiry was enormous as

Cunningham describes:

Various portions of the project dominated a survey of character education research compiled for the Religious Education Association by Ruth Shonle Cavan. A number of graduate students completed portions of the study as their masters and doctoral theses. Edith Burdick was completing the development of “a group test for children which will by indirect methods reveal the culture and economic status of their home.” Charles A. Drake was measuring “the effect of interests and emotionality on academic success.” John S. French, of the New York City Boys’ Club, was studying “the ways and means of bringing an individual’s emotions into focus, of his own attention and control.” J.C. Hsia was trying “to ascertain what constitutes sociability of school children, particularly the usefulness of certain tests and factual data in prediction.” Earle A. Hunter was studying patriotism, and J. Maller both cooperativeness and the effect of religious schooling on honest behavior. In all, a sample of more than 170,000 tests was given to more than 8000 public and 2500 private school students over five years.¹⁰⁸

One of the principles on which these behavior studies were built, according to the researchers, was that the Inquiry should be centered on age groups as young as possible. As well, because of the statistical nature of the study, it was more advantageous to apply the testing techniques to children when found in groups, which also provided data in relation to the influence of group life. For the researchers, the most accessible groups were school classes. In selecting school populations, Hartshorne and May endeavored to use representative samples of the following social groups:

1. Various intelligence levels within grades three to twelve
2. Various social, economic, and cultural levels
3. Various types of community
4. Various degrees of socialization or levels of character (delinquents excepted)
5. Various national or racial groups
6. Various occupational groups
7. Various religious groups
8. Both sexes¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Cunningham, *A Certain and Reasoned Art*, 227.

¹⁰⁹ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 104.

The Inquiry's data from the primary studies in deceit was derived from a population of some 10,865 pupils, who gave an average of four hours apiece to the test program. There were twenty-three specific student populations in this study. Given the breadth of the study, it is worth quoting at length:

- A. A suburban community of 10,000 population with about 1000 children in the public school grades five to eight. This community was composed socially of the ultra-wealthy on the one hand and the very lowest in the economic scale on the other, with a fair representation of the middle classes. Furthermore, there were many nationalities and religions. There were five elementary schools, grades one to six, one intermediate school, grades seven to eight, and one high school.
- B. In a mid-western city of 200,000 about 1000 children in grades five to ten were tested. The fifth and sixth grade children were in two elementary schools in two different sections of the city. The other grades were in one large junior high school which draws from a general district covering about half of the total population of the city.
- C. A public school serving a metropolitan population which on the whole is above the average in social and economic conditions.
- D. Another group of public school children who because of broken homes are situated in an institution for such children located in a suburban community.
- E. A vocational high school in a fine section of a large suburban city.
- F. A public school in a congested metropolitan area, recent immigration stock, mostly Russian Jews.
- G. A public school in the vicinity of F, mixed, grades four to six only.
- H. As above, but boys only, grades four to six.
- I. As above, but girls only, grades four to eight.
- J. As above, boys and girls, grades four to six.
- K. An orphanage, from which selected brothers and sisters were used.
- L. An experimental public school associated with a normal school in a suburban community, grades four to seven.
- M. A regular village school in the same community as L, grades four to seven.

- N. Certain classes in a junior high school in a mid-western city.
- O. Some two hundred children in a large mid-western city contrasted with two hundred in surrounding rural districts.
- P. A private school, grades one to six, having mixed sexes, grades seven and eight, only girls, located in a large city and drawing from the upper social levels.
- Q. Another private school of very much the same level as P but with smaller classes and mixed sexes running all the way through.
- R. A boy's private school located in a suburban community. The social level is high and the intelligence level is high.
- S. Three small private schools in Pennsylvania.
- T. A metropolitan school of the better type in a residential section.
- U. A metropolitan public school drawing from a foreign and negro population.
- V. A metropolitan elementary school.
- W. A metropolitan junior high school.¹¹⁰

The research design included both primary and secondary studies. The primary study of the Inquiry involved the development of a large body of highly standardized test material for the measurement of a variety of student responses in the field of morals and religion. The purpose of the primary study was to build a practical set of tests by which significant types of conduct could be measured. The researchers organized the test material in the following categories: tests of moral knowledge and moral skill; tests of attitude, opinion, and motive; tests of conduct; and tests of self-control. The secondary study of the Inquiry, carried on simultaneously "as circumstances allowed," included: the problem of traits with specific focus on the interrelations of conduct, knowledge, attitudes, and opinions; the problem of causes and significance with specific focus on the biological and social aspects of individuals; the problem of efficiency as it

¹¹⁰ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol. 1, 105.

relates to the character education efforts purporting to develop character or certain habits and ideas; and the problem of method as applied to habit formation. The purpose of the secondary study was to gather as much data as possible about the causes and nature of these behavioral tendencies while development of the primary tests was going on.¹¹¹

The Inquiry's *Studies in Deceit*

Studies in Deceit did not boast a full history of character education in America's schools, but, as background to their study, the researchers did provide a several-page discourse on the practice of deception. The intent was to establish a brief history of character as it relates to the "natural state of deception," asserting that historically, "the ideal of honesty... has been developed on a basis of social-minded regard for the personalities and the rights of others... honesty... is the best, that is, the safest, policy."¹¹² As well, the authors also provided the reader with several presuppositions regarding morality that formed the foundation for their study. According to Hartshorne and May, societies historically have paid homage to the ideal of honesty, and this ideal had helped to shape and mold the governing rules and standards of those societies. Yet, there was an ever-present conflict that the researchers historically found between the standard of honesty and the normal performance of societies in general.

In spite of this obeisance to the ideal of honesty, we are confronted with the extraordinary spectacle of a civilization whose institutions are founded on the assumption that men can trust one another – a civilization whose codes of business, of personal relations, of religious experience, of military, political, and professional service everywhere lift up honesty as essential to the common weal – nevertheless exhibiting in every walk of life... the most blatant use of fraud not only for the ends disapproved by public ethics but even for objects which are in themselves entirely wholesome and are frequently sought by legitimate means.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 8.

¹¹² Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 20.

¹¹³ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 20.

The difficulty that the researchers observed was how to develop an educational approach to character that could, first, remove the original conflict or strain between the child and his environment, which was the situational cause for the deception, and, second, replace the old character habit with a new one. In regard to the second process, Hartshorne and May took the opportunity early in their report to set the stage for a redefinition of assumptions regarding the concept of morality as it relates to character traits. As mentioned earlier, Mark A. May, presenting at the Chicago conference on character just two months prior to the release of *Studies in Deceit*, had challenged the conventional “trait” approach to character education as well as the concept of “transfer of training.” Volume One of the Inquiry included the authors’ discussion of “deceit as an object of study,” as it relates to the conventional trait approach to character:

Methods of replacing old habits by new or of originating the correct, that is, the honest, types of response are age-old. Most of them are based on the assumption that honesty is not only a generic concept but a generic trait... requiring only to be evoked by precept, threat, or reward. The method is prolific of wise sayings and moral cautions, but as a means of producing universal honor among men we certainly cannot boast of its success. We need not be surprised at this, however, if the underlying assumption proves to be itself fallacious. If there is no generic trait of honesty to be evoked, then it is to be expected that the multitudinous ways of evoking it will fall short of their object.¹¹⁴

With this as their theoretical foundation, Hartshorne and May proceeded to examine the previous efforts in the study of character. According to the researchers, there were sundry approaches that had already been established for the study of education for character. These included biography and fiction, observation, questionnaire methods, case histories, rating methods, testing and measurement, analysis, and laboratory experimentation. Hartshorne and May eventually chose the methodology with reference to testing and measurement, most likely influenced by the administrative head of the Inquiry, Dr. Edward L. Thorndike, who was

¹¹⁴ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 27.

acknowledged multiple times throughout all three volumes of the CEI. Thorndike and the advisory board brought to the table over twenty-five years of experience in social behavior and achievement testing.¹¹⁵ Defending the testing and measurement approach, the researchers stated:

Many facts pointed to testing and measurement as the most strategic point of attack. Not only is this relatively neglected approach basic to any fresh scientific research into the nature of character... but studies of the relative value of current methods of moral and religious education and experiments to discover improvements in technique depend to a degree rarely appreciated on the availability of ways of *measuring results*. Theories of ethical training, furthermore, suffer from lack of data concerning the causal concomitants of specific behaviors and attitudes, and plans and programs are produced by the score which have no experimental basis and which are as likely to damage character as to improve it.¹¹⁶

With their methodology firmly established, Hartshorne and May set out to review the various methods previously used to measure character. The first volume of their Inquiry was wholly dedicated to the study of *deceit* as a symptom of social friction. The researchers reviewed over thirty different tests for deception, ranging from physiological tests that measured breathing and blood pressure changes to multiple psychological tests developed by Voelker, Cady, Raubenheimer, and others.¹¹⁷ Most of the methods utilized in character analysis studies, however, for one reason or another, proved to be unsuited for the purposes of their research. The researchers formulated ten criteria that were utilized in determining adequate testing models:

1. The test situation should be as far as possible a natural situation. The response should as far as possible be natural even when directed.
2. The test situation and the response should be of such a nature as to allow all subjects equal opportunity to exhibit the behavior which is being tested.
3. No test should subject the child to any moral strain beyond that to which he is subjected in the natural course of his actual life situations.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁶ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 5.

¹¹⁷ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 34.

4. The test should not put the subject and the examiner in false social relations to one another. The examiner should guard against being deceptive himself in order to test the subject.
5. The test should have “low visibility,” that is, it should be of such a nature as not to arouse the suspicions of the subject.
6. The activity demanded of the subject in taking the test should have real values for him whether he is aware of these values or not.
7. The test should be of such a nature as not to be spoiled by publicity.
8. If the tests are to be used in statistical studies they should be group tests. They should also be easy to administer and should be mechanically scored. They should be short enough to be given in single school periods.
9. The test results should be clear and unambiguous. It should be obvious from the results whether the subject did or did not exhibit the behavior in question.
10. The scores should be quantitative, showing the amount as well as the fact of the deception.¹¹⁸

According to Hartshorne and May, these requirements proved so rigid that, “no technique has yet been devised which will meet all of them. Only one previously used method came sufficiently within the standard set to warrant our adopting it.”¹¹⁹ That method was the *peeping technique*, which was modified by the researchers prior to being utilized in their study. In this form of testing the subject attempts to complete a puzzle of some type with their eyes closed. The level of difficulty of completing the puzzle correctly is high, making it a good indicator of peeping (which would be deceitful behavior). In one example of a wooden block puzzle, the researchers determined that the chances of successful completion, three times in succession without looking, would be 1 in 4096. After a thorough review of previous testing, and developing strict criteria, the task that remained for the Inquiry was to produce adequate testing techniques

¹¹⁸ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 47.

¹¹⁹ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 48.

that would meet the research criteria in such a way as to provide quantifiable data sufficient enough to warrant reliable conclusions in regard to a child's deceptive behavior. Three types of deceptive conduct were tested: cheating, lying, and stealing. The general procedure used in the study was to place the child in a situation in which deceit might be practiced and record the conduct.

The situations in which cheating was measured were: (1) certain classroom situations where the child was provided opportunity to cheat on a test, exam, or class exercise, (2) certain situations that involved athletic contests where the child may or may not deceive in regard to his or her accomplishments, (3) certain situations arising in party games where a child may or may not cheat, (4) situations where illegitimate help at home would improve the child's grade. Lying was tested (1) by asking the child if she or he did or did not cheat in the above tests, (2) by asking questions regarding approved and unapproved conduct. Stealing was tested by placing the child in a situation (1) in which there was an illegitimate opportunity to take money, and (2) where there was an illegitimate opportunity to take small articles. To implement these situational tests the researchers developed the following techniques:

- I. Methods for measuring the cheating type of deceptive behavior
 - A. As exhibited in classroom situations
 1. The copying technique
 2. The duplicating technique
 3. The improbable achievement technique
 - a. Puzzle performance test
 - b. Paper and pencil tests
 4. The double testing technique
 - a. IER achievement tests
 - b. Speed tests
 - B. As exhibited in work done at home

- C. As exhibited in athletic contests
 - D. As exhibited in parlor games
- II. Methods for measuring the stealing type of deception
 - A. In party or play situations
 - B. In classroom situations
- III. Methods for measuring the lying type of deception
 - A. To escape disapproval
 - B. To gain approval¹²⁰

Hartshorne and May developed specific protocol and instructional directives for each particular testing method. A few examples of testing methods are provided below to afford the reader with a better understanding of the Inquiry's methods of study. The *copying* technique, which provided students the opportunity to copy work from another pupil, consisted of two different forms of a short answer test which had slight, imperceptible, but important differences. The differing tests were distributed in such a way that no student had the same test in back, in front, or beside their desk. That way, if a student attempted to copy, they would end up copying the wrong answers. This procedure was used for arithmetic tests, true-false tests, and multiple choice tests that required a numbered answer. During testing, the teacher was removed from the classroom and replaced by a trained CEI proctor. After giving testing instructions, the proctor ignored the class, oftentimes reading a newspaper or magazine, and only addressed the students if class order needed to be reestablished. The technique was initially used on a small group of sixth graders, and in two large university classes. The results in both cases were "so ambiguous and hard to interpret that we [Hartshorne and May] abandoned the method entirely. Even with a knowledge of the seating of the pupils on the examination and even by comparing the papers pair

¹²⁰ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 49.

by pair according to seating arrangement, it is very difficult to be sure whether cheating took place.”¹²¹

The *duplicating* technique, however, proved to be a more reliable testing mechanism. In this technique a test was given to the student and when the papers were collected the researchers duplicated the student’s work, thereby having an exact record of what each student actually did on the test. In a later class session the original papers were returned to the student un-scored, along with an answer key. Each child was then asked to score her own paper utilizing the answer key. The self-scored papers were then compared with the duplicates and all changes were recorded. Deception was determined by the students having increased their original test score by changing previous answers through an illegitimate use of the answer key. Again in this testing technique, the teacher was replaced by a CEI proctor who provided no supervision during the students’ self-scoring time. Examples of the duplicating technique:

The Word Knowledge Test

This is arranged as a multiple choice test. The response words are numbered from one to five. When the correct response word is located, its number is written on the dotted line at the margin. Cheating consists in both erasing this number and entering the correct one, or in writing down more numbers. There were 120 items in all, such as these:

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. boyish | 1 naughty... 2 male... 3 impudent
4 like a boy... 5 informal... | 1. |
| 2. blunt | 1 dull... 2 drowsy... 3 deaf... 4 doubtful...
5 ugly... | 2. |
| 3. default | 1 defeat... 2 blame... 3 failure... 4 libel...
5 displace... | 3. |
| 4. allusion | 1 aria... 2 illusion... 3 eulogy... 4 dream...
5 reference... | 4. |

¹²¹ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 51.

