

****DRAFT****

In Their Own Words: Students' Views about the Moral Nature of the Classroom¹

Virginia Richardson and Nicola Williams, University of Michigan.

Introduction

Given the rash of books, magazine articles, and news accounts on such topics as teaching the virtues, character education, and family values, there seems little doubt that the moral development of the young is once again much on the collective American mind. Fortunately, there is a growing literature on the moral dimensions of teaching that helps conceptualize this concern as an educational undertaking. There are philosophical writings (Goodlad, Soder & Sirotnik, 1990; Noddings, 1984; Sockett, 1993; Strike & Soltis, 1985; Tom, 1984), as well as the beginnings of an empirical base of research on the moral dimensions of classroom teaching (Ball & Wilson, 1996; Jackson, Boorstrom & Hansen, 1993; Hansen, 1993; Oser, 1986). These literatures represent different ways of thinking about how students learn virtuous conduct and how teachers foster this conduct in students.

While it is always useful to examine the moral dimensions of classrooms in terms of teacher conduct, it is also important to determine how students respond to their teachers' attempts to shape their moral conduct. Much of the work on the moral dimensions of classrooms has been experimental in nature by examining the effects of one moral or character development program or program element on student behavior or articulation of values (e.g., Lickona, 1997; Watson, Battistich & Solomon, In Press). An exception is Jackson, Boostrom & Hansen (1993) who

¹This work was supported by a grant from the Spencer Foundation. We wish to thank our colleagues, Gary Fenstermacher, Cathy Fallona, Todd Chow-Hoy, Matt Sanger, Jilo Williams, Alexandra Miletta, Charlotte Ratzlaff, and Richard Ogusthorpe for their help in collecting and coding data and providing a frame for our consideration of this topic.

conducted an ethnographic study of the moral life of classrooms, but without looking specifically at students.

This paper reports on the findings of an interview study of students in the project that examined, over a two year period of time, the moral dimensions of classrooms and schools in two very different schools—one an elementary, and the second, an elementary/middle school. The teachers were collaborators in this project that involved videotaping of classrooms, extensive interviews with teachers, principals, and students, and group meetings with teachers. Of particular interest in this paper is the degree to which and the way in which students in the classrooms of interest talk about the moral aspects of classroom life when asked questions about their school, teacher, peers and classroom.

Background of Study

Three years ago we commenced a study of what we called “manner in teaching,” funded by the Spencer Foundation. At the time, we thought of manner as conduct expressive of moral and intellectual virtue. We proposed a study of how manner is exhibited by teachers and how they make it manifest in their pedagogy.

Our approach to this inquiry does not involve conducting our research within the framework of one method or program. Most research in moral education is conducted around a specific approach to moral education such as various character education programs or the Just Community (e.g., Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989). Our interest focuses on the fundamental moral dimensions of classrooms as they operate today, with or without specific character or moral education programs in place.

The concept of manner has served as a gateway to the study of the moral qualities of teachers and their classrooms (Fallona, 1998, In Press; Fenstermacher, 1992); and more recently, the ways teachers work with students on their own moral conduct (Fenstermacher, In Press), how they think about morality (Sanger, In Press), how manner is expressed in classroom management (Richardson & Fallona, In Press), and the relationship between school context and the moral environment of classrooms (Chow-Hoy, In Press; Williams, 1999).

The empirical portion of the work took place in two quite different public elementary

schools. Jordon Elementary² is located in a university community and stresses the development of community, team work, and life skills. The second, Highlands Academy, is located in a large urban area, and is a K-8 African-centered school. Over the last three years, we observed in and videotaped classrooms in both schools, met with the teachers after school, held workshop sessions with them, and brought them together in a conference format where they presented their inquiries to each other. We also formally interviewed the teachers, their principals, and a select number of their students. The empirical work is collaborative, qualitative, and interpretive (Erickson, 1986). We involve the teachers in the inquiry because we feel that they have much to contribute to the development of the construct. The qualitative, interpretive approach allows us to remain open-ended about the phenomenon and develop a descriptive construct that is situation in classroom and school realities. We decided to locate our study in two schools to provide some contrast in interpreting the data.

The Sites: Jordan Elementary School is located within a college community, the student population is diverse, and 38% of the student population receives free/reduced lunch. The school has recently introduced a curriculum called the Life Skills. There are 17 life skills in the curriculum developed by Susan Kovalic (1994). They are: integrity, initiative, flexibility, perseverance, organization, sense of humor, effort, common sense, problem solving, responsibility, patience, friendship, curiosity, cooperation, caring, courage, and pride. Four teachers from Jordan agreed to participate with us on this project.

Highlands Academy is a public K-8 African-Centered school of choice that attracts student applications from a large urban area, Lake City. According to the district's Board of Education, African-Centered Education in Lake City's Public Schools is based upon the belief that all humans have their physical, social, and intellectual origins in Africa. The child is placed and grounded at "this center", and through an inclusionary process, all representative groups are placed not above or below any other group but alongside the rest of humanity as events and truth dictate. Highlands Academy was developed as an all-boys school, but an ACLU suit opened it up

²We have changed the names of the schools to protect their identities. The teachers' names are also changed to pseudonyms selected by the teachers themselves.

to girls. All students are African-American, and all but three of the teachers in the school are African-American. Seven teachers from Highlands Academy participated on this project.

The Teacher Participants: Eleven teachers are involved in the project. During the first year of the study, the four white females at Jordan Elementary taught in teams. Two of them worked with a group of grades 1-3 students. Since one is a special education teacher, there were a number of students in the classroom who have been identified as requiring special help. These two teachers continued to team-teach during the second year. The other two teachers shared grades 2 and 3 in the first year, and in the second year, moved with their students to grades 3 and 4.

The seven teachers at Highlands Academy are African American, with three of them male and four female. One teaches Kindergarten, and one Grade 1. In the upper elementary grades, the teachers teach particular subjects. The subjects represented in this group are physical education, English (2), Social Studies, and computers. Experience levels for all of the teachers range from 3 1/2 to 30 years.

In addition to data collection, we met extensively with the teachers in school groups. We also brought the teachers from the two schools together for dinner and conversation about the project. For example, in the first dinner meeting, we showed them a videotape with short teaching episodes from all of their classrooms. A member of the research staff introduced each episode with a short description of the context of the classroom of the episode that was being shown on the tape.

Data Collection First Year: The following forms of data were collected: research staff interviews; teacher interviews of two types: 1) descriptive belief interviews, and 2) a second form that engaged the teacher and interviewer in observing a videotape of their classroom together and commenting on particular features related to manner in teaching; principal interviews; videotapes and audiotapes of group meetings with teachers.

Data Collection Second Year: During the second year, we continued to observe and videotape teachers, interview them while viewing the videotape, collect school data, and interview the principals. We added a component in which we asked teachers to keep journals, and each teacher worked on an inquiry project that they presented to each other in a conference

workshop held in the middle of the year. During the second year, we also worked with the teachers to develop an interview schedule for students in their classroom. We then interviewed 3-4 students that each of the teachers selected.

This paper reports on the results of an analysis of the student interviews. The questions driving this analysis are:

1. To what degree do the students refer to the moral dimensions of their classrooms and schools when asked about their teachers' classroom actions, expectations and goals, and asked to describe their school and principal;
2. What is the nature of the students' description of the moral dimensions of their classroom and school?
3. Are there differences among groups of students in their descriptions of the moral dimensions of classrooms?

Method

The Interview: We held a group meeting with the teachers in each of the schools around the student interview. We were interested in the questions the teachers wanted to include and how they thought we should select the students to interview. At Jordan, for example, the teachers wanted us to include the following two questions: 1) Does your teacher like to learn?³ and 2) Does your teacher treat kids differently? At Highland's Academy, the teachers were interested in our asking questions concerning differences in treatment of boys and girls. We also decided that the interview schedule for the early elementary students would be somewhat different from that at the upper elementary/middle school level. We brought the draft interview back to the teachers for their input, and agreed on two schedules (see Appendix 1).

