SEEING WITH THE HEART:
LEARNING AND TEACHING ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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By

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This study is an examination of an emergent curriculum process and the content employed by educators, social service workers, and children who are learning and teaching about homelessness and people who are homeless. Particular, in-depth inquiry was made into the practices of one kindergarten/first grade teacher, her students, their collaboration with a university researcher, and their interactions with a group of young children in a shelter program. The teacher, her students, and the university researcher learned about people who are homeless and homelessness through reading and responding to children's literature, engaging in art, drama, and writing activities, and developing friendships with children of a similar age in a local shelter program.

Prior to the in-depth classroom study, the university researcher interviewed educators involved in service learning projects to aid people who are homeless. During the classroom study, the researcher/participant made numerous visits to the classroom and assisted in a shelter program as a tutor for young children. As a researcher and active participant in the learning process, he worked with children, shared teaching responsibilities with the classroom teacher, assisted social service workers at the shelter, and coordinated activities between the two groups.

Ethnographic research methods were used to collect data. An explanatory narrative format was employed to analyze and share insights. The findings were presented in four phases. These phases traced the processes of emergent curriculum concerned with homelessness and the evolving nature of collaboration between the
participants. The narrative pieces represent multiple perspectives and sources uncovered during the data collection process. Reviews of pertinent literatures included: the ideas of social reconstruction and multicultural theories, the value of service learning for young children, and an ethic of care. Within these areas of study, investigations were made of the ideas of emergent approaches to curriculum, cognitive and moral development in young children, and the whole language and literature-based instructional practices employed by the classroom teacher.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal History, Commitment, and Interest in Homelessness

Homelessness first became apparent to me about 20 years ago when I was beginning my college career. I was waiting at the bus station in Lexington, Kentucky to catch the connecting greyhound bus to Morehead, Kentucky where I was enrolled in my first year of university studies. An older gentleman, who looked somewhat disheveled, seated directly across from me in the terminal waiting area suddenly collapsed and fell from his seat to the floor. Without hesitation, several waiting passengers, including myself, rushed to offer assistance. I had Red Cross training in safety and first-aid and had worked the summer between high school and college as a lifeguard. As I checked for breathing and pulse, another waiting passenger began pounding on the man's chest as if to deliver heart massage. I quickly explained that the man was breathing and had a pulse and was not in need of heart massage.

I propped his head up with my jacket after turning him on his side to maintain a clear air passage. In minutes, it seems, a paramedic team arrived. They, in a nonchalant manner, began to take over and administered care to the man. It was only then that I realized a crowd of people had formed around the scene and I began to piece together what had happened. Several other men had been seated with the man I assisted; however, none of them acknowledged a friendship or gave information to the paramedics. They suddenly seemed to blend in with all the other waiting passengers. Also, the paramedics seemed to be in no hurry, as if the sequence of
events was all too familiar. As I reflect on this experience all these many years later, I wonder if the small group of men were homeless and therefore wary of the paramedics.

Several years later, while waiting for a connecting bus in San Diego to take me back to Los Angeles where I was visiting friends, I noticed a man, perhaps 30 years of age, who seemed extremely agitated. He was pacing the floor, taking long, brisk strides back and forth. He had long, tangled hair and a beard. His clothes appeared to be dirty, worn, and ill-fitting. And, although it was mid-summer, he was wearing several layers of shirts and a jacket. I didn't think his actions or his dress were too strange, until he began yelling at a passing ambulance with its sirens going that was making its way through the street outside. The other waiting passengers and I politely ignore the tortured display. However, I remember thinking the young man seemed to exhibit behavior that was socially inappropriate and this caused a dilemma for us, the other waiting passengers. No one approached the man to offer assistance. No one spoke to him. No one called the bus station attendants or police to deal with this young man's apparent problems. This episode did not make sense to me until several years later when I began teaching in a Catholic elementary school and came into contact with homelessness through my students' service projects.