5. astute 1 rigorous... 2 shrewd... 3 unsound...
 4 bony... 5 astonished... 5.¹²²

In the case of setting up tests to study the deceptive behavior of stealing, Hartshorne and May developed certain requirements in addition to the aforementioned ten general criteria.

These are as follows:

1. It must be a group situation.
2. Money must be used in a natural way or appear as a natural part of the situation.
3. There must be an opportunity to take all or some known part of money apparently without being detected in the act.
4. The subject must feel that he is not merely being clever in getting away with the money but that he is actually stealing it from a particular person or institution.
5. It must be possible to check exactly what the subject does.¹²³

An example of one of the Inquiry's stealing test:

The Planted Dime Test

In connection with the administration of the Puzzle tests... a box was given to each pupil containing several puzzles not all of which were used. In each box was a dime ostensibly belonging to another puzzle, which the examiner showed to the pupils but did not ask them to solve. This other puzzle required the use of a dime, but no mention was made by the examiner of the dimes in the boxes. Each pupil returned his own box to a large receptacle at the front of the room. [A] Check on what each pupil did was arranged for by numbering and distributing the boxes according to the seating plan of the class. The purpose of this test was to see which children would take the dime before returning the box.¹²⁴

¹²² Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 53.

¹²³ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 90.

¹²⁴ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 90.

Conclusions from *Studies in Deceit*

In regard to the results of the primary study of the CEI, as it relates to *Studies in Deceit*, Hartshorne and May succeeded in developing a whole battery of deception tests containing twenty-two opportunities to cheat in classroom work, four opportunities in athletic contests, two in party games, and one in school work completed at home. The lying tests consisted of forty-six questions in total that could be answered falsely. The stealing tests provided two opportunities to steal money, and one opportunity to steal small articles. As to the reliability and validity of these tests, the researchers stated that, “these situations... are not an adequate sampling of the whole range of possibilities, since we specifically limited our research to certain types of situations; yet, as far as they go, they are reliable and valid. That is, we do not claim to have measured deception in general but only in the types of situations studied.”¹²⁵

Results from the secondary studies were related to the following factors as they are associated with deception: age, gender, intelligence, physical and emotional condition, socio-economic level of the home, the cultural level of the home, the race, nationality, and religion of the parents, school grade, attendance, achievement, retardation, deportment, association with friends and classmates, sociability, suggestibility, attendance at motion pictures, progressive *versus* conventional school methods, teacher influence, school and class morale, membership in clubs or organizations purporting to develop character, Sunday school attendance, and certain efforts to teach or affect honesty. The more outstanding results of the study (according to the researchers) follows:

1. The social and economic background of children shows a very significant relation to honesty and moral knowledge.

¹²⁵ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 408.

2. The data shows that children inherit something like a low constitutional weakness which, in social life, takes the form of low resistance to temptation.
3. Children of parents who were born in North Europe or America are less deceptive in classroom cheating situations than children of parents born in South Europe. Colored children cheat more than most of the white groups.
4. In the matter of honesty, children enrolled in Sunday schools exhibit more desirable conduct than the children who are not enrolled in Sunday schools.
5. There is a high correlation between intelligence and honesty. Intelligence plays a strong part in the development of a child's social concepts and ability to make ethical discriminations.
6. Deception runs in families to about the same extent as eye color... and other inherited structures.
7. The progressive schools tested do not cheat as much as most of the conventional schools.
8. Children belonging to certain organizations that purport to teach honesty deceive about the same as those who do not belong to these types of organizations.
9. The results of these studies show that neither deceit nor honesty are unified character traits, but rather specific functions of life situations.
10. Such consistency of character as pupils have achieved is the product of experience preceding the fifth grade in school and does not materially increase as they move up through the eighth grade.¹²⁶¹²⁷

Implications from *Studies in Deceit*

For Hartshorne and May the implications of the *Studies in Deceit*, for moral education, were tentative and incomplete. "No conclusive experiments were conducted by which claims could be made that addressed particular forms of behavior or for that matter character as a whole."¹²⁸ Nevertheless, according to the researchers, there were a few results that did have a

¹²⁶ Hugh Hartshorne and Mark A. May, "Summary of the Work of the Character Education Inquiry, part II," *Religious Education*, vol. xxv, no. 8 (1930): 757-62.

¹²⁷ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol. 1, 408.

¹²⁸ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol. 1, 412.

direct bearing on the evaluation of current practices in character education. Their interpretation of these results was as follows:

1. No one is honest or dishonest by nature. Where a conflict arises between a child and his environment, deception is a natural mode of adjustment, having in itself no moral significance.
2. The mere urging of honest behavior by teachers or the discussion of standards and ideals of honesty, no matter how much such general ideas may be emotionalized, has no necessary relation to the control of conduct.
3. This does not imply that the teaching of general ideas, standards, and ideals is not desirable and necessary, but only that the prevailing ways of inculcating ideals probably do little good and may do some harm.
4. The large place occupied by the *situation* in the suggestion and control of conduct... points to the need of a careful educational analysis of all such situations for the purpose of making explicit the nature of the direct or honest mode of response in detail, so that when a child is placed in these situations there may be genuine opportunity for him to practice direct methods of adjustment.
5. Along with such practice of direct or honest responses there should go a careful study of them in terms of the personal relations involved, so that in the child's imagination the honest mode of procedure may be clearly distinguished from the dishonest mode as a way of social interaction, and the consequences of either method may be observed and used in evaluating the relative desirability of direct versus indirect procedures.
6. The association of deceit with sundry handicaps in social background, home conditions, companions, personal limitations, and so on indicates the need for understanding particular examples of dishonest practice before undertaking to judge the blameworthiness of the individual. As far as possible, such social and personal limitations should be removed.¹²⁹

These findings and interpretations of the Inquiry spoke directly to the traditional virtue-based form of moral education that was being practiced at this time in schools throughout America. From their research, Hartshorne and May came to the conclusion that there was not a large amount, or degree, of transfer of training in character that occurred in the child from one

¹²⁹ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 413.

relational setting to another. This, as mentioned earlier, had been a hotly debated topic among character educators. The CEI showed that the moral instruction that a child received in the classroom setting would not cross over into the other settings of the child's life, such as family, business dealings, or church. The research showed that children operated in different roles, adapting to the mores of their particular setting. Hartshorne and May referred to this behavior as the "doctrine of specificity," stating that,

This doctrine of specificity.... maintains that a child's conduct in any situation is determined more by the circumstances that attend the situation than by any mysterious entity residing within the child. Three things determine whether, in any situation, a child cheats, or exhibits self-control, or is charitable, or is persistent: (1) the nature of the situation, (2) what the child has already learned in similar situations, and (3) his awareness of the implications of his behavior.¹³⁰

According to the researchers, the data revealed no evidence of any unified traits of honesty, or charity, or self-control. Therefore, teaching the cardinal virtues to a student would be a waste of instructional time. The *McGuffey's Readers*, *Webster's Spellers*, and constant recitation of the Westminster Catechism would provide some educational benefit, in that they developed literacy and increased grammar skills, but they would have no impact on the moral character of the student.

As well, the studies also showed "no specific relation between moral knowledge and conduct." In other words, the knowledge that a student possessed regarding what was right and what was wrong had no bearing on the ultimate decision to act dishonestly in a given situation. The only correlation the CEI found between knowledge and conduct was a group phenomenon, the researchers' stating that, "this is due probably to the relationship between group code or standards and group conduct." Apart from these group settings, the data revealed no relationship

¹³⁰ Hugh Hartshorne and Mark A. May, "Summary of the Work of the Character Education Inquiry, part II," *Religious Education*, vol. xxv, no. 8 (1930): 755.

between an individual's knowledge and conduct. It was the influence of the group that had a bearing on a child's moral decision, in that the group determined the moral behavior of the individual, not the child's specific knowledge of what was moral or immoral. Hartshorne and May summarized it in this fashion: "many a boy has three vocabularies, one for the Sunday school, one for the dinner table, and one for the alley, and he never mixes them."¹³¹

Informed by the data from the *Studies in Deceit*, the researchers' concluding directives for character educators in relation to the teaching of moral principles was for those educators to place their main attention not so much on devices for teaching honesty or any other trait, but on "the reconstruction of school practices in such a way as to provide not occasional but consistent and regular opportunities for the successful use by both teachers and pupils of such forms of conduct as make for the common good."¹³²

Studies in Service and Self-Control

In October of 1929, close to a year and a half after the publication of the Character Education Inquiry's *Studies in Deceit*, Hartshorne and May published their findings of the second study, entitled *Studies in Service and Self-Control*. Whereas Volume I of the CEI had dealt specifically with the social mis-behavior of *deception*, which was contrasted to the desired concept of honesty, Volume II studied a new set of four behaviors identified by the researchers as: *cooperation*, *charity*, *persistence*, and *inhibition*. Hartshorne and May classified cooperation and charity as integral aspects of *service*. They classified persistence and inhibition as integral aspects of *self-control*. As in Volume I, the reader was cautioned in this second behavioral study to not regard the techniques of the Inquiry as "tests of character," but to consider them as "tests

¹³¹ Ibid., 757.

¹³² Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.1, 414.

of specific forms of behavior.” The chief purpose of the Inquiry was to explore the field of character measurement and to demonstrate the feasibility and value of quantitative procedures in character research. With this in mind, Hartshorne and May developed fourteen tests that related to the measurement of the four behaviors they associated with service and self-control.

Scope and Method of Inquiry

The techniques of inquiry for *Studies in Service and Self-Control* were applied to four populations that were part of the *Studies in Deceit* described in Volume I of the CEI. These populations were referred to in Volume I as *A*, *B*, *D*, and *P*:

- A. A suburban community of 10,000 population with about 1000 children in the public school grades five to eight. This community was composed socially of the ultra-wealthy on the one hand and the very lowest in the economic scale on the other, with a fair representation of the middle classes. Furthermore, there were many nationalities and religions. There were five elementary schools, grades one to six, one intermediate school, grades seven to eight, and one high school.
- B. In a mid-western city of 200,000 about 1000 children in grades five to ten were tested. The fifth and sixth grade children were in two elementary schools in two different sections of the city. The other grades were in one large junior high school which draws from a general district covering about half of the total population of the city.
- D. Another group of public school children who because of broken homes are situated in an institution for such children located in a suburban community.
- P. A private school, grades one to six, having mixed sexes, grades seven and eight, only girls, located in a large city and drawing from the upper social levels.¹³³

In addition, for this particular study, the researchers utilized the entire battery of fourteen tests in three new populations that totaled nearly 900 children:

¹³³ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.I, 105.

- X. Grades five and six of a public school in a residential section of New Haven, Connecticut. The community is not wealthy, but might be called upper middle class. X also contains grades seven and eight of another school, likewise representing a community of relatively high social level.
- Y. This group was selected because of its representative character. The entire population in grades five to eight is included. The town, known as Walden, contains 5,000 people and is situated about ten miles due west of Newburgh, New York. The inhabitants are largely of old English stock.
- Z. Grades five to eight from a third school in New Haven, Connecticut. The community is largely foreign, but with no colored or oriental pupils. Three-fourths of the fathers are unskilled laborers.¹³⁴

After reviewing previous efforts of researchers to measure character as it related to the service aspects of cooperative and charitable behavior, and the self-control aspects of persistence and inhibition, Hartshorne and May developed multiple testing techniques, utilizing the criteria for testing that was outlined in their *Studies in Deceit*. They organized the techniques for *Studies in Service* in this fashion: The Self-or-Class Test, The Money Voting Test, The Learning Exercises, The School Kit Test, and The Envelopes Test.¹³⁵ The techniques utilized for *Studies in Self-Control* were as follows:

1. Classroom tests for measuring persistence
 - a. Puzzle mastery test
 - b. Persistence for self and for class tests
 - c. Story resistance test
 - d. Magic square (and word) test
 - e. Cross and ring puzzle
2. Classroom tests for measuring inhibition
 - a. Picture inhibition test
 - b. Story inhibition test
 - c. Safe manipulation test
 - d. Puzzle manipulation test

¹³⁴ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 7.

¹³⁵ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 99.

- e. Ruggles distraction test
- f. Candy inhibition test¹³⁶

Testing Methods from *Studies in Service*

The procedure for administering these tests were the same as those utilized in *Studies in Deceit*. However, at times for the service and self-control tests, the classroom teacher remained in the classroom and was not replaced by a CEI proctor. One example of a service test utilized in the study was the *School Kit Test*. For this test a pencil case was used containing ten articles: drinking cup, pencil and sharpener, ruler, eraser, pen, penholder, double pencil, and three other pencils. The kits were of different colors, red, blue, and green, but only one color was used in any classroom. Each child was provided with a kit, which came as a present from a friend of the school. The student was allowed to give away all or any portion of the kit in an anonymous fashion to provide school kits for other children who did not have “useful and pretty things of this kind.” The articles in each kit were marked in such a way as to trace the donated items back to the individual student. The directions, administered by the teachers, were as follows:

“I am requested to announce that a friend of the school has given some kits to the pupils of certain classes. These are brand new kits (hold up the sample) containing pencils, eraser, ruler, pencil sharpener, drinking cup, etc. These are given to you for your very own, to do exactly as you please with. There is a slip with a name on it on each package.”

Pass the kits and give time (10 minutes) for them to be examined.

“Now I want to pass on a suggestion from the principal. He says there are many schools even in our own country where children have no pencils or interesting things such as these in these kits. He thought possibly some of you might like to help make up some kits for other children. You might put in one of those little things, or two, or three, or all ten, or the whole thing, box and all, or just the box, keeping the articles for yourself. If you want to help make up some kits for other children, just put whatever of these things you want to give in the red envelope. You may put it all in, or just the empty box, or just one or more of the things, or nothing at all. Tie up the envelope and drop it in the basket

¹³⁶ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 302.

whenever you want to before you leave to-day. Please put in the envelope in any case. It is quite all right for you to keep any or all of the kit if you would rather. The kit belongs to you.”¹³⁷

In describing the results from this test, the researchers felt “confident of its value as a measure of the more strictly charity type of service.”¹³⁸ Taking into consideration that different populations might value the pencil case objects differently, Hartshorne and May developed fresh weighting with each new population studied.