The teachers selected students for interview, and each student left the classroom for an interview that averaged ½hour long. The interviews were taped, transcribed, and placed within The Ethnography, a qualitative research software program.

³The teachers at Jordan were trying to model learning for their students, and were interested in whether it was getting across to the students.

The Students: The general guidelines for selecting students were as follows: approximately 4 students in each class, with a mixture of boys and girls and achievement levels. All students selected, however, were felt to be able to understand and respond to the questions asked. There were considerable variations by class. For example, the class that was team-taught by Letti and Hannah at Jordan contained a large number of special education students; thus, one of the students who was selected was diagnosed with a behavioral disorder. Since this particular class was team-taught, and the students did not view one on them as “primary” but thought of both when they said “teacher”, we interviewed five students. At Highlands, although one teacher selected a particular student, that student talked about many of the teachers as well as the one who selected him or her. Table 1 provides information on the teachers and students at Highlands Academy and Jordan Elementary. Pseudonyms have been supplied by the teachers for their own names, and by the authors for the students’ names.

Insert Table 1 Here

Analysis: A list of codes was developed by the research team through an iterative process of discussion after reading an interview, developing a set of codes in a group meeting, trying the codes on another interview, and eventually agreeing on a set. The interviews were then coded.

We then pulled out the various coded segments by school. We felt that the next level of analysis ought to be approached by school level since the two schools were very different in terms of student population, grade levels, and teaching approaches. At the next level of analysis, finer grain categories were developed from a careful reading of the segments. For example, for the “School and Principal” codes from Jordan Elementary, the segments could be categorized as: Treatment of Students, Nature of Program/Curriculum, and Description of School/Principal. We also looked for themes that took us to a third level of analysis. For example, in the “Students’ Description of Themselves” category, we focused on a subcategory of “how the teacher makes me feel” for the Jordan students. Within this, there were three themes: Feelings of Confidence and Self-Worth, Knowledge of Self, and Responsibility for Learning.

In order to represent a very large data base in this paper, we selected several descriptive codes that we analyzed across all the students in each school. We then selected one teacher in

each school to present a more complete picture of the students' descriptions of the teacher and classroom. By piecing together the descriptive statements about a teacher, we were able to assemble a mosaic of how this teacher is perceived by her students and what the students perceive as important in their classrooms. And lastly, we looked across the material from the two schools, and developed themes that emerged from this examination.

Findings: Jordan Elementary

Views of the School

The students in Jordan Elementary generally agreed on a number of elements in the school, and there were few gender differences in responses except in one category. There were very few negative comments, and they seemed very happy to be in Jordan.

All students described the school as small, except one who felt that it was bigger than another he had attended. The small size was important because "*I know people*" (Kristi). They also agreed that the teachers were nice as was the principal. Four of the students also described the teachers as good. In fact, one student said that she was "*proud to have good teachers*" (Helena). Five of the students referred to programs in the school designed to teach appropriate social behaviors or virtues. Two mentioned the TEAM program ("Together Everyone Achieves More"), three the "3 B's" ("Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible), and three, the Life Skills. The students volunteered what TEAM and the 3 B's stood for, and knew there were 17 life skills but didn't state them all.

For one student, the "3 B's" were clearly a school-level focus. Jake (4th grade) indicated that he didn't need to be reminded of them anymore. He learned them in Kindergarten:

S: The 3 Bs.

I: What are they?

S: Be respectful, be responsible, and be safe.

I: And how many times a day do you think you're reminded of that?

S: Usually we aren't. We usually just remember it on our own.

I: But you know that because like on the first day of school that's what. . .?

R: Um Hmm.

I: Or did you already know that like from 1st grade?

R: From first grade.

I: Really? They teach you that?

S: I learned in Kindergarten (Jake)

In terms of programs and activities in the school, one student described the reading program as very good, a number of students referred to the “Specials”, and other aspects such as T.V. cable hookups in the rooms, size of the gym, the student council were also mentioned.

The descriptions of the school in which gender differences occurred related to the treatment of students. For the females, Jordan Elementary was a fair school, comfortable and helpful, in which “*students are free to ask for help, and people help each other*”. In Jordan, “*everyone is important*”, and teachers show they care. For the males, the teachers are nice because they don’t yell, the principal isn’t mean, and “*they try to help with behavior problems instead of just sending them home like they did at _____*” (Jason). It would appear that the male students are thinking about Jordan in relation to other places or adults who treat students somewhat more harshly; however, the female students focus on positive interactions and expectations.

Notions of Teaching

One set of questions asked the students about what teaching is, and how it might be different from being a mother or grandmother or other caregiver. Such notions are developed within home, community and school and in the media. In general, the Jordan students had a straightforward sense of teaching. The teacher is one who either “teaches stuff”, or “helps you learn stuff”. The stuff was considered to be standard subject matters such as math, reading, writing and science. The purpose of learning “this stuff” was discussed by three students. For one,

I think a teacher struggles to teach students to get them smarter so that way they’ll get a good education and um. . .a good job and not grow up being. . .dumb (Justin).

For another, teachers teach you “*things you need to know in everyday life*” (Rachel), and a third felt that teachers help you learn stuff so you could get a college education.

However, virtue was not salient to these students as the “stuff” that teachers teach, except in one case. This lack of attention to the moral elements of the teaching role occurred even though the interviewers gave several opportunities to students to think about things other than subject matter that teachers teach. For example, note the following dialogue:

I: But first I just want to get a general idea of what you think a teacher is?

R: Somebody that helps you learn and stuff like math, reading.

I: And what does a teacher do? Besides. . .you know, how does she go about teaching you this stuff?

R: Reading groups and math groups.

I: Do they teach more than just reading and math?

R: Yeah, writing and lots of things.

I: Like what?

R: Umm. . . plants, science. . .I can't think of anything else. (Jake)

One student did mention that both mothers and teachers teach you to be responsible, and another student suggested that one role of the teacher is to teach students to actually like learning.

Good Studenting

Questions related to what a new student should know about in order to be a good student in the classroom yielded two types of responses. One was procedural, relating to classroom order and time on task. Most of the students included paying attention, and listening to the teacher. Others included not tipping back the chair, finishing all your work, and keeping your hands to yourself. Another piece of advice was “don’t talk out”, although a student can talk at times. As pointed out by Kristi:

. . .you could talk about the subjects or something, but if you do. . .if you can talk while you're doing the work. . .like if you can still do your work but still talk, you can talk. But like you can't talk about bad things or, you know, talk about somebody. (Kristi)

The second category of good studenting involved ways of being, approaching work, and treating other people. We call this the Morals category. These relate, in part, to the ‘3 B’s’ and the 17 life skills. In all classrooms, being nice to other kids was a strong aspect of good studenting. In two of the classrooms “no put-downs” was a particularly strong response to the question concerning good studenting. Rachel describes what happens when you put someone down:

S: And the life skills as good as you can. The 17 life skills and then the lifelong guidelines as good as you can. And like. . .like one of the. . .like there's. . .the lifelong guidelines, it's be trustworthy, be truthful, be. . .no put downs, personal best. And like that's what's on the bottom of the progress report.

I: I see.

S: And like if you do like those. . .and if you give a put down?

/I: Um Hmm

S: You have to give like three put ups. (Rachel)

As suggested in the preceding quote, the life skills play a prominent role in this category of good studenting advice. In fact, Rachel seems to have accepted the 17 life skills as leading to becoming a “good person”.

R: Like the lifelong guidelines. . .they're like. . .if you have all the life skills and all the lifelong guidelines down, she. . .it would be like a really good person because you like. . .the sense of humor, flexibility, integrity, initiative, caring, friendship and stuff like that. And if you have all of those, you would be a super good person. (Rachel)

Interestingly, while all students mentioned expectations in the procedural category, only a few statements were made by the male students that could be categorized in the moral category. By and large, female students dwelled on the second category as represented by Rachel's comments above, and the males focused on behavioral advice. To provide an example of the male response, here are answers to two questions given by Justin:

I: What kinds of things would you tell me I would have to do in Darlene's class to be successful?