My first ten years of teaching 1981-1991 coincided with the systematic deinstitutionalization of people with mental illness. Due to social service and mental health budget cuts, these individuals were left to wander about the streets of America with little or no social support. Students in the upper elementary grades of a catholic elementary school were involved in doing a service project to fulfill requirements for receiving the sacrament of confirmation. One project, arranged by the principal, allowed students release time from school at lunch time to go to a local shelter for people who are homeless where they participated in various volunteer activities such
as: sorting clothes, serving meals in the soup kitchen, and assisting in the child care program. The students were anxious at first about participating in these service projects, though they welcomed the idea of leaving school. However, soon they became excited/enthusiastic about their involvement with various staff and clients especially at the shelter. They returned to school telling tales about their activities and their interactions with individuals in the shelter. The positive nature of their experiences was evident in their willingness to continue with the project and their influence in generating enthusiasm for the project among other students. They began to talk about individuals at the shelter much the way one would talk about family members or close friends.

Clearly, the expectation was that students would continue these "good works" throughout life. These service programs are an example of the moral underpinnings of Catholic education. They are a part of all Catholic school students' experiences and have been for a long time. As a small child in Catholic grade school, I remember participating in fund drives, food/clothing collections for the "needy," and various other caring, socially oriented programs. While these activities fostered a level of concern for others, in my day they were seldom meshed closely with instruction, other than the religion curriculum. The focus of many of these programs was outside the local community. The funds, food, and clothing were sent to missionary relief services in other countries, or to rural communities in the Appalachian Regions of Kentucky. To encourage participation, awards such as plaques, holy cards, and devotional figurines, were offered to classes or students who raised the most proceeds for the various causes. These awards were billed as appropriate (fetching) gifts to be presented to parents or relatives for Christmas or Easter. The hallmark of the "good works" program was reserved for more mature students.
I had older siblings in high school who participated in month long, summer service programs in rural areas. They were involved in service clubs at school and fondly remember their experiences during adolescence. Their participation in these endeavors impressed me. Consequently, I received basic training in nursing assistance in eighth grade through the Cincinnati Chapter of the Red Cross and served for two years as a volunteer at a local hospital in Covington, Kentucky. While in high school, I volunteered on weekends to work with children with disabilities through Riverside/Good Council and went to the summer mission in Vanceburg, Kentucky to help build houses. These service experiences have had an impact on my family. Three of my siblings work in a social service profession today and/or do community service projects with their families. The experience of demonstrating care through service to others is now a part of the lives of my nieces and nephews who attend school. The literature on service learning and service projects, reviewed in chapter 2 provides insights about the significance of "good works" for young children and adolescents when the service projects are routine with school curriculum.

The nature of Catholic education lends itself to exploring social issues and promoting "care" oriented programs with children in their community. It was an accepted practice in the school community. Consequently, it was easy to promote activities that established an intimate connection between other curriculum areas in school and addressing social issues. As a practicing teacher, I began to see the value in promoting a closer link among children's thoughts, understanding, and experiences to various social problems. These links were solidified in my classroom when children began to explore social issues in their writing of poetry based on newspaper articles as in the following example.
Homeless

by Jack Shinners, grade 6

If I was homeless, where would I go?

A car?

A box?

I really don't know.

I would be frightened,

as you could see.

I'd like to know,

where would I be?

I wouldn't want to be homeless.

That is true.

From where I stand, the skies aren't blue.

The government isn't listening.

Make them aware.

The homeless need homes

and they need care.

I began teaching in a public junior high school in 1991. My and my students' relationships to the problem of homelessness shifted significantly. In the catholic school, homelessness was a problem that happened to other people. In the public school, the problem was much more direct. I became aware that a large number of students were confronted with tremendous difficulties at home and had very unstable living situations. Some shared their experiences in class discussions or when asked about why projects and assignments were not completed. One spoke about sleeping on the floor in his sister's apartment because of conflicts at home with his parents. Another student left her home to escape an abusive relationship with her parents. A
child, who was living with his great-grandmother, became homeless as a result of the fire, in which his great-grandmother and two cousins died.

The students who were homeless seemed to be isolated, undocumented cases, yet they were members of a growing community of students who struggled with homelessness and its myriad problems. There seemed to be little or no communication between home and school or among school personnel about the experiences of these troubled students. There was little or no overt support for them in the structure of the school community, through the curriculum or guidance services offered at school. In addition, each case seemed to have a unique set of circumstances, but somehow was representative of, related to, resulted from, or led to basic changes in a family structure. Thus, I began to question how to address the needs these students had, how I viewed family structures, and how the social structures within the school setting could change to acknowledge and address the physical and emotional problems of these children that hinder their educational achievement.