Testing Methods from *Studies in Self-Control*

On the assumption that “persistence is in part a function of the child’s interest in the activity being pursued,” Hartshorne and May planned a series of tests that attempted to measure a child’s behaviors in a relation to the level of interest associated within the test. One test addressed the curiosity of the child by leaving incomplete a captivating story’s ending. Another involved the solving of a mechanical problem. The third was the solving of a mental problem.¹³⁹ In the *story resistance test*, an adventure story was told by the proctor to the class up to the climax of the story. At that point the proctor asked the class if it want to know how the story ends. Each child was then provided with the story’s ending, which was written in such a way as to make the reading difficult. The difficulty increased the closer the story got to the ending. The child was given the option of finishing the story or beginning a new story that ended in the same difficult way. This opportunity was provided for each additional story that the child attempted to read. Three degrees of reading difficulty were provided in the ending to each story. The first level consisted of capital letters that ran together with no spaces between words, as this:

¹³⁷ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 62.

¹³⁸ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 63.

¹³⁹ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 292.

CHARLESLIFTEDLUCILLETOHISBACKANDTOLDHERTOHOLD. A second level of difficulty mixed small and capital letters together, with no spaces between words, as this: ChaRIEsLIftEdlUCiLleTohISbACkaNDToLdHeRtOhOLd. A third level of difficulty was accomplished by using small and capital letters with spaces at inappropriate points, as this: Char Les LiF TYed LuCIILEtO HisBacKa NDtOIDhErTo HoLd. A short practice period of three minutes was provided for each child prior to the story time. The aim of this was to allow the child to become accustomed to reading such material, and it also provided a measure of the child's ability in deciphering terms. When the end of the story was presented, the length of time that each child worked on deciphering the difficult reading was noted. The amount of deciphered words associated with the child attempting to read the end of the story was then compared to the amount of words deciphered in the three minute practice time. A relational function of time was then established, revealing the level of persistence for each reading.

The classroom inhibition tests were administered along with the tests of persistence. These tests were designed to measure a child's tendency to yield to "desire aroused," commonly described as temptation. One example of these inhibition tests was the *safe manipulation test*. In the classroom, at the beginning of a long paper and pencil testing period, the proctor would place a small combination safe on each student's desk. The child was told that the safes were part of a later test, so they were to not touch the safe until after all the other tests were completed. As well, to increase temptation, the children were told that each safe contained a penny that would become the property of any child that could open the safe. Each safe's combination dial was set at 61/2. After each paper and pencil test was given in class, the proctor would gather up the completed tests and also note any changes on the safe's dial. Six such collections and check-ups were made in the final procedure. The number of times that the safe's dial was in a different

position, as noted by the proctor, provided a measure of the child's tendency to yield to the temptation to open the safe at an inappropriate time.

Conclusions from *Studies in Service*

The *School Kit Test*, along with the other service testing techniques, was used in the major populations, X, Y, and Z. The findings made available to the researchers provided ample support data for them to develop a strong theoretical position in regard to cooperation and charity, which was spelled out in chapter two of Volume II of the CEI. Hartshorne and May prefaced their Inquiry conclusions with this statement: "Obviously only a beginning has been made of a study of the tendency to serve."¹⁴⁰ The *Studies in Service* did not cover near the ground that the *Studies in Deceit* did, but the researchers believed that they had positive results in terms of their primary study results. They believed that they had provided a scientific demonstration that a battery of testing might properly claim to measure a single type of conduct representing a variety of life situations. Regarding these conclusions, the study consisted of forty different variables that were considered to have some association with the behaviors of cooperation and charity. According to the researchers "the battery [of service tests] as a whole had a reliability not less than .80 and probably .90."¹⁴¹ Notable conclusions from the *Studies in Service* are as follows:

1. The relation of service to age, grade, and grade retardation compared to acceleration showed no consistent changes in relation to service. However, there is a suggestion that classroom behavior is partly a function of classroom adjustment.
2. The relation of service to intelligence showed that brighter children tended to slightly be more cooperative than normal and dull children. There were similar findings in regards to the intelligence of parents. However the correlations were

¹⁴⁰ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 73.

¹⁴¹ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 264.

much lower than those seen between honesty and intelligence. There was a higher correlation between school achievement (marks) and service.

3. The relation of service to physical condition, and emotional condition was negligible. The aspect of sex difference, however, did show girls as being slightly more cooperative and charitable than boys.
4. The relation of service to community differences showed the mid-population, from the standpoint of economic and social status, as the most cooperative. This was followed by the high group then the low group.
5. The relation of service among national and religious groups revealed that in each population children of English and Scandinavian parentage were more cooperative on the whole than those of native parentage, and the children of native-born parents than those of foreign-born parents. In each population the Italian and Irish groups did less than all other groups on the tests. Of the religious groups tested Catholics made the poorest showing and Protestants the best. As well, those who had at any time been enrolled in Sunday school are seen to be more cooperative than those who have never attended. Similar correlations were found regarding boy's clubs and girl's clubs.
6. As in the case of deception, no evidence of a general trait of selfishness or unselfishness was found. Behavior in different situations calling for cooperative or charitable behavior was only loosely organized.¹⁴²

Conclusions from *Studies in Self-Control*

In regard to the primary study conclusions as they relate to self-control, Hartshorne and May developed eleven techniques that were employed in the measurement of persistence and inhibition. The battery of five persistence tests had a reliability of .89. The researchers suggested a need for twenty-four additional tests to "cover the ground with reasonable completeness." The inhibition battery of six tests had a reliability of not less than .80. Again the researchers suggested about twenty more tests would be needed for a complete measure of inhibition tendencies.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 265.

¹⁴³ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 444.

In relating the results of the secondary studies, the researchers noted the difficulty in any attempt to summarize the complex relationships between the forty variables, which had been part of each study, and the measurement of persistence and inhibition. They did provide these general conclusions: “The conduct trends and their relations to one another in individuals are the precipitates of specific experiences and are functions of the situations to which they have become attached by habit.... these specific trends and relationships are gathered into patterns which represent not general ideas about conduct, but rather specific group tendencies.”¹⁴⁴ The only influencers that had any relational effect on persistence and inhibition were the sex of the child (girls resisted temptation far better), and school morale (an increase in morale correlates with an increase in self-control).¹⁴⁵

Implications from *Studies in Service and Self-Control*

In examining the data from the CEI, Hartshorne and May developed several general conclusions in regard to the behaviors of cooperation, charity, persistence, and inhibition, as they are related to character development. The Inquiry showed that with children in grades five to eight, service tendencies were specific rather than general, with the child’s response being more related to external demands of a specific situation than to internal demands that found their source in particular principles or ideals. Once again the CEI had supportive data that transfer of training did not occur in the realm of character education, this time as it related to service and self-control. As well, the researchers also found that the friends a child made, along with the classroom code, satisfactory school adjustment, the example of parents, and general cultural level, had a greater impact on service character than did conventional character instruction. All

¹⁴⁴ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 445.

¹⁴⁵ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 447.

character instruction, however, was not impotent, in that one of the Inquiry's findings did show that "The tendency of pupils to help one another can be changed, at least temporarily, by suitable teaching."¹⁴⁶ According to the CEI, the tendencies to be of service and to exercise restraint are learned skills. Children do not develop general tendencies in these behavior areas, but specific tendencies according to experiences that the child has had. In regard to character instruction, Hartshorne and May suggested that:

The teaching of cooperation, charity, and self-control requires (1) careful planning of situations to which these activities are the natural and successful response, (2) provision for building a group morale which supports the desirable mode of conduct, and (3) increasing complexity and difficulty of situations in order that general principles may emerge and be brought into play for the guidance of conduct and the integration of behavior.¹⁴⁷

The problem of specificity and integration on character as a whole, as mentioned in the above quote, was taken up by these researchers in the third and final study of the Character Education Inquiry.

Studies in the Organization of Character

The first two volumes of the studies resulting from the Character Education Inquiry, *Studies in Deceit* and *Studies in Service and Self-Control*, were concerned with the development of measurement tools for moral behaviors and the causation of certain behavioral tendencies. From these studies, two general conclusions emerged that specifically challenged the conventional approaches to character that were present during the CEI studies. First, the concept of specificity, as mentioned earlier, maintains that a child's conduct in any situation is determined more by the circumstances that attend the situation than by any mysterious entity residing within the child. The researchers also came to a conclusion in regards to the concept of

¹⁴⁶ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 9.

¹⁴⁷ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 10.

behavioral traits versus tendencies, which was commented on in each CEI study. Their findings showed that children do not develop general tendencies in these behavior areas, but specific tendencies according to experiences that each child has had. Nothing, however, has been stated thus far concerning the way in which these behavioral tendencies are related to one another in the total make-up of the individual. Hartshorne and May recognized the possibility of the theory that there is an empirical organization of various tendencies among individuals, and that in relation to some general purpose, the individual's character is greater than the mere sum of its parts. In other words, the character of a person is more than all their behavioral tendencies added together.

It is to this discussion of the integration of an individual's behavioral tendencies that the Inquiry turned in Volume Three, *Studies in the Organization of Character*. Commenting on this problem, the researchers stated, "We are concerned here both with the inner consistency or self-integration of the individual and with his outer relations or social functioning. The two are woven together in actual experience, although the inner unity can be abstracted from the outer for purposes of analysis or measurement."¹⁴⁸

Scope and Method of Inquiry into the *Organization of Character*

In order to study the concept of integration in an empirical fashion, Hartshorne and May set up an experiment that included all their previous tests administered to three distinct populations. The test program included six days of testing from these populations that were part of the *Studies in Service and Self-Control*:

- X. Grades five and six of a public school in a residential section of new Haven, Connecticut. The community is not wealthy, but might be called upper middle class. X also contains grades seven and eight of another school, likewise representing a community of relatively high social level.

¹⁴⁸ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.III, 2.

- Y. This group was selected because of its representative character. The entire population in grades five to eight is included. The town, known as Walden, contains 5,000 people and is situated about ten miles due west of Newburgh, New York. The inhabitants are largely of old English stock.
- Z. Grades five to eight from a third school in New haven, Connecticut. The community is largely foreign, but with no colored or oriental pupils. Three-fourths of the fathers are unskilled laborers.¹⁴⁹

The choice of these populations, according to the researchers, was based “partly on their social placement and partly on the ground that in these communities we should be able to secure from the principals, teachers, and others a large amount of validation material.”¹⁵⁰ The validation material supplemented the CEI testing tools in order to create a test of an individual’s whole character. The researchers gathered evidence of character on individual students, records of what the students had done and were in the habit of doing, as well as ratings of their character tendencies. The four criteria of character developed for this particular study were as follows:

First, we have the *reputation* of the child among his teachers, leaders and classmates. That this reputation may be prejudiced is of course quite possible. Second, we have an estimate of the extent to which the pupils work happily, intelligently, and usefully in various life situations, i.e., the extent to which they *function socially*. Third, we have a *scale* of character based on the judgments of experts. The steps of the scale consist of pen pictures of 100 of the children we have tested in population Y. The scale is built around the concept of character shared by these experts and is a concrete exhibit of this concept. Fourth, we have measures of the *self-integration* or consistency of the 100 children of Y for whom the pen portraits were written. In addition, we gathered a large amount of data about our subjects by means of time schedules and case studies.¹⁵¹

These criteria helped form a whole picture of the character of an individual. The Inquiry in previous studies had developed a battery of tests that yielded conclusive results in regard to specific tendencies or actions of the child. As the CEI looked deeper into the question of

¹⁴⁹ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.II, 7.

¹⁵⁰ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.III, 4.

¹⁵¹ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.III, 5.

character, it was time to focus on the inner aspects of those tendencies as they related to knowledge and attitude. Moral knowledge was that knowledge of right and wrong that a child possessed in regard to specific matters of character, and social attitude was the viewpoint and opinion that the child held toward specific character behaviors. To measure these inner aspects of character, a battery of tests was developed: the *Good Citizenship Ballot*, the *Information Ballot*, the *Opinion A Ballot*, and the *Opinion B Ballot*.¹⁵² The data gathered from these tests were compared to another whole battery of tests that culminated from both the *Studies in Deceit* and the *Studies in Service and Self-Control*. An example of the knowledge and attitude tests is the *Cause-Effect Test*, which is a type of Information Test:

The Cause-Effect Test

Some of the statements made below are true and some are false. Read each statement carefully and underline the word TRUE if it seems to you to be true. Underline the word FALSE if it seems to you to be false.

Good marks are chiefly a matter of luck.....	True	False
Minister's sons and deacon's daughters usually go wrong	True	False
If one eats stolen apples, he will have a stomach ache.....	True	False
Success always comes from hard work.....	True	False
God punishes bad people by making them sick.....	True	False
Eavesdroppers never hear anything good about themselves.....	True	False
The youngster who can cheat and not get caught at it shows more good sense than the one who does not cheat.....	True	False ¹⁵³

¹⁵² Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.III, 368.

¹⁵³ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.III, 38.

The intention of this test was to measure the child's ability to trace consequences back to their causes. A supposition of Hartshorne and May was that "such ability is an important factor in locating one's own and other's moral responsibility for what happens, that is, in placing oneself and others in a true casual sequence.... [the] ability to place oneself in such a determinative sequence of events is one aspect of self-conscious activity that needs to be understood and measured."¹⁵⁴ In measuring social attitude, the researchers used a ballot format for testing. In this technique a type of behavior would be stated, such as cheating, and then be described in short phrases providing differing opportunities, motives, and obstacles that might be associated with the behavior. The child was asked to respond to each situation with an answer that best fit her opinion. It was presumed by the researchers that the number of correct response was a good indication of the amount of socialized attitudes the situation represented for the child.¹⁵⁵ An example of an Opinion Ballot follows:

Opinion Ballot

Vote by drawing a line under the word *Yes* or the word *No*. If your vote is "Yes," underline *Yes*. If your vote is "No," underline *No*. Read each question carefully and vote on each one.

Would even an honest boy or girl tell a lie

If it would keep him out of trouble?.....	Yes	No
If it would get him a good job?.....	Yes	No
If it would get him into a movie show?.....	Yes	No

Would even an honest boy steal

If he could make some money that way?.....	Yes	No
If he wasn't likely to get caught?.....	Yes	No

¹⁵⁴ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.III, 39.

¹⁵⁵ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.III, 59.

Conclusions from *Studies in the Organization of Character*

A large amount of the testing material, results, and conclusions described in Volume Three of the Character Education Inquiry corresponded with similar findings Hartshorne and May published in Volumes One and Two of the Inquiry. In regard to moral knowledge, however, a few conclusions are worth noting:

- In their ability to score on moral knowledge tests, the evidence suggests that children resemble their parents more than their friends, club leaders, public school teachers, or Sunday school teachers. Within the home situation, a mother's influence is considerably greater than that of the father.
- There seems to be little evidence that there is a "moral knowledge" age independent of the mental age of children.
- Knowledge of right and wrong is a specific matter applied to specific situations which the child encounters in daily living.