J: Don't play around while she's teaching, don't interrupt while she's talking, um. . .do your work and don't talk to neighbors. And, follow instructions, if she's giving them out for something.

.....

I: if I was in your class, and she was going to make an example of a good student, such as yourself, what kinds of things would she say about you? Like if she was going to make an example of you to the whole class?

J: That he pays attention, he doesn't talk. Because I'm really quiet. He doesn't go out wandering. Which, a lot of kids have problems on that. . .(Justin)

Females also provided procedural advice, but also the virtues as suggested in the 17 life skills. Here are some comments from Helena that represent both procedural and moral expectations:

H: I would say that you should listen to the teacher and keep focus so that she doesn't have to. . .many times so that the other people have to wait.

IN: Okay

H: And I'd say you'd need to behave or else they're gonna somehow give you a punishment.

I: What other kinds of things to know, are there rules in this classroom I need to know?

H: A whole lot of rules. But not too many. There's um, we have like life long guidelines and we have those rules. You have to be respectful, don't put down, and . . .be polite to other people, . . .and be responsible for the work that they're doing. (Helena)

Darlene's Students

In order to gain a better understanding of how students view the moral aspects of the classroom, this section examines the responses of students in one classroom. We selected Darlene's classroom since one of us was involved in a case study of the teaching side of this classroom, and is familiar with the observational and teacher interview data (Richardson & Fallona, in press). Eventually this data will be brought together for a thorough case study of the classrooms.

The Students: Four students were interviewed in Darlene's classroom. The students were selected from a list provided by Darlene that also included a description of each student. Rachel was described by Darlene as a capable and articulate student; and Kristi as bright, articulate and dyslectic. Justin was described as intellectually advanced with emotional problems, and Jeffrey as learning disabled. All but Kristi were in their second year with Darlene, and Kristi was new to Jordan Elementary the year of the interview.

Description of Darlene's Personal Character and Teaching Style: The students described Darlene as a good teacher; as nice, funny, caring, loving and sometimes strict with students. She knows the students well. As Kristi says: "*She knows me pretty well. Knows my mom and my aunt, knows I am doing my best and that I am truthful*" (Kristi). Rachel suggested that she is different from other teachers, but that "*every teacher is different and they teach in different ways*" (Rachel).

Caring means various things to the students. For Jeffrey, the fact that Darlene helps him with his homework indicates that she is a caring teacher. Justin suggests that because she doesn't treat kids differently, Darlene is caring; although he later suggests that she does treat students differently (see below). Rachel feels that because Darlene is nice and expresses her feelings for them, she is a caring teacher:

I: How can you tell? What is it that she does to let you know that she cares?

R: She like. . .sometimes when she like we help and stuff or do something while she's gone, she says like, "Oh, I love you guys!". And she's always like nice to us.

I: So you can tell she cares from that. . .?

R: And she always like. . .at the end of the day she usually makes us give a. . .one of the three H's. . .a high five, a handshake, a hug. And then she got this sign that says, "Free hugs! One size fits all!" (Kristi)

She also likes to learn, according to all students. She indicates this by making mistakes and allowing the students to correct her. This also ties in with her being funny. For Jeffrey, Darlene indicates that she likes to learn “*Because when she makes mistakes, we correct her*” (Jeffrey). Rachel suggests that when Darlene makes a mistake, she is funny:

. . .she’s like nice and funny and she makes like. . .she once in a while. . .she always like makes these little mistakes that we laugh about it with her and stuff. And like when she tries to read a book and then she remembers she needs her glasses. It’s funny. (Rachel)

And Kristi feels that being funny helps the students to learn:

I: How does she get you to learn?

K: She just kind of pushes it because she’s funny when she teaches.

How the Students Feel: This particular set of questions asks students how the teacher makes them feel. The responses to this question suggest three themes: feelings of confidence and self-worth, self-knowledge as learners, and responsibility for learning.

Darlene helps the students feel confident (Justin), good about self and secure (Kristi), wanting to be in school (Rachel), and liking to learn (Jeffrey). Rachel, for example, would choose to be in school rather than stay at home, if she had a choice: “*And sometimes, like. . .when I’m sick. . .well, not totally sick but I have the choice to go to school, I usually do.*” The following discussion from Justin reflects his feelings:

J: She wrote that on my progress report that: Who is that boy? Send him back next week!

I: (laughter). So you’re doing well now. Well, that’s good to hear.

J: I had all five’s and a “yes” on both um, “turned in progress report” and um, “turned in homework”.

I: So when Mrs. _____ says these things to you, how does that make you feel about yourself?

J: Feel confident. Feel appreciated. I guess I feel. . .

I: Good?

J: Yeah, mainly that.

The students are also quite aware of their own learning styles and difficulties with learning. Kristi dwells on her reading problems, and that things are going much better, now, and she feels good that Darlene is helping her be a better student. Justin reflects this assessment of his own style:

J: I’m more self-smart than people smart.

I: So you're an independent thinker? So you like to work by yourself? And Mrs. _____ knows that?

J: Yeah (Justin)

Kristi is aware of learning certain virtues, and that these should be applied outside of school as well:

I: Do you. . .take what you learn in school and you do that at home, too?

K: Um Hmm

I: Yeah?

K: Yeah

I: So you don't do put downs at home?

K: Uh Uh

I: Even with your little brother? (Both chuckling)

K: Ohh! Well sometimes I do them but only when he gets really, really. . . .like I really want to do it.(Kristi)

The students are also aware of their responsibility for learning. Justin suggests that *It's what I do that makes me learn* (Justin), and Jeffrey states that *Its mostly me doing it* (Jeffrey). Rachel provides a little more explanation for this responsibility:

Well, Mrs _____ s, like, she Is, like,. . .she, like, says, "who is responsible for your learning?" And, like, we. . .if. . .she knows that we weren't, like. . .knowing everything about what they need to know and then we always say "We are!" And then stuff. . .so really we're responsible to learn and we could be like drifting off in space and stuff and pretending to listen, but really we're in control of learning. We just got to listen.

How Darlene Teaches: The examples of the students' descriptions of Darlene's teaching either relate to Darlene's own manner, or describe her attempts at calling for the development of moral action on the part of the students. In other words, when Darlene uses an approach that makes students curious about what they are reading, this represents the former. When she asks students to join and participate in a community, it is the latter. Some of these latter may also be described within the categories suggested by Fenstermacher (in press). He suggested that there are six methods for fostering dispositions and enhanced moral relationships: 1) construction of the classroom community; 2) design and execution of academic task structures, 3) didactic instruction, 4) calling out for conduct of a particular kind, 5) private conversations, and 6) showcasing specific students to illustrate preferred conduct. Not all of these are represented in

the students' interviews. We will provide examples of several of these forms of teaching, and then describe two themes that are strong in the interviews:

Building Community: Community circle is a big hit for two of the students, and is mentioned by them all. Associated with community circle is the complement box. Rachel, for example, finds the complement box to be fun and motivating:

R: . . .makes it fun so we'd want to learn more.

I: Um Hmm

R: And so its just like not all like "Do this. Do that. Blah, Blah Blah."

I: I see. So, she makes it fun and she. . .

R: Well, see, we have this complement box.

I: Oh.

R: And a suggestion box and you like. . .you don't sign your name or anything and you like write a complement about someone and then you don't write your name so they don't know like who just to be nice to so that they have to be nice to everyone because then. . .because they don't and that kind of like makes it funner. . .(Rachel)

Jeffrey is also an advocate of community circle, particularly the complements. When asked what he liked about community circle, he replied: "*When we get to do complements*". He also stated that he liked to give as well as receive them.

Design of Tasks: One aspect of the way in which Darlene approaches the life skills curriculum is the assessment system. She first describes the color of the paper it is on (blue), and then the numbering system (as representing grades), and then the way in which the student is asked to grade him/herself before Darlene does.