**Touching the Homeless World**

Through participation in a class in graduate school, I discovered the Topiary Garden behind the main library in downtown Columbus, Ohio. It is my favorite place to take out-of-town visitors. The design of the topiary is based on George Seurat's painting *Sunday Afternoon on the Grande Jatte*. While you view the topiary, you see a portion of the city towering behind the library. The park is located on the site of what was once the State Deaf School. From the park, it is a short walk to the state capital building, theaters, and the corporate headquarters of many prestigious firms. This peaceful bit of green space is a delightful place to walk or enjoy a quiet lunch. The surrounding neighborhood seems to be a charming place to make a home. I learned of one man's attempt to reside in this city park while I was taking a course in
ecological art. His presence was tolerated by the individuals involved in creating the
topiarv until he attempted to fish for food in the pond they had created. He punctured
the lining of plastic holding the water in the pond. Unfortunately, the pond had to be
drained, the plastic repaired, and then the pond was refilled with water and restocked
with fish. No mention was made of what became of the man.

The topiary park is beautiful. I am grateful to those who have worked to
create it. However, I was puzzled and frustrated by this story when I first heard it. I
didn't understand how anyone could speak with such indifference about another
individual. The man's struggle to find a comfortable place to live and the uncaring
manner his plight received from individuals working to create the topiary are, in part,
the impetus for this investigation. I wanted to know why and how any individual
with obvious physical needs could be met without such a lack of caring.

A Short Distance Across the Center of Town

I did not know how to address the needs of the man who had taken up
residence in the topiary garden. However, because his plight made me aware of the
problem of homelessness, I responded to an advertisement on television asking for
volunteer tutors to work in an after school program at a local shelter. The following is
an account of some of my experiences at the shelter on my first afternoon there and
my subsequent reflection about the difficulties of children who are homeless.

A loud crashing thud against the glass-fronted doors and the voices of excited
children announce the arrival of this evening's after school group. The
kindergartners, first and second graders look chuffed and come through the door as
blustery as the autumn weather which rushes in behind them. It's Tuesday. A damp
October evening. The kind of evening that makes you want to curl-up with a warm
bowl of homemade soup and a good book. The whir of cars in the street outside
signal the end of another work day as the remaining commuters depart from the city
center. This is my first visit to the shelter located on the near west side. Feelings of nervousness and excitement run through my body like it's the first day of school. I'm not sure what my expectations are for a group of young children who are homeless, but the group seems to be like any other group of young children I've met. Their young bodies seem to pulsate with electrical energy. Their tiny faces brighten with broad smiles and enthusiastic greetings are showered on me. I'm taken by surprise as a small, wiry child with strong thin arms reaches to hug me. "What's your name?" she calls out as she squeezes me tight around the middle. "Isaac," I reply looking into her dark brown eyes set in a cherub face edge in long brown shiny ringlets. "I--zi-ck." she responds, making my name sound like music. "What's your name?" I ask. "Nichole," she says as she twists free from my hug, peeling off her jacket in one smooth motion. She skips away to where the other children are putting their coats.

The excited little group, not 21 as expected, is seated on the floor near the door and Cathy begins counting bodies and calling out names. Several children are new this evening, but seem fully integrated into the group. When Cathy calls the name of a child who is not present the group falls silent. The hushed children seem ambivalent to the disappearance of this former group member. No explanations are offered for the child's whereabouts. There is no discussion about why Aaron is no longer here. After role is taken Cathy tells the children that they will not have the program next week because of Halloween. She then divides the children into two groups. The kindergartners are taken into another part of the room with Adam, an Americorp volunteer who has just finished college. I elect to stay with the older children.

Cathy hands out copies of a booklet with simple Halloween sentences and tells the children to create matching illustrations. The children are told to construct pictures
for each sentence and read the sentences to one of the volunteers. I sit with two boys, Randolph and Charles and another volunteer, Mr. Sims, who is a member of a retired people's group visiting the shelter this evening. Randolph reads the sentences with ease and seems already bored with the activity. Feeling bored myself, I ask if I can help him draw the pictures. He readily agrees and pushes the booklet in my direction. I point out the blank facing pages, opposite the text, and suggest that we make-up our own sentences and drawings to go on them. Randolph likes this idea and we begin our project.