In concluding comments regarding the nature of character as it was actually found to exist in most children eight to fifteen years of age, Hartshorne and May stated:

moral habits are specifically related to moral situations through the medium of nonmoral experience.... Specific actions over wide ranges of situations cannot be predicted from knowledge of conduct in one type of situation, since these varied situations are not bound together by any prepotent concept which elicits from them all a common response.... The quality of any act is thus found from its contribution to the life of the group, and the organization of these acts into a consistent self is achieved not through a process of self-exploitation but through a process of social-idealization by which situations... are subsumed under some one concomitant which, through intelligently directed experience, becomes potent to control conduct."¹⁵⁶

For Hartshorne and May, the problem faced by the individual who is attempting this type of character integration is the contradictory demands that are placed upon the person who is responsible to the home, school, work, etc. The researchers go on to state, "It is not surprising, therefore, that our present generation of children shows little integration of character.... It would

¹⁵⁶ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.III, 374.

seem to be implied that radical changes were called for in our prevailing methods of character education.”¹⁵⁷

Initial Response to the Findings of the Inquiry

As Mark May had predicted at the Mid-West Conference on Character Development in Chicago just two years earlier, the implications of these findings for character education were enormous.¹⁵⁸ George Coe, then General Secretary of the Religious Education Association, commenting on the findings of the Character Education Inquiry, stated, “research has proved the incorrectness of what had seemed to be wisdom, and the total pressure of many researchers is in the direction of revisions of both content and method far more drastic than at first thought necessary.”¹⁵⁹

The impact of the Character Education Inquiry against the traditional approach of the character educators was also reflected in the 1932 report of the Character Education Committee of the National Education Association’s Department of Superintendence, which called for a redefinition of moral education. The report stated that, “Relativity must replace absolutism in the realm of morals as in the spheres of physics and biology. This of course does not mean the denial of the principle of continuity in human affairs. Nor does it mean that each generation must repudiate the system of values of its predecessors. It does mean, however, that no such system is permanent; that it will have to change and grow in response to experience.”¹⁶⁰ The CEI also became an integral part a variety of journal articles concerning the moral education of America’s youth. For example, Herman Stuart, in his article “Trends in Character Research” in the

¹⁵⁷ Hartshorne, *Studies in Character*, vol.III, 376.

¹⁵⁸ McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 55.

¹⁵⁹ George A. Coe, “The Present Crisis in Religious Education,” *Religious Education*, vol. 28, no. 3 (1933): 181.

¹⁶⁰ McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 56.

November 1929 issue of *Religious Education*, quotes extensively from the studies of Hartshorne and May describing the Inquiry as, “perhaps one of the best examples of what can be done experimentally in this field [character education].”¹⁶¹ The then General secretary of the Young Men’s Christian Association of Rochester, New York, S. Wirt Wiley, gave a torrid critique of the moral instruction occurring in the YMCA centers across the country citing the work of the CEI as proof that there was a great need for pedagogical change.¹⁶² William Russell presented a survey of the Inquiry in the July, 1929 issue of the *Educational Record*, using the results of the CEI as a foundation for his consideration of the wholesale changes that he believed were needed in how educators approached moral education in the nation’s schools.¹⁶³ These are just a few of the numerous articles that were a direct result of the studies conducted by Hartshorne and May. It would appear that the Inquiry had undermined the traditional pedagogical approaches to moral education, suggesting the futility of virtue-based character training. The death knell had sounded for character education, and there seemed to be no cry from the victim.

Although the overwhelming majority of educational journal articles gave rave reviews for the CEI, the Studies did not go unnoticed by the traditional character educators. The *Inquiry* received little initial criticism. Soon after its publication, however, one of the study’s co-authors, J.B. Maller, questioned the study’s strong conclusions regarding *specificity* and *transfer of training*.¹⁶⁴ Although the focus of this paper, as it relates to the CEI, is concerned more with the impact that the Inquiry had on the educational discourse, pedagogy, and curricula of the character education movement, it is interesting to note that Cunningham, in his paper “The Rise

¹⁶¹ Herman N. Stuart, “Trends in Character Research,” *Religious Education*, vol. 24, no. 8 (1929): 840.

¹⁶² S. Wirt Wiley, “Recent Trends in Character Education,” *Religious Education*, vol. 26 (1931): 346.

¹⁶³ William Russell, “The Character Education Inquiry,” *Educational Record*, vol. 10 (1929): 207.

¹⁶⁴ Cunningham, *A Certain and Reasoned Art*, 231. Cunningham, also refers the reader to (Neumann 1930, Cutright and Shoemaker 1930, Jenkins 1935).

and Fall of Character Education in America,” states that the Character Education Inquiry “study’s methods and assumptions can be severely criticized,” referring specifically to Hartshorne and May’s narrow sample and their use of “statistical sleight of hand.”¹⁶⁵ According to Cunningham, since the seventy-year-old studies of Hartshorne and May, a number of other studies have challenged the significance of their findings. Robert Havighurst completed his own study of character programs over a sixteen-year period with findings that shed a more favorable light on the concept of teaching traditional moral virtues. Burton also re-examined the conclusions of Hartshorne and May. By eliminating those tests, which had demonstrated reliabilities of less than .70, his re-evaluation showed evidence of *transfer* among students in regard to their “resistance to temptation”¹⁶⁶ According to Wynne and Ryan, later studies by Philip Rushton and his colleagues “have generally found higher correlations... between the teaching of virtues and the subjects’ later virtuous’ acts.”¹⁶⁷ The critics’ claims seemingly fell on deaf ears, as the Character Education Inquiry doctrine continued to dominate the educational scene, replacing the traditional moral educational practices that for centuries had had their grounding in Aristotelian thought.

The New Character Approach

Having lost the traditional authoritative position of the Virtues and with their pedagogical practices in question, character education became a much less important concept among educators after the late 1920s. According to McClellan, ethical behavior was no longer

¹⁶⁵ Cunningham, *A Certain and Reasoned Art*, 230.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁶⁷ Edward Wynne & Kevin Ryan, *Reclaiming Our Schools: Teaching Character, Academics, and Discipline*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill, 1997), 55.

presented in schools as a set of personal values or virtues, but was related to particular situations and the student's informed response to life's challenges. For the next fifty years Character Education, historically a major thrust of every school's mission statement, declined dramatically as a major issue in educational and curricular discourse.¹⁶⁸ Although the CEI greatly impacted traditional pedagogy and practice, it would not seem to have logically led to any real or perceived prohibition against moral discussions. Cunningham notes that although the discussion continued, "the only window left open for educators interested in teaching character... was the use of the 'group discussion' as a tool... this tied in well with the emphasis on extra-curricular activities which had had been emphasized since the early twenties."¹⁶⁹

It was around this time as well that the Progressive Education Association established the Commission on the Relation of School to College, placing Wilford M. Aiken as chair of what would be the most comprehensive study in the history of the curriculum field to date. The purpose of the Commission was to engage in long-term studies of the relevance of high school curriculum and education and its impact on success or failure in college admissions and success. According to William Pinar, the Commission found that "the relevancy of the traditional high school curriculum was questionable, that student-centeredness was absent in pedagogical approaches, that there was a lacking vitality and significance in the curriculum, and that high school education was marked by purposelessness."¹⁷⁰ With this in mind, the Commission set out to make changes in the curriculum. The result for character education, in many cases, was a shift from traditional curriculum mainstay to minor inclusion of moral principles in the fundamental teaching of "life adjustment" courses such as *Social Living* and *Leisure and Education*. Moving

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 55.

¹⁶⁹ Cunningham, *A Certain and Reasoned Art*, 233.

¹⁷⁰ William Pinar, et al., *Understanding Curriculum: An Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Discourses* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 2.

moral education to marginal courses outside the core curricula was yet another sign of moral education's new marginality.

CHAPTER IV

CURRENT RESEARCH AND THE IMPACT OF THE INQUIRY

Introduction

Tianlong Yu, in his research on moral education and political control, considered Hartshorne and May's studies as the "fatal blow" to the character education movement of the 1920s. In his text, *In the Name of Morality*, Yu provides a brief history of moral education in American schools. The influence of the Inquiry, as seen by Yu, is reflected in his treatment of this history. In his writings, he leaped from 1930 to 1980, simply stating that, "although character education continued to exist in American schools (after the CEI), it was never a star on the stage again until the 1980s."¹⁷¹ McClellan concurred, stating that the CEI, "put champions of traditional morality in a defensive posture that they have struggled to escape ever since."¹⁷²

As well, Craig A. Cunningham, in his text, *The Rise and Fall of Character Education in America*, sees a relationship between the CEI and America's loss of interest in moral training. Cunningham's research provides a historical calendar that reflects the ebb and flow of America's concern with the aspect of "character" as it relates to education and the youth of the nation. He analyzed the number of citations on "character" and "moral education" in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* from 1904 through 1970 as a way "to gauge the contours of this trend, and to follow the interest in character education during the early decades of" the twentieth century.¹⁷³

For Cunningham, the first decade of the twentieth century was a time in which there was a "nation-wide movement" of interest in character education. The author attributes this to both

¹⁷¹ Tianlong Yu, *In the Name of Morality: Character Education and Political Control* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 47.

¹⁷² McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 55.

¹⁷³ Cunningham, *A Certain and Reasoned Art*, 208.

the “preoccupation of progressive educators” with their concerns regarding the traditional approach to character training that had dominated the pedagogy of schools for centuries, as well as “a renewed sense that the family could no longer be counted on to provide adequate moral training.” Thus, the task of filling this moral void was placed on the public school.

Cunningham’s historical calendar shows the concept of “character” peaking during the 1920s matching the heyday of the Character Education Movement, the implementation of the Iowa Plan, and the impact of the NEA’s widely distributed *Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* that called for “ethical character to be the paramount concern of all teachers.” Interest in character then gradually fell off through 1970, although there was a slight increase in the concept of moral training in the 1950s that did not reemerge until the mid 1970s.¹⁷⁴ The drastic decline in America’s interest in character education, noted by Cunningham in the early 1930s, coincides with the published results of the Character Education Inquiry in 1928, 1929, and 1930.

The Impact of the Inquiry

To test and extend Cunningham’s research, I analyzed the number of citations on “character education,” “moral education”, and “values” in the *Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature* from 1920, which marks the start of the Character Education Movement, through 2004 (see figure 1). My research confirmed his findings in relation to the contours of the trend associated with America’s popular interest in character education up to 1970 (where Cunningham’s analysis stopped). The 1970s, however, showed an impressive increase in “values education” and “moral education” citations up to the 1980s, with a corresponding decrease in “character education” during the same time period. “Values education” citations

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 210.

decreased significantly through the 1990s, with “moral education” and “character education” gradually increasing through 2004.

This same trend was evident in an additional analysis I conducted for citations in *The Education Index*, from 1929 (the first year of publication) through 2005 (see figure 2). Significant findings regarding citation subject headings provide another indicator as to the impact of the Character Education Inquiry. In 1929, when one queries the subject heading “moral education,” the *Index* refers one to the heading of “character education.” This was during the golden years of the character movement. By the 1950s, the subject heading for “moral education” has a significant number of notations. In 1957, when one queries “character education,” the user is directed to see “moral education.” At this point, at least in published educational literature represented by the *Index*, “character education” all but disappeared from any educational discussion. In the late 1960s, “values education” became a subject heading, and by the 1990s “character education” returned to *the Education Index*, but did not replace the heading of “moral education.” The significant increase in index citations for both moral education and character education after the 1960s is reflected in my extension of Cunningham’s research. This citation increase matches a heightened educational interest with the introduction of values education, Kohlberg’s developmental theories, and the return of character education into school curricula.

Figure 1: *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, (H.W. Wilson Company, New York), 1920-2003

Year	CEI	Moral Values	Moral Education	Moral Character	Character Education	Ethics	Total # Citations
1920-25 (6 yrs)	0	3	85	29	21	229	151,391
1926-30 (5 yrs)	1	3	104	57	39	264	136,322
1931-35 (5 yrs)	0	2	68	33	23	330	148,128
1936-40 (5 yrs)	3	8	53	21	17	297	172,254
1941-45 (5 yrs)	0	5	34	11	7	250	187,948
1946-50 (5 yrs)	0	5	39	9	3	246	219,636
1951-55 (5 yrs)	0	11	51	7	2	409	243,726
1956-60 (5 yrs)	0	8	33	1	1	412	214,489
1961-65 (5 yrs)	0	8	15	5	1	567	216,887
1966-70 (5 yrs)	0	6	20	1	2	642	225,219
1971-75 (5 yrs)	0	15	30	1	1	649	207,558
1976-80 (5 yrs)	0	26	61	2	0	960	254,992
1981-85 (5 yrs)	0	45	35	n/a	0	317	244,067
1986-90 (5 yrs)	0	15	65	n/a	0	775	293,664
1991-95 (5 yrs)	0	15	45	n/a	25	508	236,784
1996-2000 (5 yrs)	0	16	90	n/a	127	663	263,008
2001-03 (3 yrs)	0	27	87	n/a	136	374	163,817

Figure 2: *The Education Index* (New York: H. W. Wilson), 1929-2005

Year	CEI	Moral Values	Moral Education	Moral Character	Character Education	Ethics
1929-30 (2 yrs)	4	0	0	0	320	8
1931-35 (5 yrs)	6	0	0	0	442	13
1936-40 (5 yrs)	0	0	0	0	176	34
1941-45 (5 yrs)	0	0	0	0	112	32
1946-50 (5 yrs)	0	0	0	11	205	51
1951-55 (5 yrs)	0	0	135	22	0	59
1956-60 (5 yrs)	0	0	146	15	0	35
1961-65 (5 yrs)	0	93	103	0	0	31
1966-70 (5 yrs)	0	243	425	0	0	30
1971-75 (5 yrs)	0	246	432	0	0	36
1976-80 (5 yrs)	0	178	277	0	0	57
1981-85 (5 yrs)	0	156	487	5	23	815
1986-90 (5 yrs)	0	23	574	9	32	773
1991-95 (5 yrs)	0	117	686	44	167	1168
1996-2000 (5 yrs)	1	265	1131	142	555	1776
2001-2005 (5 yrs)	0	150	938	100	388	2145

My research of the citations in both Indexes confirms the earlier findings of Cunningham, who states, “While it is impossible to make a conclusion regarding the casual relationship between the CEI and educational discourse about character, it is clear... that character became a much less important concept among educators (at least those publishing articles in educational journals) during the years immediately following publication.”¹⁷⁵

To add to this research, I also gathered additional data from *The Social Sciences and Humanities Index* (see figure 3), which provided a wealth of information that confirmed the two previous Index findings regarding trends associated with America’s interest in character education. Using this Index I tabulated the number of citations for each two year period from the years 1920 through 2004. For this particular analysis I combined the citation counts for the terms *moral values*, *moral education*, *moral character*, and *character education* in eight year segments to create a graph as shown in figure 4. As illustrated in the graph below, there are two spikes in the data that can be considered shock interventions.