R: And then she gives it to us usually, like if we have time. And then we circle what we think we did and then we like pick a life skill. Like I usually pick flexibility because that's how I see lots of things like talking louder and stuff like that. And then she goes over it with her red pen if she like agrees with it. And if she like gives you a 3 or something, she'll explain why and stuff.

Calling out for conduct of a particular kind: Jeffrey describes how Darlene's insistence that he turn in his homework, and her tying it to responsibility finally convinced him to begin to turn in his homework.

I: What about finishing your work? Would that be a positive thing? Turning in your homework and?

J: Yeah. Although they don't. . .sometimes she'll treated me to, like, hit me on the head with a rock. She said that once. . .

I: (laughter) You didn't like that?

J: Whoa!

I: So she doesn't do that to you anymore?

J: No. Mainly if I didn't turn it in, she'd be like, "Jeffrey, I'm disappointed in you!"

I: And would that make you want to make sure to turn it in the next time?

J: She expects me to do it, before she even say that!

Two themes are apparent in these interviews concerning Darlene's teaching: Differential Treatment of Students, and Cause and Effect.

Differential Treatment of Students: The Jordan elementary teachers were particularly interested in the students' responses to questions concerning the differential treatment of students. All students, including Justin, agreed that Darlene treats different students differently, even though at one point in the interview Justin states that she doesn't. For Rachel, she is adapting to different learning styles. This depends on Darlene's learning about how the different students learn. One student, for example, needs to be yelled at, but others just need a few reminders. Kristi agrees with Rachel, and also states that she just notices this; Darlene does not say this:

I: Does she talk about how she treats different kids differently?

K: Uh Uh.

I: Does she ever talk about that? You just notice it?

K: Yeah

I: You just notice it. And do you think. . .why do you think she does this?

K: Because some kids need that help. I mean, she wouldn't do it because they were her favorite, but some kids like need more help reading, or some kids like need more reminders so she's more strict.

The students all agreed that this differential treatment was fair; although Justin thought it was only sometimes fair.

Cause and Effect: Both Kristi and Rachel had an astute sense of cause and effect in terms of teaching and learning. That is, they often tied Darlene's teaching approaches and manner to their learning. Rachel, for example, provides a description of a student who requires particular treatment from Darlene.

R: There's this kid _____, and like she learned that he works better as like he needs to be yelled at and stuff. . .

I: Um Hmm.

*R: . . .to like be able to listen and learn and he'll like get time outs and stuff like that. .
.but then there's people like. . .Hmm. . . _____ who like works better as just getting a
couple of reminders and just like look at her and then she knows what she's doing and
stuff.*

I: Okay. Okay

R: She adapts to their learning.

Kristi points out that Darlene uses her sense of humor to help students become curious: “*But she kind of gets funny into reading and so she tells you stuff about the story and it makes you get curious*”. There is also a quite long sequence in which Kristi explains what is essentially the concept of Wait Time. Not only does she describe Darlene’s patience in waiting for answers from the students and her efforts at keeping the other students quiet while the student is thinking, Kristi is aware of why this is important: “*Because sometimes like you know stuff but then you need time to remember it.*” (Kristi). Kristi pointed out that Darlene tells the class why she is waiting, providing that link between her classroom actions and student learning.

Summary: Jordan Elementary: The students at Jordan Elementary appear quite aware of the attempts on the part of the principal and teachers to develop in students the virtues as described in the Life Skills curriculum, and the “3 B’s”. In addition, the students are aware of the individual nuances of their teacher’s manner and moral emphases in their classrooms. For example, responsibility for learning seems quite internalized in Darlene’s students. This was something that Darlene was very conscious of stressing in her classroom (Richardson & Fallona, in press).

Of particular interest in this data are the gender differences in the way students perceive their teachers expectations. This is particularly apparent in the descriptions of good studenting in which the males focused on procedural and behavioral expectations, and the girls on procedural, but also relational and moral expectations. Throughout the interviews, we found that the moral life skills related to relationships with others were much more salient for the girls than the boys. As we move into the descriptions of the students’ perceptions at Highlands Academy, it will be important to examine what appears similar across the two schools, and what is different.

Findings: Highlands Academy

Views of the School

We now turn our attention to a very different context, that of Highlands Academy, the K-8, urban public school of choice. The students at Highlands Academy generally agreed on some school level characteristics when asked to describe their school; but there were several gender and grade level differences across six categories that we will be analyzing in this section. Although we will explore statements regarding some of the negative experiences that some of the female students reported, all of the students seemed to value the experience of being at Highlands Academy.

All students described that they had come to Highlands for a better educational environment. They were in agreement that as a school of choice, Highlands Academy was better than the neighborhood schools in the city because of the caring teachers, the emphasis on academics, and the safer environment. Students often compared neighborhood schools to their school. One student said, “*police don’t have to come..everyday and break up a fight (here), and guns don’t get (brought) into school*” (Pia, seventh grade). The students agreed that they had better teachers who cared about their learning and their quality of life. Jon, an eighth grader, said, “*(In) neighborhood schools, the teachers are more like high school teachers. They don’t really care what you do. ..Everyone (here) shows that they care about your actions.*” Students also agreed that the strong academic program at the school was one of the main reasons why Highlands was better than other schools. All of the students highlight the focus on learning at the school. All students were asked to describe their school, and one student said,

it's a school that really wants to teach students and prepare them for high school and college. They let you know that it's a hard world out there and that you have to learn this stuff now while you can, and there maybe won't be a later time that you can. (Destiny, eighth grader)

Another student reported that, “*most of the students are smart..because you have to be smart to get in here*” (Jamal, eighth grade).

Overall, students agreed on the superior quality of their education, particularly compared to other public “neighborhood” or “regular” schools. Six themes were identified. For a number of these themes, boys and girls approached them in dissimilar ways. There were also upper elementary school and lower elementary school differences in that the younger students didn’t talk so much about themes 1 – 4, and they talked differently about themes 5 and 6. We’ll return to grade level differences later in the section.

1) **Choice:** Most of the students reported that they had no choice in applying to the school. Only two female respondents said that it was a shared decision with their parents to apply to the school. The reasons that the students gave for their parents’ choice were: for a better education; the emphasis on “*heritage,*” “*us as Black people,*” and “*African-centered education;*” the uniforms; the fact that the teachers were “good,” and that they could “*relate to them;*” the learning environment; and, in one case a student said that her parents wanted her to go to Highlands because “*it was closer to home.*” Some male students reported additional reasons for their parent’s choice: “*because it was going to be an all-boys school;*” and, “*to be around Black men*” (Jon, eighth grader).

2) **Elite School:** More boys than girls made statements about how much better their school was in comparison to other schools. Andre, an eighth grade student in the all-male class said that he knows that Highlands is “one of the top schools ... because the teachers always talk about it...” This is one of the top schools...better be glad you are not going to your neighborhood school.” Other students give support to the notion that their school is superior, which comes from the outside community: “*Some parent came in and said it’s a good school,*” (Pia, seventh grade), or “*it’s been recognized on the Channel Two*” (Jamal, seventh grade). One male and one female felt that going to Highlands was no different than going to another public school except for the uniform. Adria, a seventh grade student was the only one to say that she felt like another school that she had gone to out of state was better than this school, “*because it was a richer school.*”

3) **African-Centered program** – Males and females made an equal number of statements regarding the significance of “black history” at Highlands. No one expressed negativity about the “African-centered” focus at the school, but two male students voices criticisms regarding the program:

I'm okay with it and some of the kids they say they hear too much of it but ...if you got to learn it you got to learn it you should learn your history or something like that you know about your people. ..what they did for you to get free and how you should act...just like that. (Marcus, eighth grader)

Another student pointed out the lack of white students at the school:

I don't like it...It shouldn't matter what school you go to, they shouldn't have to separate us, like black kids in (Lake City), and white kids in the suburbs. I think we should have white people in this school cause whites, White people should know our history, too, cause we know theirs, like um, the Declaration of Independence and stuff..(Jamal, seventh grader).