Charles is a bit more reluctant to engage with the activity and becomes discouraged. Mr. Sims is seated next to Charles and attempts to redirect his attention to the task. Charles begins again in earnest, but quickly announces to the whole table, "This drawing is ugly." "Great!" I respond. "You were smart to make it ugly since it's a Halloween picture." Charles seems surprised by my response, but apparently sees the sense in what I am saying and continues working on his picture.

I delight in working with Randolph. My nervousness has dissipated and I'm enjoying the lively exchange between us as we seem to build on a natural affinity for one another. Our ideas flow and become more elaborate as we discuss the pointed ears of black cats, huge orange pumpkins with yellow eyes, and airy ghosts that fly through the night making us shiver in mock fear. We share a pencil and crayons back and forth as we take turns drawing and coloring our pictures. The booklet becomes a real collaborative project between us, as much my work as his work. "Are you comin' back next week?" Randolph asks me. "No." I respond in a flat tone of voice as I look over at him. A glum expression appears on his face when he hears my reply. "Cathy said we wouldn't have the program because it's Halloween. But, I'll be back in two weeks." I continue. He smiles. His small warm body folds into mine as he cocks his head and laughs at my Jack-O-Lantern with large round eyes. "That's not the way you're 'sposed to do it," he quips.
Nichole appears at our table. She has been wandering about the room her booklet in hand. She begins playing the dozens with Randolph, ignoring Charles, Mr. Sims, and me. Their stinging, verbal exchanges quickly deteriorate into verbal assaults which I protest and attempt to redirect. Nichole continues her verbal jabs with Randolph. I ask them to stop making inappropriate comments or leave, but she and Randolph ignore me. I finally stand as if to leave, but Randolph tugs on my arm and pulls me back. I tell him I don't like the comments and will not stay if he continues to say inappropriate things. He agrees and turns his focus to our booklet. Nichole is distracted by her sister, Angela, and the two saunter off to another table.

We finish the booklet and Randolph reads the entire thing to me. He stumbles on the word, "celebrate." I tell him the word. I point to various words in isolation and he reads them quickly and easily. I point to the word "celebrate" and he shouts the word while bouncing several times in his seat. He takes the booklet and hoists it above his head. He brings it down to his face kissing the front cover while tapping his feet and rocking his body back and forth in rhythmic electrical motion.

Cathy calls the entire group together for story time. We move en-masse to the other side of the room which is divided by a wall of wood paneling. The kindergarten children are gathered on the floor and we join them. Cathy asks me to read one of the stories. The kindergarten children have each selected a book and placed it in a pile in the center of the group. I step through the group of tiny bodies to the center. I ask the children to vote for their favorite book when I read the title. I hold each book up and read the title. The children vote and vote again until it looks like a majority have settled for *Flossie and the Fox* by Patricia McKissak. I begin reading the book, showing the illustrations as I go along. The book is rather long, but the children seem to enjoy it. Before I have time to ask questions or talk about the story upon finishing the reading, the children call for another book. I read a book by Jon Scieszka titled
The Stinky Cheese Man, which Warren, a small boy, proclaims to be his favorite book. Before I am able to finish the story, time is called because the van has arrived. The children are lined-up and each is given a gummy fruit treat to eat on their way.

Randolph throws his arms about me and we are both being jostled about in the line by his friends. His arms are lost in the jacket that is more than two sizes too big for him. He is clutching the booklet by the tips of his fingers of one hand the fruit treat in the other. He arches his back, straining his neck to peer up into my face. The full weight of his body is pushing against me. "Are you comin' back next week?" he asks. Seeing me smile, he remembers and laughs. I cup his face in my hands, "I'll see you in two weeks." I tell him.

The line moves out the door into the chilly and darkening October night. I watch from the shelter doorway as Randolph and the others leap into the van still energetic, still having fun. I stay for a few minutes to talk with Cathy and the other volunteers. We all sigh feeling a bit exhausted, but content. Eventually, there is no more pleasant small talk to make and I pass through the heavy glass-fronted door on to the broad avenue leading into downtown. I wonder, how many bright, energetic young children like Randolph will be on the streets of Columbus tonight through no fault of their own?