The first shock peaked around the 1930s, with a sharp drop that occurred over the next eight year period. There was an approximate forty year period of stasis in the data, showing only a slight “bubble” increase in the 1950s, which dropped again during the 1960s. The second shock intervention reveals a gradual increase in citations that occurred since the 1970s up to present-day. The extended analysis that I was able to complete in all three Indexes from the 1970s to present-day shows a rebirth of moral education and character education that surpasses the golden years of the 1920s (at least in terms of educational discourse as reflected in journal citations).

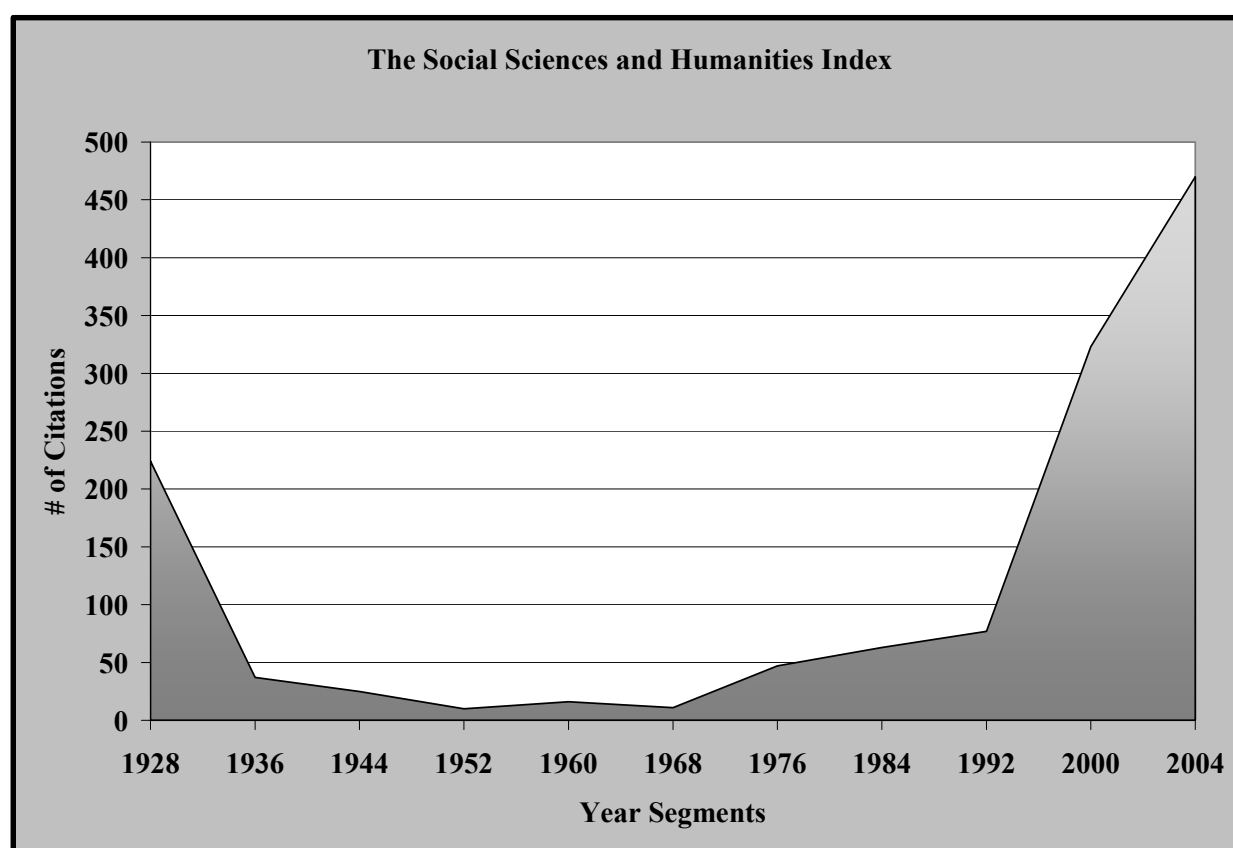
¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 208.

Figure 3: *International Index to Periodicals* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co.), 1920-1965; and *Humanities Index* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co.), 1965-2004

Year	C E I	Moral Values	Moral Education	Moral Character	Character Education	Total #
1920-22 (3 yrs)	0	0	4	3	1	25,145
1923-24 (2 yrs)	1	0	17	7	5	31,207
1925-26 (2 yrs)	0	0	32	13	5	39,008
1927-28 (2 yrs)	1	0	57	41	26	38,686
1929-30 (2 yrs)	0	0	4	3	2	34,646
1931-32 (2 yrs)	0	0	7	2	2	40,149
1933-34 (2 yrs)	0	0	5	5	2	40,888
1935-36 (2 yrs)	0	0	1	2	0	37,908
1937-38 (2 yrs)	0	0	2	0	1	39,059
1939-40 (2 yrs)	0	0	5	2	1	33,926
1941-42 (2 yrs)	0	0	6	1	1	26,807
1943-44 (2 yrs)	0	0	4	2	0	23,238
1945-46 (2 yrs)	0	0	1	0	0	23,593
1947-48 (2 yrs)	0	0	0	1	0	24,172
1949-50 (2 yrs)	0	0	3	1	0	25,561
1951-52 (2 yrs)	0	0	1	3	0	26,188
1953-54 (2 yrs)	0	1	5	2	1	26,861
1955-56 (2 yrs)	0	0	3	0	0	25,240
1957-58 (2 yrs)	0	0	2	1	0	27,238
1959-60 (2 yrs)	0	0	0	1	0	28,614
1961-62 (2 yrs)	0	0	2	1	0	28,228
1963-64 (2 yrs)	0	0	4	0	0	26,547
1965-66 (2 yrs)	0	0	3	0	0	23,069
1967-68 (2 yrs)	0	0	1	0	0	22,216
1969-70 (2 yrs)	0	0	1	0	0	20,900
1971-72 (2 yrs)	0	0	2	0	0	19,637
1973-74 (2 yrs)	0	0	15	0	0	59,281
1975-76 (2 yrs)	0	1	16	0	0	105,347
1977-78 (2 yrs)	0	1	19	2	0	112,189
1979-80 (2 yrs)	0	0	5	0	0	111,308
1981-82 (2 yrs)	0	0	19	1	1	84,264
1983-84 (2 yrs)	0	0	8	1	1	56,822
1985-86 (2 yrs)	0	1	14	3	0	49,007
1987-88 (2 yrs)	0	0	15	1	1	52,075
1989-90 (2 yrs)	0	1	9	5	0	55,668
1991-92 (2 yrs)	0	0	12	3	2	56,290
1993-94 (2 yrs)	0	2	10	18	6	58,343
1995-96 (2 yrs)	0	2	23	26	9	62,887

Year	C E I	Moral Values	Moral Education	Moral Character	Character Education	Total #
1997-98 (2 yrs)	0	0	22	21	12	63,655
1999-2000 (2 yrs)	0	3	30	29	10	67,174
2001-02 (2 yrs)	0	4	25	28	13	72,663
2003-04 (2 yrs)	0	5	22	37	15	82,026

Figure 4



Resurgence and Decline of Character

At the end of the Second World War, there was a renewed interest for a brief time in developing character training for America's school population. The upsurge of patriotism as a result of the world-wide conflict, and the enormous impact of the communist movement, had made the teaching of proper beliefs, values, and behavior to young people something of a national preoccupation immediately after the war.¹⁷⁶ As Americans united against their international perils, the issues within moral education that had in previous years caused such great dissension were laid aside. New, softer lines of curriculum were drawn where a balanced program taught values, which could be considered acceptable by all Americans in an open-minded manner. Among these values were *respect for the individual personality, devotion to truth, commitment to brotherhood, and acceptance of individual moral responsibility*.¹⁷⁷

With this shift in moral perspective, educators began to emphasize the development of the child, and the American youth was expected to perform as a responsible member of society. The foundational basis for these values remained social in nature, influenced greatly by the strong national sentiment that permeated the country as a whole. These character strands were far more humanistic in nature with a relative view that was reflective of change in thought and view of the present world, the individual, and the moral interaction between the two. The focus was not so much on a restrictive set of principles to live by, but rather a few general columns of truth that could provide support for a more open ethical discourse. During a class lecture in the fall of 2000, Dr. Ronald Butchart noted that Americans of the postwar era increasingly thought of the issues of morals and religion as being "private" in nature, and as new psychological

¹⁷⁶ Gutowski, *The High School as an Adolescent Raising Institution*, 227.

¹⁷⁷ McClellan, *Moral education in America*, 71.

theories stressed the importance of forming character within the first six years of life, the family once again became the primary institution of moral education.

By the end of the war, and with the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, conservatives hoped to regain control of the White House. The search for a platform and spokesperson was on. Eventually the conservatives aligned themselves with Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy, and his crusade against the depredations of Communism as it existed (according to McCarthy) within our own borders. One of the moral impacts of McCarthy's reign of terror was to create an army of young crusaders who were committed to the preservation of democracy in the face of the red threat. As the anticommunist movement gained strength, moral education took on a new role. In place of the cardinal virtues, citizenship was made paramount. The teaching of morality in America's public schools became a political tool of indoctrination against the perceived threat of communist thought. Yet again the definition of moral education shifted with the changing face of American politics and culture. The McCarthy era ended abruptly, however, as the entire country watched the congressional proceedings, millions of witnesses to what fear and hatred are capable of doing. Nonetheless, for the next two decades, moral education and citizenship remained an integral part of the curriculum in most schools around the country. The emphasis on moral instruction in individual schools was most often influenced by the particular makeup of the communities themselves. Moral instruction also became a political tool on the local level. For instance, a rise in the amount of juvenile crimes in a particular town might provide a successful political platform for the challenger whose cry became "get morals back into the schools." The election results might then elicit educational reform in the way of new moral

curriculum requirements for the school systems. Moral training as a curricular emphasis was soon overshadowed by great social changes and perceived dangers on the national level.¹⁷⁸

Sputnik 1, launched on October 4, 1957, became the first artificial satellite to successfully orbit the Earth. The satellite was not a large object--it was a metallic sphere about two feet across weighing 184 pounds (84 kg.)--but it had a huge impact on American education. The Sputnik satellite represented a wake up call for an American public that had always maintained a strong belief in the ideal of American superiority in all things. The nation became worried about the Soviet accomplishments, and soon the development of space technology became a national priority. Within a matter of days American mass media had settled on a reason for the Soviet's technological success: "America's soft education in contrast to the rigorous Soviet system."¹⁷⁹ The impact on character education in the public schools of America was almost instantaneous. Congress reacted with the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which made its intent clear in the first paragraph:

The Congress hereby finds and declares that the security of the Nation requires the fullest development of the mental resources and technical skills of young men and women. The present emergency demands that additional and more adequate educational opportunities be made available. The defense of the Nation depends upon the mastery of modern techniques developed from complex scientific principles.¹⁸⁰

It was apparent that the focus of education, and the finances of the nation, would shift to the science and technical fields of study. Not only was there a shift from emphasizing the development of the child to perform as a member of society (which included the moral

¹⁷⁸ John A. Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the rise of Conservative Politics, Perspectives on the Sixties* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 12.

¹⁷⁹ Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 226.

¹⁸⁰ Barbara Barksdale Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and National Defense Act of 1958* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 47.

development aspects of the child), there was also a radical shift in curriculum control. The entry of the federal government, with massive programs and huge sums of money, would dramatically alter the relative strength of all the various interest groups in the ongoing battle for the curriculum of American schools.¹⁸¹

In the 1960's, educators witnessed a retreat from moral instruction that was both rapid and purposeful. The struggles to achieve racial equality and the disputes over the Vietnam War were particularly divisive. There was deep suspicion of all authority in both political and social relations. Schools were often seen as authoritarian strongholds that smothered creativity and individuality, with the psychological theories of the day supporting these views. The times were ripe for a new insurgence of reform organizations that were youth-driven. In civil rights, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee formed to challenge the leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In Left politics, the Students for a Democratic Society sought to move the political discussion of the Democratic Party to the Left. On the Right, the Young Americans for Freedom formed as an outgrowth of efforts to create a new conservative leadership within the Republican Party (ultimately causing a shift in that party to the Right). Aside from the genesis of these three groups occurring in the 1960s, there are some other significant comparisons that can be drawn. According to John Andrew, all three were youth movements that challenged the status quo. All three were grass-roots organizations that criticized the elite power structure and the existing rule of those in authority. More important, "they combined their ideology with activism, their principles with politics, and greatly influenced their decade."¹⁸² Going beyond Andrew, it might also be argued that all three were fundamentally about the perceived immorality of politics and

¹⁸¹ Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 229.

¹⁸² Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties*, 4.

society. If that was the case, then one could contend that the lack of character education in the prior three decades or more had not adversely affected the youth movement.

Amid all this revolution of ideas and activism, moral educators for the most part were on the defensive, avoiding controversy at almost any cost. The growing involvement of the federal government, and Supreme Court decisions restricting school sponsored prayer and bible reading, complicated the issue for teachers who feared litigation. As the country entered the 1970s, moral education had reached a historic low point in America's schools.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ McClellan. *Moral Education in America*, 78.

CHAPTER V

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MORAL EDUCATION IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS: THE LAST QUARTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Introduction

The 1970s saw renewed interest in moral instruction among some moral educators, with a shift away from assessing behavior and movement more toward trying to evaluate, and value, the quality of students' thinking. Ralph Mosher's book, *Moral Education: A First Generation of Research and Development*, provided a decade of research demonstrating that over time teachers could stimulate students' advance to higher stages of moral reasoning. This period of research also included a comparative evaluation of the then two top contenders in moral education, values clarification (aimed at helping students clarify their personal values and act on them consistently), and Kohlberg's moral dilemma discussions (aimed at developing better moral reasoning). These two approaches to moral education were introduced to America's classrooms near the end of the 1960s, started gaining some support in the 1970s, but only began to have a substantial impact in the 1980s.¹⁸⁴

Value Clarification and Moral Education

The Supreme Court opinions on school-sponsored Bible reading and prayer that occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s made school officials careful in their acceptance of moral training curriculum. Fearful of potential litigation problems, school districts were careful to introduce moral education into the classroom that had secular grounding. Values clarification embraced the notion of situational ethics with the programs designed around the concept of decision-

¹⁸⁴ Purpel, *Moral Outrage in Education* (New York: P. Lang, 1998), 200.

making and the development of critical thinking skills. Some of the key figures in the development of this approach were Louis Rath, Sidney Simon, Merrill Harmin, and Howard Kirschenbaum. To assist their students in exploring their own moral views, teachers would utilize non-judgmental methods to help them discover and refine their values. The student would be given the opportunity to grapple with their personal preferences, and to clarify their own belief system. In all instances, teachers were to avoid imposing their values or morals on students.¹⁸⁵ An example of values clarification curriculum is cited here:

EXERCISE 1

Values Clarification People make decisions based upon their values.... you must be able to understand the difference between your personal values and the interests of your group. You should know where you place value in your life.... Imagine that you have been asked to pass along a special secret to future generations, the secret of life that you have learned over the many years. Each person's secret is unique, and they are being recorded for the future so that no potential wisdom out of time is lost.... You are passing this secret along to unknown future people, so you want to use the clearest and most descriptive language possible. Tell this secret of life, stating it both directly and with the use of metaphors or examples.... Take several minutes in pairs to give feedback to the other person about what seemed important, what the person seems to value in life....¹⁸⁶

Value clarificationists faced a host of critics ranging from moral philosophers to religious fundamentalists. According to Andrew Oldenquist, a major criticism of the values-based program lay in their romantic faith that “people will be naturally kind, honest, fair, diligent, and so on, if only they are stroked well, and are not corrupted or psychologically damaged in some way.”¹⁸⁷ Another charge against the clarification of values method, as a form of moral education, is that students emerged from the process without the ability to deal with moral conflict or make difficult moral decisions. Research that came out in the late 1970s confirmed

¹⁸⁵ Kevin Ryan, *Questions and Answers on Moral Education* (Bloomington: Phi Kappa Delta, 1981), 16.