4) **Uniforms**- Most students expressed the notion that uniforms were required for safety reasons. While it appeared that all students could reason why they had to wear uniforms, only two female students expressed that they actually liked wearing the uniforms. One student Cherie, an eighth grader, said:

It's great. I like, other students don't like wearing uniforms, but I do. Cause my mom, my parents don't have to go out there and buy all that name brand stuff. I think it's helping my momma out by saving money. That's what I like about the uniforms.

No male students reportedly liked the uniforms. All of the males and only one of the females said that they disliked the uniforms. This is significant because the uniforms are representative of one of the ways that the school seeks to create a normative community in terms of the moral development of its students.

5) **Treatment of students**: Lower elementary students talked about the difference in treatment based on students who were “good” and students who were “bad”. There was no pattern of gender difference among the Kindergarten and first grade students. The upper elementary students showed a definite gender difference pattern. Girls made more statements acknowledging difference in treatment than boys did. Girls stated more relational differences in the ways that students interacted amongst themselves as well as with teachers. Usually the

comments suggested that the boys received better treatment than the girls. For example, Pia made the statement that she could still tell that Highlands was a boys' school first, "*because, the men teachers treat the boys better than the girls..Like when they play. The boys, the boys um, can learn and listen to the boy teacher better than the girls can.*" Boys usually made statements that indicated that the girls were more talkative and caused by talking in classes. No boy said that girls got more privileges. However, one male, Ajmal, who had just switched from the all-male class to the coed class had this to say:

Well the females, our class, we're like an advanced class, um, let's just say, we're proving in this school that the girls have a higher intelligence rate than the boys, and I'm trying to stay up there with the girls, in their academic level.

Favoritism and "sucking up" was also reported by 4 of the students. One of the male teachers runs two groups with exclusive membership, one based on gender and the other based on GPA, which several students felt was the basis of some unfair differential treatment. Some female students also felt that one of their female teachers treated the members of her after school activity with special privileges that she felt "shut out".

Three out of the six upper elementary girls interviewed, Cherie, Destiny, and Pia, reported having problems involving the school community and "favoritism" or disciplinary expectations at the school. Their response to these problems was to take it home to friends and family rather than discuss it with the teacher. Cherie for example felt that she or two other girls should have received an honor, but that a teacher favored a boy:

C: I kept it to myself...So I went home and told my sister what happened, she said that's not right so say something, it's like I don't wanna say nothing cause I don't want to make no big deal out of it..so I just left it alone and I just, you know, what goes around comes around..

IN: Looking back, do you regret that decision you made?

C: I regret it cause I should of said something. But then, I ain't, I know some teachers might of said, 'well, you don't know that' and stuff like that, so it's like it's between. In a way I wish I did and in a way I wish I didn't.

6) Descriptions of the school: Upper elementary and lower elementary differed on how they responded to the statement, "Describe your school to someone who had never been to the school before." Younger students across gender lines described the school in terms the physical aspects of the school, "*red, black, and green tiles,*" "*computers,*" "*lots of doors on the*

hallways,” “light skinned and dark-skinned people,” “my church is next door,” and it has a “chimney on top...sign in the front.” Only one Kindergartner, Lionel, described it as a place where you “be good and don’t do bad things.” The upper elementary students described the school in terms of learning or in terms of the characteristics of their teachers, which we’ll explore later in this paper. None of them described it in terms of what the school physically looks like.

Though there were many reported differences in the treatment based on gender, Highlands’s students across gender and age levels agreed that their school was a safe and generally, caring academic environment. As one student put it, “if you can’t stand any love and attention, don’t come here” (Ajmal).

Notions of Teaching

This section of the study focuses on Highlands Academy students’ notions of teaching. Based on what they were able to articulate in their interviews, students held a range of notions of what a teacher is, what a teacher does, how it is done; and, in some cases speculated on why teachers do what they do.

Teacher-Student Relationships: Overall, the students at Highlands described notions of teaching that involved a strong relationship with their students, with three characteristics: 1) they were personal; 2) they involved a well-defined teacher role; and, 3) they were ones where students and teachers held positive expectations, sometimes in conjunction with negative experiences. Sometimes in their discussion of teacher-student relationship, students associated this notion of teaching with parents or parenting.

According to what students said, they view teaching as something that is very personal. One eighth grade boy, who later was voted co-valedictorian of his class defined a teacher as:

someone who’s there to teach you, is your friend, won’t leave you, they’re always there when you need help...with your teacher you have a tighter bond than with your family, say you’re having family problems, you could go to your teacher
(Ajmal)

Lionel, a kindergarten student articulated that “*kids (are supposed to) love the teacher.*”

These indicate that one of the notions of teaching is that there is a personal bond that is expected and accepted by students. This personal closeness could help to make it possible to shape and cultivate the moral conduct so desired by teachers.

Teacher role: Students had very clear notions of what role a teacher is supposed to perform. Even the very young students were able to articulate what a teacher is, what a teacher is supposed to do, and in some cases why. A first grade boy articulated what he perceived to be the role of teachers:

to teach kids a lot of stuff that they don't know, .. and if they don't know something, they expect, um them to figure it out or if they can't figure it out, they just help them with it (Daniel)

They also speculated on why teachers did what they did, and expressed it as best they could. When asked why she thought it was hard to be a teacher, another first grade student posited:

If all the students in the class (were) acting bad, it'll take you a whole year to get them straight. ... because (people) be pushing up on [acting aggressively towards] people and when (students) grow up you (the teacher) don't want that ..when they're like 12 or 10, (students) are not going to be standing in front of stores[loitering]. (Aliyah, first grader)

Display of Positive Disposition: Whether Highlands' students were having a difficult or easy time in school, they described teachers positively; and, that positive element often involved a connection to the students' parents. Despite some students' challenging experiences in school students articulated some type of positive notion of teaching, in all of the interviews. An eighth grade boy recounted his early experiences in school and how his notions of teachers changed over time:

[because of teachers that I had] when I was little I thought my mom was sending me to school to punish me... as I got older I realized that a teacher is like, sort of like a mentor that helps you through life, they show concern and help you. (Brent, seventh grader)

Ajmal gave an example of how he knows that his teachers care about him:

..they send for us when we're in trouble, when we're doing something wrong

and so on and they always, they call our parents when they don't believe we're doing the right thing, they only do it because that's what they believe is best for us. (Ajmal)

This is significant because students are able to develop a positive notion of teachers that students often describe as extending into a relationship with their parents.

One reason for this notion of teaching as partner to parents might be that parents are required to spend three hours per month in service to the school (Watson and Smitherman, 1992). Because of this school level characteristic, Highlands students often see their teachers in collaboration with their parents. As a boy in kindergarten defines what a teacher does in relation to his parents, he says, “*They talk...the teacher and the parent...they could um, talk when we're getting ready to leave.*” This emergent notion of teacher as collaborator with parent is significant because it is salient at the beginning of a trajectory that could cultivate a strong normative foundation for students' moral development.

Challenges and Virtues: It appears that having strong notions of teaching sometimes allowed students to articulate greater empathy for their teachers. This heightened degree of awareness of the notions of teaching may explain students' descriptions of both the challenges that teachers face as well as the virtues that they desired in teachers. Several students mentioned the importance of patience: “*Being a teacher, you gotta have a lot of patience, cause you gonna have to deal with a lot of kids being noisy and stuff*” (Brent, seventh grade boy) and calmness: [Teachers] “*have to be calm with the students, and you have to show respect, ...make them feel welcome, ...don't get stupid...let the students express themselves when they have a problem.*” (Cherie, eighth grade girl)

Many of the students associated teaching with challenging work. These students not only acknowledged that the job is challenging, but they also hypothesized on what the challenges are that teachers faced:

Well being a teacher, I guess, I guess it would have to be hard going day after day with all these children, some hard headed, some nice, but, having to put up with all this, that would be hard. (Ajmal) eighth grade boy

Teacher as Helper: Most students defined a teacher as some sort of helper. The ways that teachers were depicted as helpers were broken up into three categories for the purpose of

analyzing the data: teacher as 1) Socio-emotional helper; 2) Academic task helper, and, 3) Integrated help pattern, which is characterized by almost a fusion of socio-emotional and academic task help provided by the teacher.

Socio-emotional helper: Students often defined the role of teacher, just as one eighth grade boy put it: a person who “*could be a concerned friend.*” This common pattern of teacher as friend, confidante, or counselor was noticed in the ways that students described what a teacher should do, or as in the first quote, what a teacher shouldn’t do.

[A teacher] is supposed to teach you, um, when you have a problem, they’re supposed to help you out, ...they’re not supposed to make fun of you...they just supposed to be there for you, make sure you understand what you’re going through, don’t embarrass you in front of nobody, make you feel comfortable, help you feel welcomed (Cherie) eighth grade girl

A seventh grade boy defines a teacher’s role as:

..teaches you about life, and also teaches you how to, how to go through life, and teaches how to respect other people (Brent)

Academic task helper: The academic task helper is seen in the teacher who helps students acquire fact-based knowledge or helps students to learn to think about their academic work.. As one eighth grade student, Jillian, put it, a teacher is “*someone who exchanges their knowledge with you.*” In these ways teachers were seen as knowledge sources.

“[A teacher is] someone who teaches, makes sure students know.. teach, reinforce, test .. that’s it.” (Kevin) eighth grade boy

A first grade girl, Aliyah, said:

[A teacher] helps you think about things and helps you um...read things ...learn, ...a teacher teaches us how to learn.

Integrated Help: Finally, some students’ comments showed that students were seeing a combination of socio-emotional and academic task help in teachers. Metaphorically, these statements show how students saw the teacher as a shoulder to lean on, as well as a fountain of knowledge. Students represent this type of helping by articulating a complex picture of the ways that teachers help. One eighth grade girl defined a teacher as:

A person who...helps you learn what you need to learn and prepare for your

future...teaches specific assignments and materials that you, that he thinks or she thinks that you need to know in order to graduate school and have a lifestyle in the future...they just talk to you, and make you understand that some things that you do or don't do are right or wrong. (Destiny)

This same student goes on to articulate an example of what teachers do in another school that she attended. She continues to include this duality of teacher help in her depiction:

...many other schools where teachers are at, they don't care, they just teach, and if you don't get the message or the assignment, they will not go back over it, they feel that you should have been paying attention the first time, or that you should automatically understand. (Destiny)

This student has characterized what she considers to be an uncaring teacher. According to her notion of teaching, even an uncaring teacher can deliver a message or an assignment of work..

Gender Differences in Teacher Help Statements: There are some patterns of difference in notions of teaching when we look at teacher help statements based on Social-Emotional, Academic Task Help, and Integrated help patterns. Boys and girls showed the exact same number of statements regarding socio-emotional help. This was the most common type of help statement. Boys and girls showed the same number for Integrated help, which was about half as frequent as Socio-Emotional teacher help nations. What is significant is that girls articulated twice the number of academic task statements as boys.

Summary: Systematic analysis of students' notions of teaching may give us insight into the moral aspects of the classroom. Assessing students' perceptions of teacher help patterns is also important as we continue our look at students. How a teacher helps a child, or as is the case here, how students perceive that they are being helped is critical to understanding the moral aspects of the classroom.

Sister Souljah

In keeping with our purpose to gain a better understanding of how students view the moral aspects of the classroom, this section takes a beginning look at the responses of one set of students regarding one of their teachers.

The Students: Sister Souljah teaches fourth through eighth grade Social Studies at Highlands. She selected three eighth grade students to be interviewed: Marcus, a student in her

all-male class; Jillian, a student in her co-ed class; and Ajmal, a student in her co-ed class, who was transferred from her all-male class a few months prior to his interview. Jillian and Ajmal were selected as co-valedictorians of their graduation class a few months after being interviewed. While Jillian, Marcus, and Ajmal were the primary interviews for analysis, there were also four secondary interviews. Destiny, Cherie, eighth grade girls; Pia, a seventh grade girl; and, Andre, an eighth grader from her all-male class, while selected by other teachers to be interviewed, also made statements about Sister Souljah and her classroom in the interview. There were seven interviews in all, four girls and three boys.

Sister Souljah's Personal Character: Across the interviews, students readily used words like "influential," "caring," and "positive," to describe their teacher. Overall, students were in agreement that she is a teacher who really tries to get to know her students.

..let's say she's like a mother to me and she's always there for me, and she knows when I'm in trouble and she always asks me what's wrong and she cares about me. (Ajmal, an eighth grader)

Many students also suggested that they also know her well.

From my behavior last year, she used to talk to me, and, she talked to my mother and my mother told her to let her know that if I wasn't acting right, call her or tell her, and (Sister Souljah) has done it. ... (I've had her as a teacher for) three years... it becomes easier (to be with her that long) because the longer you had a teacher, the more you get to learn about the teacher and the more they get to learn about you.

(Destiny, eighth grader)

Destiny's statement also shows how Sister Souljah works in partnership with the parents of the students in order to help students improve their conduct. The statement also shows how Sister Souljah utilizes the opportunity to have students for several years. Another eighth grade girl, Cherie, also talks about how Sister Souljah utilizes her familiarity with the student to guide students through the performance of the instructional tasks:

I have been here for a while, she knows what level I'm on, what level I'm not on, what I understand,..It's like she just knows me. ... If I don't understand something, and she'll pull me to the side and say, let me break this down for you a little more so you can understand on your level... she knows what I can do, but she won't let me slack... , but she (says) like, no that's not fair. I got to treat you like other students, even though I know you so well, I still got to treat you equal.(Cherie, eighth grader who's had Sister Souljah for four years)

Both boys and girls seemed to regard Sister Souljah as a teacher that they felt close to as a person. All of the seventh and eighth grade students described her as someone with whom they shared a relationship. Most of them seemed to have known her for at least three years. Because of this they were also in a good position to describe not only her character, but also her teaching style, classroom environment, and her goals as their teacher.

Teaching style, classroom environment, and teacher goals : Students, particularly the male students commonly talked about how “entertaining,” “fun,” and “enjoyable” Sister Souljah is as a teacher. This element of her teaching style seemed to be balanced by the notion that their teacher emphasized the instructional task and the skills involved in becoming a successful, positive student and person.

When asked what he talked to his friends about when he spoke of Sister Souljah’s class, Marcus, a student in her all-male class said:

.like entertaining things, like things that I like enjoy in the work that we have to go over... If she was to give us a free writing assignment, she would tell us to go over it and she would find the humor in it and bring it out. (Marcus)

A female student in her co-ed class talked about how Sister Souljah integrated other enjoyable activities into her curriculum:

...she’ll teach us something - we have her on Thursday, and maybe on Friday we’ll play Jeopardy and she’ll give us grades for the questions.(Jillian)

Students also describe a more arduous side of the class. Students described several of the skills that they commonly focused on in Sister Souljah’s class in order to be what she calls “a scholar”:

..[A scholar would] just listen and take notes... Take a lot of notes! Study up on it, and try to come in and be positive about the answer if you were to ask a question... Just come out with it. Don’t hold back any questions. (Marcus)

Students show in their comments the disposition and the conduct that Sister Souljah asks of her pupils. Marcus goes on to say, that “*she teaches us about ...life and the lesson.*”

These comments taken together begin to characterize the teacher and her classroom. Sister Souljah seems to be able to integrate work ethic, skill-building, and a positive image of the self into her pedagogy.

Making Manner Visible: revisited

A number of the six methods for making manner visible that were described by Fenstermacher (in press) are apparent in the students' comments.