¹⁸⁶ Howard Kirschenbaum, *Advanced Value Clarification* (La Jolla, CA: University Associates, 1977), 36.

¹⁸⁷ Andrew Oldenquist, “Moral Education without Moral Education,” *Harvard Educational Review* 49 (May 1979): 242.

the ineffectiveness of this moral approach to education. According to Lockwood, there was “no evidence that values clarification had a systematic, demonstrated impact on students’ values.”¹⁸⁸

In regard to the lasting impact of the values clarification method, McClellan writes,

Even at its high point the popularity of values clarification depended largely on the enthusiasm of particular teachers who had simply added it to existing classroom activities instead of finding it a secure plan in reformed curriculum. When criticism grew, enthusiasm quickly waned, and the scheme lost its influence on American education.¹⁸⁹

However, because over the last fifty years moral education models had not been a significant part of most school curriculum, values clarification ideas still permeated the local character training initiatives that were developed. By default, ethics programs still kept a values clarification format for their classes for many years to come. For example, when this researcher took a teaching position at Gainesville High School in the north Georgia area in 1993, the standard ethics course curriculum that was provided by the school was a values-based approach. All readings and activities were based on texts that were produced in the 1970s. On a national scale, however, the values approach was largely discredited, and with a void once again left in the moral instruction of America’s youth, educators turned to yet another program that had been gaining momentum in the educational ranks for some time.¹⁹⁰

Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development

By the mid-1960s, Lawrence A. Kohlberg, a Harvard psychologist, had developed a comprehensive conception of cognitive moral development, and his theories began to attract the

¹⁸⁸ Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood, “The Effects of Values Clarification and Moral Development Curricula on School-age Subjects: A Critical Review of Recent Research,” *Review of Educational Research* 48 (1978): 344.

¹⁸⁹ McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 82.

¹⁹⁰ The Character Education Partnership, “Character Education in U.S. Schools: The New Consensus,” *A Report on Developments During 1993-1995* (Alexandria, VA: The Character Education Partnership, 1996), 4.

interest of many educators. His theory of moral development was dependent on the thinking of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, and the American philosopher John Dewey. These men had emphasized that human beings develop philosophically and psychologically in a progressive fashion.¹⁹¹ Kohlberg believed, and was able to demonstrate through studies, that people progressed in their moral reasoning (i.e., in their bases for ethical behavior) through a series of stages. He believed that there were six identifiable stages that could be more generally classified into three levels. Kohlberg's classification can be outlined in the following manner:

The first level of moral thinking is that generally found at the elementary school level. In the first stage of this level, people behave according to socially acceptable norms because they are told to do so by some authority figure (e.g., parent or teacher). This obedience is compelled by the threat or application of punishment. The second stage of this level is characterized by a view that right behavior means acting in one's own best interests. The second level of moral thinking is that generally found in society, hence the name "conventional." The first stage of this level (stage 3) is characterized by an attitude which seeks to do what will gain the approval of others. The second stage is one oriented to abiding by the law and responding to the obligations of duty. The third level of moral thinking is one that Kohlberg felt was not reached by the majority of adults. Its first stage (stage 5) is an understanding of social mutuality and a genuine interest in the welfare of others. The last stage is based on respect for universal principle and the demands of individual conscience.¹⁹²

Kohlberg believed that individuals could only progress through these stages one stage at a time. That is, they could not *jump* stages. They could not, for example, move from an orientation of selfishness to the law and order stage without passing through the good boy or girl stage. They could only come to a comprehension of a moral rationale one stage above their own. Thus, according to Kohlberg, it was important to present them with moral dilemmas for discussion, which would help them to see the reasonableness of a "higher stage" morality and

¹⁹¹ Cunningham, *A Certain and Reasoned Art*, 235.

¹⁹² Robert N. Barger, *A Summary of Lawrence Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 36.

encourage their development in that direction.¹⁹³ According to McClellan, Kohlberg's favorite technique for creating this moral discussion was the presentation of hard-case ethical dilemmas where "students were expected to resolve the dilemmas and defend their positions. Teachers gauged the progress of students not by the solutions they developed.... But rather by the quality of reasoning they used in arriving at their final positions."¹⁹⁴

Despite Kohlberg's research claims of the connections between the development of moral rationale and the moral action of an individual, he endured harsh criticism for his narrow focus on the cognitive development of the child. Critics claimed that dealing with hard cases without the acquisition of more concrete moral principles and moral action led to a kind of rhetorical sophistication that provided the child with no moral accomplishment. "It is questionable," declared critic Kevin Ryan,

whether American parents are going to buy an approach to moral education that concentrates exclusively on thinking and has so little to say about how children actually behave. My own concern is the turning of this whole issue of moral education into a word game with few implications for action. Teaching our children how to discourse about complex personal and social issues without helping them in the world of action could be an empty and dangerous victory.¹⁹⁵

Ryan's critique of Kohlberg's approach to moral education echoes similar points made fifty years earlier by Hartshorne and May regarding their findings in the Character Education Inquiry.

To his credit, Kohlberg took the challenge of his critics to heart, as he began to incorporate his moral education program into several different school systems. In an article entitled "Moral Education Reappraised," published in 1978, Kohlberg stated,

Five years of working with Cambridge Rindge, Latin's democratic alternative school, and the Cluster School has led me to see the need to go beyond "stimulating discussion"....

¹⁹³ Lawrence Kohlberg, "Stage and Sequence: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization," In *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*, D. A. Golsin, ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969), 356.

¹⁹⁴ McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 84.

¹⁹⁵ Ryan, *Questions and Answers on Moral Education*, 24.

the educator must be a socializer teaching value content and behavior, and not only a Socratic or Rogerian process-facilitator of development. In becoming a socializer and advocate, the teacher moves into “indoctrination,” a step I originally believed to be philosophically invalid.... I no longer hold these negative views of indoctrinative moral education, and I believe that the concepts guiding moral education must be partly “indoctrinative.”¹⁹⁶

With the vision of a moral education program that provided both value content and moral action, Kohlberg founded the *Just Community Schools*. The schools operated under a foundational premise that moral thinking can be advanced educationally, using social interaction, cognitive conflict, a positive moral atmosphere, and democratic participation. Kohlberg advocated a Just Community approach to education which included equality of the participants, ownership of decisions by all group members, and a teacher that promotes mature moral reasoning outside the didactic authoritarian model.¹⁹⁷

According to McClellan,

The fate of Kohlberg’s ideas -both old and new- is far from clear. Although the use of moral dilemmas has never been a common practice in schools, the idea has not entirely lost its appeal.... The just community school has also attracted attention, and with the help of a devoted band of Kohlberg disciples, a number of cities have established just community schools of their own. Yet, neither reform has yet had a broad effect on educational practice.¹⁹⁸

With Kohlberg’s moral dilemmas not fully embraced by the educational community, and the decline of the values clarification model, the time seemed right for another philosophical shift in moral education. Sociological and political factors played a key role in this shift toward “character education.”

¹⁹⁶ Lawrence Kohlberg, “Moral Education Reappraised,” *The Humanist* (November 1978): 14-15.

¹⁹⁷ C.G. Harding & K. Snyder, “Tom, Huck, and Oliver Stone as Advocates in Kohlberg’s Just Community: Theory Based Strategies for Moral Education,” *Adolescence*, 26 (1991): 320.

¹⁹⁸ McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 87.

The 1980s saw a new conservatism moving across the country, and with a resurgence of religious activism in the political realm, there was an attempt to return to the traditional roots of moral education. Influenced by the publication of Alisdair MacIntyre's book, *After Virtue*, communities throughout the country, which had retained the philosophical framework of virtue theory, began to reenter the social discourse regarding moral education. In his text, MacIntyre chronicled the near demise of virtue theory, in the wake of rival relativistic theories, which had come about as a result of the Enlightenment. According to MacIntyre, the moral theories that have been advanced since the Enlightenment had all proven to fall short in constructing arguments that answered the philosophical questions surrounding the moral debate. This was one of the reasons why philosophy was replaced with psychology as the guiding science in moral education. MacIntyre claimed that with philosophers all aware of the failings of Enlightenment thought, the academic philosophical world was left with a strategy of inaction and silence. They were (and still are) only able to wait "until some more powerful mind applies itself to the problems."¹⁹⁹

On a positive note, MacIntyre stated that America was at a turning point, as far as being able to retain the tradition of the virtues. Placing his hope in establishing communities "within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages," MacIntyre called upon his readers to be conscious of their predicament.²⁰⁰ Thus, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, character education once again entered the stage as a viable option for moral praxis in the American school. For the new character education proponents, the cry for moral instruction in the 1970's had not been adequately answered by the value

¹⁹⁹ Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 51.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 263.

clarificationist's model or Kohlberg's moral dilemmas. What was needed was another model of moral education. What was brought to the forefront of the moral discussion was not a new approach to moral instruction, but a call to return to the traditional virtues that these character advocates believed had sustained the nation for centuries. The character education drought, for them, which had covered the American landscape for the past fifty years, was finally ending.

CHAPTER VI

THE REBIRTH OF CHARACTER EDUCATION

The Return of Character Education

Character education regained momentum during the 1980s and 1990s with a groundswell movement that encompassed various factions and regions of the country. The promoters of this movement were a host of parents and educators who saw the need for prevention programs that would counter the presumed tide of moral decline. The emergence of a new ideological-cultural force, the New Right, had a major political impact on the battle for Character Education in the late 1970's and early 1980s. The New Right was a socially conservative group that allied with the Moral Majority, the Religious Roundtable, and the right-to-life movement to form a clearly socially conservative related political front. This group, as a valid political force, was underestimated until November of 1980 when Ronald Reagan and conservative Republicans took Washington by storm. This Presidential win, according to Kevin Phillips, awakened a sleeping conservative giant.²⁰¹

One particular advocate of the New Right, Phyllis Schlafly, founded the Eagle Forum. The Eagle Forum was a leading pro-family movement that was instrumental in impacting the outcome of public hearings conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in March 1984. The charges leveled by Schlafly, through the *Schlafly Report* -- the Eagle Forum's newsletter -- and assertions by other New Right organizations, touched off a controversy on ethical responsibility in education policy-making that ultimately involved Congress, federal officials, the press, parents, and students around the nation. The success of the New Right in this controversy was

²⁰¹ Kevin P. Phillips, *Post-Conservative America: People, Politics and Ideology in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Random House, 1982), 186.

helpful in creating an atmosphere in American education where no school initiatives that involved the character of the student seemed safe from conservative scrutiny. Since that time, conservative activist groups such as the Moral Majority, the Religious Right, Concerned Women for America, and Focus on the Family have been instrumental in shaping numerous policies.²⁰² On the state and local levels especially, they have been able to orchestrate legislative mandates and policy changes that speak directly to the moral education of America's youth. According to Sara Diamond, the Christian Right of the 1990s represented the largest grassroots movement to come on the political scene since the 1960s anti-war and civil rights movements.²⁰³

It was in the wake of this conservative swell that a loosely formed group of like-minded intellectuals in universities and powerful educational leaders began to shape a nation-wide dialogue that would soon be recognized as the "character education movement." Although historians held a different view, for most Americans this was a new term that embodied a desire to bring "character" back to a nation that sorely needed to move toward a better moral grounding for the youth of the day. The term "character" also allowed for a distinction between the value clarification and moral developmental models of the 1970s, making sharper lines of dissimilarity between the teaching of values and the teaching of traditional virtues. According to Charles Helwig, the proponents of character education took "the position that there are necessary moral virtues reflected in the fabric of cultures and its traditions, and that American culture has lost its way by losing sight of those traditions."²⁰⁴ Among the most powerful and articulate in this faction were William Bennett, director of the National Endowment for the Humanities in the

²⁰² Melinda Fine, *Habits of Mind: Struggling over Values in America's Classrooms*, The Jossey-Bass Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 101.

²⁰³ Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 311.

²⁰⁴ Charles Helwig, Elliot Turiel & Larry Nucci. "Character Education After the Bandwagon has Gone." Paper Presented in *Developmental Perspectives and Approaches to Character Education*. Symposium Conducted at the Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, March 1997.

early Reagan years, then secretary of the U.S. Department of Education; Bill Honig, superintendent of public instruction in California; and university professors Andrew Oldenquist, Kevin Ryan, James Wilson, and Edward Wynne. According to McClellan, “By any measure Bennett was the most influential, using his high positions in government as a pulpit from which to preach the need for revival in character education.”²⁰⁵

As the U.S. secretary of Education, Bennett expressed concerns about the condition of American education in the areas of content, character, and choice. At a symposium held in Washington, D.C. in April of 1986, Bennett presented twelve scholars and their research in regard to the issue of changing schools to meet the needs of the present generation of youth. Bennett proposed a comprehensive approach to character education that began in the early years of the child’s education and progressed through college. He believed that the answer to moral training was not in creating new courses, but rather drawing upon the wealth of material that already existed in the curriculum of most schools.²⁰⁶ Stories for Bennett were particularly helpful in relating the concepts of positive virtues to adults and children alike. As an author, he produced a collection of classic tales in the immensely popular text, *The Book of Virtues*, tying particular character traits to personalities in these familiar stories. Bennett’s “book of virtues” and his subsequent books on character were designed to enable teachers and parents to discuss ethical issues with their children. Bennett’s desire was to connect the child to the culture and

²⁰⁵ McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 91.