Design and execution of academic task structures. These are tasks that are constructed so that the teachers can analyze and assess the students' work in ways that extend the students' ability to think ...thereby fostering an enhanced range of intellectual virtue (Fenstermacher, in press). One student describes how Sister Souljah emphasizes the importance of asking questions in the structure of the daily lesson:

she'll write what we'll have to do on the board like...bellwork, then, what she plans for us to do and she'll go over the assignment that we have to do and then she'll sit there and ask if we have any questions to ask her and then she'll answer them as best she can...if we were to ask her a question and she didn't know it she would try to read up on it or something like that, then find out...then she would tell us the next class period.. (Marcus)

Based on what the students report, she seems to design lessons that allow for and perhaps are based upon the students asking questions. This is one student's advice on how to do well in her class:

I would tell you to, listen to everything that she says, and ask enough questions on what you don't understand, because she'll answer them for you. Ajmal

Students like Ajmal, also seem to pick up that Sister Souljah expects and is committed to working hard in her after school homework sessions as well. He goes on to say:

She stays after school and she explains to me what I don't understand, and she even helps me in other subjects that I don't understand. When um, say that teacher went home already. Ajmal

This student's take up, along with the previous statements in this section demonstrates the students' understanding of what is important in this classroom. According to their statements, the students interpret the classroom norms as working hard and being positive. Students suggest that because Sister Souljah is so fair and well respected, they have an opportunity to ask questions, they can feel free to laugh a bit at times, and because she is so dedicated to helping them that this is a "nice and enjoyable environment" to be in.

Calling out for conduct of a particular kind. (The teacher says something to the student

that indicates to the student and all others within earshot how the student ought to behave (Fenstermacher, in press). Students talked about the direct way that Sister Souljah communicated her ideas to them. The students reported that unlike other teachers, she didn't "talk too much". As Marcus put it "*She tells it the way it is...she doesn't hold it in she just comes out with it*". The things that students revealed that were important in Sister Souljah's class were things that she frequently called out directly for: "listening," "being positive," "asking questions" and "believing in yourself.."

Private conversations. These occur when a teacher takes a student aside for a chat, ..intended to be corrective...many are highly affirmative and nurturing, (Fenstermacher, in press). Several students highlighted the fact that Sister Souljah would never embarrass a student in the classroom. Instead they describe private conversations where she would focus on their conduct. Marcus describes how Sister Souljah would let you know if you weren't doing so well:

She'll pull you aside after class and let you know what you can do and how to do it...she'll let you take another book home or something.

What is significant about this account is that we are given insight through the students' descriptions of what they get out of these private conversations.

Showcasing specific students. According to Fenstermacher (in press) this is when "the teacher is not modeling virtuous conduct for the students, but placing students in the role of modeling such conduct for their peers." Jillian, one of the eighth grade co-valedictorians presented several examples of when she was showcased in terms of her moral and intellectual conduct. What is most significant in these two examples that Jillian gives is her description of how Sister Souljah's method made her feel. This description shows how she is frequently showcased in terms of her intellect in the classroom:

..like today, we were testing, she (Sister Souljah) read my paragraph from one of my questions in the book out loud...and ...she bragged about me

Jillian also presented a situation where Sister Souljah showcased she and her friends to each other when there was a dispute that had divided the four:

..like me and my friends are standing and arguing, and we had separated, like two and two. And (Sister Souljah) got upset and made us all apologize ...she wanted us all to get along.

Jillian later used that incident as an example of how Sister Souljah wants the best out of

her students. By rectifying the situation in that way the students were able to be examples to each other. This was also recognized as something that made Sister Souljah proud. It also showed the friends that handling the situation in this way presented “the best that they could do.”

Students recognized the use of themselves and their peers as models of the dispositions that Sister Souljah idealized in her classroom. Students seemed to accept these roles and communicated that they appreciated this method used by their teachers.

Summary: Highlands Academy:

The students at Highlands Academy appear quite aware of the attempts on the part of the school and its individual teachers to develop as their school mission posits it: “academic excellence, ethnic awareness, pride, and high-esteem through the combined efforts of parents, community and staff.” There are times on the school level when female students, in particular, articulate experiences of negative differential treatment. However, the overall feeling of the students interviewed is that all of their teachers love and care about the academic success and quality of life of all of the students. In addition, students are highly aware of the individual nuances of their teacher’s manner and moral emphases in their classrooms.

Of particular interest in this data are the gender differences in the ways the students look at the nature of teaching and specifically at the Sister Souljah’s style and instructional approach. Boys talk much more about classroom procedures (e.g., bell work, asking questions, etc.), and while the girls also talk about procedures, they also focus strongly on relationships.

Summary: Across Schools

Notions of Teaching: For the younger students at Highlands Academy and the students at Jordan (grades 3 and 4), the teaching role is quite straightforward. The teacher teaches you stuff—things you don’t know and should know. For Jordan students, the stuff was the various subjects—reading, mathematics, science. Such stuff was also on the minds of the younger students at Highlands, along with certain behaviors, such as stealing, that the school and teachers would not want students to engage in.

However, the older students at Highlands had a sense of the teacher role as including interpersonal relationships that helped students with their personal problems as well as helping

with school work. Helping with life was a strong theme in their interviews, as was the view that teaching is full of challenges.

At neither Jordan nor Highlands were there gender differences in the views of the students toward the role of the teacher role, except that at Highlands, the girls made twice as many statements about teachers as *academic* helpers as boys.

Views of the School: The Highlands Academy upper level students' interviews revealed a richer conception and deeper discussion of the nature of their school than the discussion by Jordan students. This is probably related, at least in part, to the fact that Highlands Academy is a school of choice, and parents and sometimes their children undoubtedly engaged in that selection with some discussion about the nature of the school. Further, the upper level students took their classes from a number of teachers; thus they saw "going to school" differently than the younger students who stayed in the same class all day. Nonetheless, the Jordan students had a strong sense of school that resided in the participants—teachers and principal, and other students—and in the moral vision that was articulated at the school and classroom levels. They were aware of the vision of the school, and described the other adults with language similar to that used in descriptions of their own teacher. The students expressed a sense of the school as a whole, and their descriptions at the school level were similar to what went on in their own classrooms.

School level was more salient to the upper level students in Highlands Academy. They saw their school as elite (although more boys than girls focused on this), the teachers as good teachers, and the students as not dumb. For the early elementary students, school was a physical place with lots of doors and rooms, whereas for the upper level students, school was a place of relationships and academics.

The two cases of Darlene and Sister Souljah provided a more in-depth look at the perceptions of the students around a particular teacher's manner. In these analyses, it was possible to detect the degree to which the students pick up on the particular nuances of a teacher's approaches to teaching both in terms of personal characteristics and her attempts at developing moral dispositions in her students. The descriptions of the teachers focused strongly on her virtues—caring, nice, knowing, helpful, funny—as well as on what the teacher did to teach the virtues.

Conclusions

The following conclusions will be further developed:

- All students in both schools expressed some awareness of the goals for moral development advocated by the school and/or the teachers.
- In these two schools, there was considerable coherence between descriptions of the school and descriptions of the classroom. That is, if one accepts what the students say, the virtues that are stressed at the school level are also emphasized at the classroom level.
- The students picked up on the nuances in an individual teacher's goals for moral development. (e.g., responsibility for Darlene, academic emphasis for Sister Soulja).
- There is some evidence of internalization of concepts and virtues (e.g., responsibility)
- "Teacher role" was viewed differently between the two schools, and from early to later elementary school levels. At Jordan, the teacher role focused almost exclusively on teaching academic subjects. At Highlands, it focused on the academic, the moral and the personal.
- There are significant gender differences that were apparent at both schools. At both schools, for example, all students suggested that there were procedural expectations for them (not talking, following the rules, asking questions, etc.). However, the girls were also cognizant of and articulate about aspects of the moral curriculum and teachers' manner that focus on developing positive relationships with others.

Table 1**STUDENT PARTICIPANTS**

TEACHERS	SCHOOL	GRADE	STUDENTS
Sister Souljah (Soc Studies)	Highlands	8	Ajmal (M)
		8	Jillian (F)
		8	Marcus (M)
Nandi (English)	Highlands	8	Kevin (M)
		8	Andre (M)
Cheryl (English)	Highlands	8	Jamal (M)
		8	Jon (M)
		7	Vonda (F)
		7	Brent (M)
		7	Adria (F)
Doc (Phys Ed)	Highlands	7	Pia (F)
		8	Destiny (F)
Shawn (Computers)	Highlands	8	Cherie (F)
		8	Rachelle (F)
Kai	Highlands	K	Lionel (M)
		K	Chandra (F)
		1	Donya (F)
		1	Aliya (M)
		1	Daniel (M)
Baba X	Highlands	1	Daniella (F)
		1	Rachel (F)
		1	Kristi (F)
Darlene	Jordan	4	Justin (M)
		4	Jeffrey (M)
		4	Alan (M)
		4	Dennis (M)
Margaret	Jordan	4	Bethany (M)
		4	Helena (F)
		4	Alana (F)
Letti	Jordan	3	Andrew (M)
		3	Jake (M)
Hannah	Jordan	4	Jason (M)
		4	
		4	

APPENDIX 1

Student Interview Questions Grades K – 3

- A. **General** - These questions help to focus the attention of the interview on the teacher and the students' perception of teaching.
1. What is a teacher? What does a teacher do?
 2. Do you live at home with your mother or grandmother? How is a teacher different from your mother? Or your grandmother?
 3. How do you know that your teacher cares about you?
 4. How would you describe your teacher?
- B. **Communication about teaching** - These questions delve into specific student perceptions of what happens in the classroom.
1. Pretend that I am a new student. What kind of things would you tell me to do to help me do well in _____ 's class? How are you supposed to behave or "be good" in your classroom?
 2. What makes your teacher happy or proud of you?
- C. **Student feelings about learning**- This section shifts the focus from student's perceptions of teaching to student learning.
1. Do you like to learn different things in school? What kinds of things are you being asked to learn?
 2. Tell me about something interesting or cool that you have learned about in school. Did you talk to people at home about it?
 3. Would you say that you really like to learn? How do you show this? Does your teacher like to learn? How does your teacher show this?
- D. **Achievement**- Now the focus shifts to student assessed teacher perceptions of student learning.
1. How are you doing in school?
 2. What is your teacher doing to help you become a better student?
 3. If your teacher were making an example of someone who was a good student, what kinds of things would she say about him or her?
- E. **Differences and Perceptions**- This section probes the student's feelings of individual treatment by their teachers.
1. Does your teacher treat kids differently? Explain.
 2. How well does your teacher know you?
- F. **School Level Questions** – This final section transitions from individual student/teacher relationships to a broader student/school relationship.
1. What is it like being a student at _____?
 2. How would you describe your school?

Student Interview Questions Grades 4 – 8

- A. General** - These questions help to focus the attention of the interview on the teacher and the students' perception of teaching.
1. What is a teacher? What does a teacher do?
 2. How is a teacher different from your Mom? Or your grandmother? Or someone in your family? How is the job of being a teacher different from other jobs?
 3. Do you feel that your teacher cares about you?
 4. How does your teacher make you feel about yourself? What does she say or do to accomplish this?
- B. Communication about teaching** - These questions delve into specific student perceptions of what happens in the classroom.
1. Do you ever talk to your friends or other people about stuff that happens in class? Do you ever talk to them about stuff that the teacher does/ What kinds of things do you talk about?
 2. If you ever talk about which teachers you don't like and which teachers you like, what kinds of things do you usually say?
 3. Pretend that I am a new student. What kind of things would you tell me to do in _____ 's class in order to be successful? What are your teachers all about? What makes them happy or proud of you? What do teachers want from students?
 4. How would you describe _____ 's teaching?
 5. Do you usually know what you are going to be focussing on in class on any particular day? In thinking about how your classroom is set up, how do you know what your teacher has planned for you to do?
- C. Student feelings about learning**- This section shifts the focus from student's perceptions of teaching to student learning.
1. Do you like to learn different things in school? What kinds of things are you being asked to learn?
 2. Think of something that you learned in school this year that you were excited about or interested in. What excited you? Why were you interested in it?
 3. What did you do about it? Did you talk to people at home about it/
 4. Would you say that you really like to learn? How do you show this? Does your teacher like to learn? How does your teacher show this?
- D. Achievement**- Now the focus shifts to student assessed teacher perceptions of student learning.
1. As a student, how do you think you are doing in school?
 2. What is your teacher doing to help you become a better student?
 3. Aside from grades, how do you think your teacher sees your efforts? How do you know that?
 4. If your teacher were making an example of someone who was a good student, what kinds of things would she highlight about that student?
- E. Differences and Perceptions**- This section probes the student's feelings of individual treatment by their teachers.
1. (>At Mitchell, this question is aimed at the understanding of the different treatment of the special needs students. Does the teacher treat different kids differently? Why? Is it fair?)
(>At Malcolm X, these questions are geared more toward gender differences. How many girls/boys are in your classes? How does that make you feel? Do you think that your teachers want you to behave differently because you are a girl/boy?)
 2. How well does your teacher know you? Do you think that your teachers' perception of you is accurate? Explain. For students who have been with a particular teacher for longer than a year, do you think that it is easier or harder to be a student in that class? Why?)

- F. School Level Questions** – This final section transitions from individual student/teacher relationships to a broader student/school relationship.
1. What is it like being a student at _____?
 2. How would you describe your school?
 3. (>At Malcolm X - You and your parents had a choice when it came to enrollment in the Malcolm X Academy, why do you suppose your parents want you to go to this school? What are your feelings about being enrolled here?

References

- Ball, D., & Wilson, S. (1996). Integrity in teaching: Recognizing the fusion of the moral and intellectual. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33(1), 155-192.
- Chow-Hoy, T. (In Press). An inquiry into school context and the teaching of the virtues. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*.
- Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching: Third edition* (pp. 119-161). New York: Macmillan.
- Fallona, C. (In Press). Making manner visible: A study in observing and interpreting teachers' moral virtues. *Teaching and Teacher Education*.
- Fallona, C. (1998). *Manner in teaching: A study in moral virtue* [Diss], Tucson: University of Arizona.
- Fenstermacher, G. D. (1992). The concepts of method and manner in teaching. In A. Oser & J. Paltry (Eds.), *Effective and reasonable teaching* (pp. 95-108). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fenstermacher, G. D. (In Press). On the concept of manner and its visibility in teaching practice. *Journal of Curriculum Inquiry*.
- Goodlad, J., Soder, R., & Sirotnik, K. (Eds.). (1990). *The moral dimensions of teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hansen, D. T. (1993). The moral importance of teacher's style. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 25(5), 397-421.
- Jackson, P., Boorstrom, R., & Hansen, D. (1993). *The moral life of schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lickona, T. (1997). Educating for character: A comprehensive approach. In A. Molnar (Ed.), *The construction of children's character*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley University Press.

Oser, F. (1986). Moral education and values education: The discourse perspective. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* [3rd Edition] (pp. 917-941). New York: MacMillan.

Power, C., Higgins, A., & Kohlberg, L. (1989). *Lawrence Kohlberg's approach to moral education*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Richardson, V., & Fallona, C. (In Press). Classroom management as method and manner. *Journal of Curriculum Inquiry*.

Sanger, M. (In Press). Inquiring into the moral dimensions of teaching: Talking to teachers and looking at practice. *Journal of Curriculum Inquiry*.

Sockett, H. (1993). *The moral base for teacher professionalism*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Strike, K., & Soltis, J. (1985). *The ethics of teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Tom, A. (1984). *Teaching as a moral craft*. New York: Longman.

Watson, M., Battistich, V., & Solomon, D. (In Press). Enhancing students' social and ethical development in schools: An intervention program and its effects. *International Journal of Educational Research*.

Williams, J. (1999, April). Going public? Afro-Centric pedagogy in the public schools. American Educational Research Association. Montreal.