²⁰⁶ William Bennett, “Content, Character and Choice in Schooling: Public Policy and Research Implications,” *Proceedings of a Symposium at the National Advisory Council on Educational Research and Improvement*, Washington, D.C. , April 1986.

traditions that for him would provide the child with his or her moral grounding. This grounding was crucial, as Bennett perceived America as a nation experiencing a crisis of character.²⁰⁷

It was this “crisis of character” that united the CE movement of the 1980s and 1990s. Kevin Ryan described what he considered the moral demise of the nation in this manner:

We have been confronted with massive statistical evidence of widespread youth pathologies, from upward rates of youth suicide, armed robbery and homicide to promiscuity and out-of-wedlock births. Coincidental with these developments has been the weakening of the institution which is most responsible for forming character and moral understandings, the American family. Divorce and the sharp rise of single-parent families has [sic] left large numbers of our children with less stability and supervision in their lives, and more importantly, less regular face-to-face moral teaching... It would appear, then, that the rise in youth troubles and the decline in other agents have created a new moral landscape and a new set of influences on the young.²⁰⁸

There were numerous books and essays during this time written by social commentators and scientists with titles that echoed the feelings expressed by Ryan: *The Devaluing of America* (William Bennett); *The Closing of the American Mind* (Alan Bloom); *The Spirit of Community: The Reinvention of American Society* (Amatai Etzioni); *The Demoralization of Society* (Himmelfarb); *The Declining Character of American Youth* (Edward Wynne); and *After Virtue* (Alisdair MacIntyre), to name a few. For Ryan and his contemporaries, it was the role of the school to not only make children smart, but to make them smart and good. The task that faced the teacher was assisting the student to “acquire the skills, the attitudes, and the disposition that would enable the common good to flourish.”²⁰⁹ For these character educators, it was the essential task of the present society to make sure that the next generation of leaders had been

²⁰⁷ William Bennett, ed., *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993). See also Bennett’s *The Book of Virtues for Children* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999).

²⁰⁸ Kevin Ryan, “Why a Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character,” *Journal of Education*, Vol. 175, no. 2 (1993): 3.

²⁰⁹ Kevin Ryan, “The New Moral Education,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, November (1986): 233.

provided with the necessary tools and virtues to advance the culture and traditions of the nation.

Philosopher Andrew Oldenquist stated the importance of this endeavor:

If we were anthropologists observing members of a tribe, it would be the most natural thing in the world to expect them to teach their morality and culture to their children, and moreover, to think that they had a perfect right to do so on the ground that cultural integrity and perpetuation depended upon it. Indeed, if we found that they had ceased to teach the moral and other values of their culture, we would take them to be on the way to cultural suicide: We would think them ruined, pitiable, alienated from their own values and on the way out.²¹⁰

In the 1990s, as the United States moved more toward a less rightist political position under George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton, character education remained an important topic, but the discussion now allowed for a broader definition. The movement became more inclusive and less partisan. In 1992, the Josephson Institute for Ethics, a privately-funded organization that represented diverse perspectives, convened a group of youth and character experts to discuss the need and direction for character education in America's public schools. The result was the *Character Counts* model of character education which has become the most widely implemented CE program in the United States. Almost simultaneously The Johnson Foundation organized a conference around the question, "How to provide effective K-12 character education." The goal of the conference was to encourage leaders of national educational associations to give greater attention and priority to character education. In response to this call, the Character Education Partnership (CEP) was formed, having now become the leading advocate and resource in American character education.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Andrew Oldenquist, "Moral Education without Moral Education," *Harvard Educational Review* 49 (May 1979): 241.

²¹¹ Marvin Berkowitz, Esther F. Schaeffer & Melinda C. Bier. "Character Education in the United States," *Education in the North*, Number 9 (2001): 53. The CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute, is a partnership of nearly 400 national and regional organizations and local school districts. It was established in 1993 to raise awareness of the need to teach and model core values that are acceptable to liberals and conservatives as well as to secular and faith-based communities. Its initial spokespersons were Congresswoman

Throughout the nation, major education associations began fostering support for character education initiatives. Some worked in concert with groups dedicated to character building, such as the Character Education Partnership, the Communitarian Network, and the Character Counts Coalition. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development took a lead role quite early by urging the teaching of values in the public schools and by devoting its 1993 issue of *Educational Leadership* to this topic. Other organizations, including the National School Boards Association, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Education Association, and the National Society for the Study of Education, have all endorsed character education and provided published materials for instructional purposes.²¹² Although the National Association of School Psychologists did not endorse character education directly, it devoted an entire issue of the *School Psychology Review* to the educational implications of the United Nation's Rights of the Child Convention in 1989. Article 29 (U.N. General Assembly, 1989) from this convention directed schools to "promote the development of moral character by teaching children the values necessary to sustain democracies and to develop the full potential of each child."²¹³

From the beginning of this rebirth of character education, educators at all levels of administration and instruction were attempting to discern a true direction for the new movement. Thomas Lickona, a developmental psychologist and professor of education at the State University of New York College at Cortland, in his book, *Educating for Character*, established a theoretical framework for character education and subsequent implementation strategy. Lickona

Barbara Jordan and actor Tom Selleck. These core values, known as the "Six Pillars of Character," are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship

²¹² Stephen G. Fairchild, "Character Education," *A Policy Paper for the Implementation of Character Education in Georgia Schools* (University of Georgia, 2000), 5-12.

²¹³ See *School Psychology Review*, vol. 18, issue 3 (1989).

provided a twelve component approach to his moral training program as he attempted to address the basic questions that surrounded character and the public schools: Why schools should teach character? What are the values schools may legitimately teach in a democratic society? What sort of character ought the schools to try to develop around those values?²¹⁴

Lickona was not alone in attempting to piece together a character education program that adequately addressed moral issues while not crossing over the lines that separated the church and state. A host of character programs began to sprout up throughout the country in an attempt to answer what seemed to be a nation's clarion call to educate for character. The Giraffe Project focused national attention on what could be done to inspire more citizens to "act from the heart and work for the common good." The Heartwood Institute fostered moral literacy and ethical judgment for children through the propagation of "universal values" common to the world's cultures and traditions. The Jefferson Center for Character Education provided curricula, programs and publications that taught "core values" and "ethical decision-making skills." These are only a few examples of the hundreds of programs and groups that were created in response to the frantic demand for character education.²¹⁵

At present, the American public school is faced with a wide variety of choices when it comes to character education programs. Most approaches maintain a set core value system, but have devised their own pedagogy and implementation strategy. Some CE programs take a comprehensive approach with an emphasis on total school reform such as the Child Development Project and the Just Community School. Other programs utilize existing literature

²¹⁴ Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 23.

²¹⁵ Marvin Berkowitz, "Finding Common Ground to Study and Implement Character Education: Integrating Structure and Content in Moral Education," *Journal of Research in Education* vol. 8, no. 1 (Fall 1998): 4.

as an avenue for character inclusion in the school curricula, such as Laws of Life from the John Templeton Foundation and Heartwood. According to Marvin Berkowitz,

The mix of programmes and approaches considered character education can include those promoting moral reasoning development (moral education), those teaching specific values (e.g., assuming responsibility, respect for diversity programmes), those reducing risk behaviours (e.g., drug prevention, violence prevention), as well as those focusing on promoting development of the whole child (including intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical dimensions).²¹⁶

The Character Education Inquiry Revisited

Since its rebirth in the early 1980s, the Character Education Movement has grown in both numbers and influence, finding once again a significant place in the agenda put forth by those who determine educational policy and curriculum. The earliest programs of the *new* character education effort often took an aggressive stance on both the teaching of specific virtues and the use of a didactic pedagogical approach. By doing so, these proponents of character opened themselves up to the same criticisms that were leveled at the character traditionalists at the turn of the twentieth century. As pointed out by McClellan, there have been critics who have questioned the effectiveness of the Character Education Movement programs “harkening back to the Hartshorne and May studies to support their case.”²¹⁷ Others have challenged the movement citing conservative political and educational bias that directly disenfranchises certain segments of American society. Despite the continuing tension and vocal criticisms, the present-day character educators have succeeded in gaining substantial public support for moral education on the local, state, and federal levels.

²¹⁶ Marvin Berkowitz, Esther F. Schaeffer & Melinda C. Bier, “Character Education in the United States,” *Education in the North*, no. 9 (2001): 53.

²¹⁷ McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 93.

Lynn Revell, commenting on the worth of Character Education programs in the United States, cites the Character Education Inquiry studies as specific supportive research for the ineffectiveness of character education and their claims that “children take the values on board.”²¹⁸ Lockwood concurs regarding the claimed connection between values and behavior that contemporary character educators are claiming, referring back to Hartshorne and May’s findings as the “classic set of empirical studies that measured the relationship between values and behavior [which] failed to find a correlation.”²¹⁹ Another indication of the study’s continued impact is reflected by the numerous citations Hartshorne and May receive in present day educational psychology textbooks. Thorndike and Hagon’s, *Measurement and Evaluation in Psychology and Education*, cites the Character Education Inquiry conclusions as “the primary source for thinking about whether character is generalized or specific.”²²⁰

Kohlberg wrote that “Recent studies confirm the old findings of Hartshorne and May...” as it relates to schools’ attempting to transmit moral virtues through instruction, citing the Character Education Inquiry as the “classic studies of character.”²²¹ Michael Scriven, in his article entitled “Cognitive Moral Education,” renders a scathing assessment of the history of character education in the U.S., calling it a “history of failure,” with documentation starting with the research of Hartshorne and May.²²² James Hunter, in his book *The Death of Character*, comments on the most recent attempts at character education in American schools, referring specifically to the neoclassical theorists of the Character Education Movement. He cites the findings of the Character Education Inquiry as supportive evidence of the ineffectiveness of

²¹⁸ Lynn Revell, "Children's Responses to Character Education," *Educational Studies* 28, no. 4 (2002): 422.

²¹⁹ Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood, *Character Education: Controversy and Consensus* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc., 1997), 6.

²²⁰ Robert L. Thorndike, & E. Hagen, *Measurement and Evaluation in Psychology and Education* (New York: Wiley, 1969), 373.

²²¹ Purpel & Ryan, *Moral Education... It Comes with the Territory*, 204.

²²² Michael Scriven, “Cognitive Moral Education,” *Phi Delta Kappan* (1975): 689.

traditional character education approaches used in the 1920's and those same approaches reflected in the present-day Character Education Movement, stating, "if programs were ineffective in the 1920's, when the broad moral culture of America was so much more conservative, then similar programs resurrected in our contemporary social and cultural context are likely to fare no better."²²³

The varied approaches to character education, both pedagogically and philosophically, have created a different landscape in terms of moral training than the one provided for educators in the early part of the twentieth century. With all these differences, however, the question still remains, how can current efforts in regard to character education succeed where previous efforts failed? The key findings of the Character Education Inquiry involved the transfer of training debate. From their research, Hartshorne and May came to the conclusion that there was not a large amount, or degree, of transfer of training that occurred in the child from one relational setting to another. For example, the moral instruction that a child would receive in the classroom setting would not cross over into the other settings of the child's life, such as family, business dealings, or church. The research showed that children operated in different roles, adapting to the mores of their particular setting.²²⁴ According to the researchers, the data revealed no evidence of any unified traits of honesty, or charity, or self-control. Therefore, teaching the Cardinal virtues to a student would be a waste of instructional time. The *McGuffey's Readers*, *Webster's Spellers*, and constant recitation of the Westminster Catechism would provide some educational benefit, in that it developed literacy and increased grammar skills, but it would have no impact on the moral character of the student. If this is the case, then the present-day character

²²³ Hunter, *The Death of Character*, 154.

²²⁴ Hugh Hartshorne and Mark A. May, "Summary of the Work of the Character Education Inquiry, part II," *Religious Education* vol. xxv, no. 8 (1930): 755.

educators' use of the *Word of the Week*, Bennett's *Book of Virtue*, and emphasis on teaching a set of *core values* would not produce the moral citizen that these CE programs promise.²²⁵

Although moral instruction has changed since the CEI, there are still many similarities between the new character education efforts and those of the 1920s. In both instances, there is considerable emphasis on the use of literature and history to propagate models of character. Present-day character initiatives and those at the turn of the twentieth century provide stories as a means to communicate positive character traits. Both movements use ceremonies and reward systems as motivations for students to demonstrate good character. Like previous character education efforts, contemporary programs rely largely on the teacher to implement specific lessons and initiatives, yet according to James Leming, in both instances the demands on the teacher are placed “without much, if any, preparation for the moral endeavor.” Leming goes on to say that, “adequate preparation before tackling issues of virtue and values is necessary... in addition to some understanding of the goals of character education, prospective teachers need to acquire more than a passing familiarity with appropriate, character-focused skills.”²²⁶

A qualitative distinction between the two efforts, however, is that the current programs have a greater awareness of the hidden curriculum and its influence on a child's learning process. The earlier CE initiatives did not have the understanding of the effects of school climate, cooperative work in the classroom, teacher's roles, consistent curriculum, and consistency between teachers, students and parents. The instructional method for the most part in the 1920s was teacher-centered and didactic. According to Leming, the present-day character educators are less didactic in their approach, focusing more on indirect methods of teaching. Leming states

²²⁵ Ibid., 757.

²²⁶ James S. Leming, “The Current Condition of Character Education,” In *Character Education: Controversy and Consensus*, ed. Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 1997), 23.

that teachers “place a much stronger emphasis on certain kinds of behavior than in the 1920s. Today’s character educators do seem informed more by basic educational research and by principles of human learning.”²²⁷

Marvin Berkowitz is a professor of psychology at Marquette University who specializes in moral and character development in adolescences. Berkowitz has done extensive research in the area of character education in the United States. His research into contemporary CE programs reveals a positive correlation between the teaching of character and the resultant impact on the child. In other words, Berkowitz has documented transfer of training as it relates to moral instruction. It is of interest to note, however, that the programs that are considered the most effective models of character education “are those that recognize the complexity of human nature and attempt to be multi-faceted in their approaches.... In other words, by being less narrow, more philosophical and psychological, and less contentious, character education can... be more effective in producing moral citizens.”²²⁸ Other research supports the transfer of moral training as well. Leming states, “we know how cultures transmit values and behavior, and we know under which conditions children learn these values in consistent patterns... we also know what kinds of social environments for which that process is effective.” For Leming, the programs that provide the best environment for character acquisition are the approaches that “combine developmental insights into how children learn with research findings about how children are socialized.”²²⁹

Character education is clearly experiencing a rebirth in American public schools. It has withstood the partisanship of political agendas and ideological myopia to become an eclectic and

²²⁷ Ibid., 24.

²²⁸ Berkowitz, “Finding Common Ground to Study and Implement Character Education,” 8.

²²⁹ Leming, “The Current Condition of Character Education,” 25.

pervasive movement that is impacting state and local educational practices throughout the nation.

Those involved in the promotion of CE have a variety of reasons for their interest. According to Berkowitz:

Some derive the need from our history and system of government- a democracy demands citizens who share a sense of responsibility and caring for their community. Others note the need for increased attention to respect and tolerance in an increasingly diverse society, while others fear the influences of violence and drugs confronting our children. Others yearn for a return to greater spirituality. Still others believe that an education system fixated on drill-and-test processes is an inadequate, if not poor, education and are seeking to strengthen the ethical, social, and emotional development of children.²³⁰

Just as numerous as the reasons educators give for the teaching of character, there are a variable set of CE initiatives and approaches in existence today. Criticisms have oftentimes found their mark, especially concerning the earlier programs that focused on the shallow acquisition of terms and concepts of character without addressing the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of a child's development. In response to this critique, leaders in the field have attempted to clarify particular principles that are associated with high quality CE programs. In one large-scale attempt to address the issue of quality in character education, the Character Education Partnership articulated *Eleven Principles of Effective Character*, established a recognition program for schools that demonstrate effective CE, and developed a rubric for local and state school systems to utilize in assessing their ongoing CE initiatives.

The *Eleven Principles* are as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Principle 1</i> | Character education promotes core values as the basis of good character |
| <i>Principle 2</i> | Character must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior |

²³⁰ Berkowitz, "Character Education in the United States," 53.

- Principle 3* Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all place of the school life
- Principle 4* The school must be a caring community
- Principle 5* To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action
- Principle 6* Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed
- Principle 7* Character education should strive to develop student's intrinsic motivations
- Principle 8* The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students
- Principle 9* Character education requires moral leadership from both staff and students
- Principle 10* The school must recruit parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort
- Principle 11* Evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school's staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character²³¹

Among researchers today there remain contradictory claims in regard to the reliability of the findings of the Character Education Inquiry. However, it is clear that present research shows that CE programs adhering to the *Eleven Principles of Effective Character*, or similar principles based on available scientific research, have exhibited success in their initiatives. The most effective models of character education are those that have developed approaches based on research that takes into account pedagogy, social interaction, curricula, and is multifaceted in its

²³¹ The Character Education Partnership, "Character Education in U.S. Schools: The New Consensus," *A Report on Developments During 1993-1995* (Alexandria, VA: The Character Education Partnership, 1996), 9.

application.²³² By moving away from didactic, teacher-focused pedagogy that was indicative of character programs at the turn of the twentieth century, many present-day character educators have effectively placed themselves outside the instructional parameters associated with the findings of the Inquiry.

The Fate of Character Education

According to Gordon Vessels, “Character education in its current form is a social-educational movement that could institutionalize, and become a permanent feature of schools once again if it generates solution ideas that are shown to be philosophically, scientifically, and technologically sound and effective.”²³³ Although there is, generally speaking, no place in the traditional formal curriculum for moral education, and very little support for giving it parity with the usual requirements (English, Science, Mathematics, History and Foreign Languages), a number of school systems have mandated some form of character education that emphasizes moral instruction and behavior change.²³⁴

There are other pressures on the schools, however, which complicate the issues and make for caution and indecision by school leaders on how they are to respond to a public concern for values education. There is the continuing debate on multicultural education, the pressures on the one hand to nourish diversity and difference, and the countervailing fears that this exacerbates divisiveness and fosters factions within the school. Add to this the extremely volatile and contentious debates on sex education, AIDS prevention, and education on substance abuse. All these issues are added to the plate of an already over-taxed school system that presently finds

²³² Berkowitz, “Finding Common Ground to Study and Implement Character Education,” 8.

²³³ Gordon Vessels, *Character and Community Development : A School Planning and Teacher Training Handbook* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), 4.

²³⁴ Purpel, *Moral Outrage in Education*, 198.

itself in survival mode, attempting to meet the considerable set of requirements that are associated with *The No Child Left Behind* legislation. In these instances, the school usually finds itself, according to Purpel, “Making bland compromises, side-stepping controversy and ambiguity, or in a state of educational gridlock as school leaders struggle to respond to a number of conflicting constituencies with varying moral outlooks.”²³⁵

One such controversy that leaders consistently face is the teaching of moral absolutes in a public school setting while keeping true to the concept of separation of church and state. The growing emergence of interest in the relationship between spirit and education is clearly a reflection of the huge interest in America in religious and spiritual matters. Recently a new CE literature has appeared that is clearly not sectarian, but seeks to integrate spiritual concerns with education. This represents “an attempt to provide a holistic perspective to human learning, in that all possess the presence and significance of certain phenomena (the soul, spirit, or inner life, and the transcendent), which is normally denied and/or ignored by traditional education.”²³⁶ However, the issue of separation of church and state, and the battles that have been waged in countless educational institutions surrounding the matter, provide huge hurdles for any state supported moral and spiritual union within a secular character curriculum.

Decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court and lower federal courts over the last several decades have provided substantial support for character education in the public schools. U.S. Supreme Court opinions which have clarified the Free Speech rights of public school students have also established that values education is a constitutionally acceptable practice for elementary and secondary schools. Justice Brennan, in *Board of Education v. Pico* (1982), wrote that while local school boards do not have “unfettered discretion” where library content is

²³⁵ Ibid., 199.

²³⁶ Ibid., 203.

concerned, they must be permitted “to establish and apply their curriculum in such a way as to transmit community values.” Brennan also stated that there is “legitimate and substantial community interest in promoting respect for authority and traditional values be they social, moral, or political.” In supporting curricular values education in *Bethel School District No. 403 v. Fraser* (1986), the U.S. Supreme Court stated that the public school system “must inculcate the habits and manners of civility as values in themselves conducive to happiness and as indispensable to self-government in the community and the nation.”²³⁷

Support for the Court’s rulings has come from some unexpected places. This, too, shows the extent to which the ecumenical nature of the character education has taken root. Robert Coles, professor of psychiatry and medical humanities at Harvard University, makes several observations in response to the difficult position he says teachers find themselves in when they attempt to address the disparate moral assumptions revealed by students in the classroom. Coles remarks that, “Teachers struggle every day with issues of character, but their hands are tied. They can’t say what is absolutely wrong, what is evil, without risking being accused of promoting religion.” Although Cole was not advocating a return to the kind of moral authority that teachers were invested with in the early 1800s, he contends that:

The point remains that when religion was removed from the schools, nothing came along to take its place, and teachers were stripped of the moral authority they once had. Perhaps, in our haste to redress a constitutional wrong, we didn’t stop to think about the repercussions. In effect, we have removed right and wrong from the school. And when you do that, you remove discipline. How can you have discipline when *nothing* is wrong? And it isn’t just that we’ve gotten rid of religion. The whole society has become self-centered, resulting in the attenuation and weakening of civic responsibility.²³⁸

²³⁷ LaMorte, *School Law*, 99.

²³⁸ Robert Coles & Louis Genevie, “The Moral Life of America’s Schoolchildren,” *Teacher Magazine* vol. 1, no. 6 (March 19, 1990): 74.

In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education distributed a series of guides on religious liberty in public education, endorsed by a broad range of major religious and educational organizations, to every public school in the United States. These guides were written by Charles C. Haynes, senior scholar at the First Amendment Center. Haynes directs the center's First Amendment educational program in schools and addresses issues concerning religious liberty in American public life, helping schools and communities find common ground on conflicts involving religion and values in public schools. Haynes also serves on the board of directors of the Character Education Partnership. The initiative of Cole, Haynes and the CEP as a whole reveals an interesting insight into the present-day Character Education Movement (CEM). In the CEM we see a diverse group of advocates for character, by agreeing on the *essential* need for change, working together even while disagreeing on the *non-essentials* of pedagogy and curricula.

Within the CEM, there also is a growing sensitivity among many educators to the moral aspects of education, and much less reluctance in the professional literature to address the moral facets of social and educational policies. For example, those writing in the traditions of critical pedagogy are far more likely to include moral concepts, and even to use the term “character,” than they were ten or fifteen years ago. In addition, there continue to be writers who directly approach CE from a philosophical perspective, arguing that moral education requires careful analysis and open dialogue grounded in logic.²³⁹ What had once been considered by many to be part of the discourse of organized religion or superstition is at minimum becoming an important element of the educational discourse. Moreover, there began to appear a number of writers who

²³⁹ Robert D. Heslep, *Moral Education for Americans*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995), 36.

clearly spoke directly to issues implicit in character education even though they do not present themselves explicitly as moral educators.²⁴⁰

Author Robert Bellah, in his description of *The Good Society*, presents democracy as a “moral quest.” For Bellah, this honorable pursuit has yet to be completed in American society. In trying to make sense of the societal problems he believes Americans are facing, Bellah observes that the institutional dilemmas that the country is presently confronted with are also moral dilemmas. As well, he sadly concludes that the needed cultural resources required for dealing with the present issues being faced in most communities are simply not adequate. For him, a community’s answer for those dilemmas can be found in the public school. Bellah considers educational institutions as having become the “church of our secular society,” stating, “we ask if our schools and universities can become democratic learning communities, whether they can help us deal with the moral as well as the technical problems of a complex society.” For Bellah, and many other present-day social critics, the time to include the moral aspect of one’s life into the educational equation is at hand.²⁴¹

My own research of character education programs throughout the United States, and interviews with character education directors on the state level, reveals a need for change on several fronts if the resurgence of character education is to have a significant influence on the history of moral education in America. Key findings regarding the present character education movement include:

1. Leaders in teacher education overwhelmingly support the concept of Character Education.

²⁴⁰ Purpel, *Moral Outrage in Education*, 202.

²⁴¹ Robert Bellah et al., *The Good Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 16.

2. In practice CE is not a high priority in teacher preparation.²⁴²
3. Community most often serves as a dominant framework for the inclusion and basis for any character initiative.²⁴³
4. Most teachers are taught character education through an indirect approach, which relies on practical experience rather than specific instruction on how to do it.
5. Schools that formally include character education in their mission statement are more likely to have active character instruction occur in the classroom.²⁴⁴
6. Smaller schools with religious ties are more strongly committed to character education initiatives.
7. Educators generally believe character education will receive more attention only if it is required.²⁴⁵

Since the birth of our nation, traditional understandings of moral education have combined with emerging theories and psychological models. This reliance on the ever-changing scientific-based, psychological and philosophical paradigms of education has resulted in a continually changing series of aims, understandings, methods, and agents for character education. The history of character education in America's schools provides a clear picture of how educators have consistently attempted to reach an effective consensus for what constitutes the appropriate pedagogy for moral instruction. There has been a constant recycling of reform

²⁴² Jack Frymier, *Values on Which We Agree*, (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa International, 1995), 3. *Values on Which we Agree* was a project authorized by the Phi Delta Kappa Board of Directors in July 1993. Data were collected in 1994. The study concluded that educators accept character education as important for children to learn in school. However, very few colleges offer education courses that would train teachers in how to implement CE into their classroom instruction.

²⁴³ B. E. Matthews & C. K. Riley, *Teaching and evaluating outdoor ethics programs* (Vienna, VA: National Wildlife Federation, 1995), 17. Matthews and Riley from their research determined that effective ethics education is grounded in community. "We ensure failure if we teach ethics without using a community context to illustrate, nurture, and support ethical development. Without grounding ethics within the particular community and cultural context of the learner, ethics remain abstract, outside the scope of experiences of the learner, and ultimately irrelevant."

²⁴⁴ Berkowitz, "Character Education in the United States," 56. Berkowitz lists this as one of his tenets in answering the question, "what works in character education?" Schools that demonstrate effective CE programs have a clear, visible CE mission statement that is part of the school's identity.

²⁴⁵ Fairchild, "Character Education," 4.

created by value shifts in the larger society, which leads schools to practice the art of accommodation in order to survive politically. These accommodations have oftentimes been merely pedagogical adjustments rather than fundamental changes. The familiar blueprint for this pseudo-reform, namely a short burst of intense action followed by longer periods of inaction and neglect, is a historical pattern that American schools have followed faithfully in the administration of moral education.

Research reveals a multitude of programs, theoretical frameworks, and approaches for what is currently labeled the *Character Education Movement* in America's schools. In order for these initiatives to be effective, character education leaders must take into consideration specific states' mandates, resources available, training programs, assessment and evaluation, and coordination of community efforts. A Character Education program strategy is only as good as the implementation of these facets. In addition, contemporary advocacy must place CE in its historical context to more fully understand the problems and contradictions in the current character education initiative. A survey of program literature and advocacy groups involved in the present character movement reveals that some educators have, to an extent, addressed the issues raised by the CEI.

Character Education's Achilles' Heel

Just as the mythical warrior, Achilles, was found to have one fatal flaw, the present-day Character Education Movement needs to be cognizant of a historically significant character flaw of its own. The history of moral training in American schools involves the teaching of one moral premise to children in the public school setting, while operating under another totally different moral premise within the marketplace. This charge echoes back to the transfer of training debate in which Mark May suggested that children operate under different moral structures according to

their particular group code. The child has learned that there are different moral codes associated with family, school, church, and work. The reading of numerous good character stories and the recitation of countless moral proverbs in a school classroom cannot hope to compete with the learning that occurs as a result of the realities of the moral values witnessed in the marketplace. That is why one finds oftentimes that the era of high moral education in America's schools corresponds to high immorality in the nation's history.

It would be worthwhile to question whether we even have good evidence of character education's effectiveness, aside from the *Inquiry*, when we interrogate history to determine how moral earlier generations were, even with heavy doses of moral education. It does not go unnoticed that while moral training in America's schools emphasized the cardinal virtues, honesty, fair play, and the like, the morality of the nation as a whole allowed slavery, Indian removal, genocide against Native Americans, the refusal of the nation to pass anti-lynching laws, and the high level of effective organized terrorism in ending Reconstruction, just to name a few. Once again, as mentioned earlier in this paper, how effective was the moral teachings of Brittain's *Blue Book*, with praises for the character of Robert E. Lee, to the African American child in Georgia's public schools? The message of good character is often marred by the mode in which it is delivered. Moral teachings for the child become a distinct canon that is separate from the national morality of adult politics and the marketplace.

The reputed decline in virtue among America's children has little to do with the failure of schools, but is rooted rather in modernization, male abandonment of responsibility for child-rearing, the corrosive impact of markets and modernization on human relations and particularly human virtue production. If this *character flaw* is not addressed, and if superficial, inadequate approaches to character education continue without a solid theoretical grounding that takes into

account the problematics associated with moral education, being informed by historical research, present-day character education will ultimately be discredited and its benefits lost.

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