The two weeks pass by quickly and I find myself feeling anxious to visit the shelter again. There are significant changes when I return. I learn through interviewing Dr. Mauge, the director of the shelter programs, that Cathy is no longer with the tutoring project after only five weeks. The new coordinator, Olivia, is pulling materials together and greeting volunteers when I arrive. Adam is already there helping Olivia. The adults from the retirement group are not returning tonight. These are significant changes for me to absorb as an adult, but my stunned, lack of understanding is not addressed, no one seems concerned about the changes or how
the children will be affected by them. There isn't time or energy to address these concerns because the children are due to arrive soon.

Randolph does not return. I learn of a family that has been turned out of the program because the parents abused the rules. A caseworker discovered alcohol in the family's apartment during an unscheduled visit. Like Aaron, Randolph has disappeared. No one seems to know why he is gone or where he is now. Like all the other life changes, and seemingly ever changing events in the lives of the children at the center, this change is blithely accepted. No explanation or information is offered about Randolph. He is gone. I have a terrible sinking feeling in my gut. I think of the bright, engaging little boy full of energy and vitality. The program at the shelter helps families who have been homeless to reestablish a stable life for themselves. Is Randolph's family homeless once again? Will he be counted among the hundreds of thousands of people who are homeless in our nation tonight?

I had wanted to work with Randolph, to continue our friendship. I felt disappointed that he was not at the shelter. I recalled two weeks ago, on my first night, how frightening it was, even as an adult, to mingle with so many new faces, so many new stories. Randolph had provided some security for me. He was a friend to me as well as helping me to feel I had a purpose for coming to the tutoring program. I had a feeling of loss that evening. I wanted to know what had happened to him. What is Randolph's story? I have tried to imagine the terrible upheaval Randolph might experience each time his life has dissolved into the chaos of homelessness. How many times has his life been thrown into chaos by circumstances which he has not created? Is there a connection between the loss of routine he has experienced and his potential for years to come? Perhaps his "story," his understanding of life itself is destroyed through these disruptions in his life.
I reflected on my experience with Randolph and experiences of tutoring other children at the shelter, volunteering over a period of time and constantly meeting new children. I began to understand how “The stories we hear and the stories we tell shape the meaning and texture of our lives at every stage and juncture” (Witherell and Noddings, 1992, p. 1). I began to see a connection between my own upbringing in an environment that emphasized service to others, my knowledge of children’s literature, my studies of young children and their moral and cognitive development, the influence of culture on our social and political actions. These experiences and areas of learning have informed my concerns for people who are homeless. I have a different understanding of homelessness because of my work with children and hearing their stories as they try to live through the experience of being homeless. It has been a long journey for me. But, I have begun to understand through this smattering of exposure that is probably not unlike what many people experience as our lives touch, if even briefly, the lives of children and families who are homeless.

The Scope of Homelessness in the USA

My experiences and knowledge about individuals who are homeless has increased. I have begun to recognize the various "groups" of people and/or individuals who are homeless as they exhibit specific characteristics, patterns of behavior, and have different levels of need/want for intervention from other members of society. Marin (1995) has developed a number of categories which seem to provide a more complete representation of "the homeless."

- Veterans, mainly from the war in Vietnam. In many American cities, vets make up close to 50 percent of all homeless males.
- The mentally ill. In some parts of the country, roughly a quarter of the homeless would, a couple of decades ago, have been institutionalized.
• The physically disabled or chronically ill, who do not receive any benefits or whose benefits do not enable them to afford permanent shelter.

• The elderly on fixed incomes whose funds are no longer sufficient for their needs.

• Men, women and whole families pauperized by the loss of a job.

• Single parents, usually women, without the resources or skills to establish new lives.

• Runaway children, many of whom have been abused.

• Alcoholics and those in trouble with drugs (whose troubles often begin with one of the other conditions listed here).

• Immigrants, both legal and illegal, who often are not counted among the homeless because they constitute a "problem" in their own right.

• Traditional tramps, hobos, and transients, who have taken to the road or the streets for a variety of reasons and who prefer to be there.

A study of the list reveals two distinct groups. There are individuals who have become homeless as a result of social (e.g., veterans, people with physical and mental illness, and victims of domestic violence) and economic (e.g., corporate downsizing) calamities. These individuals would like nothing better than to rejoin their neighborhoods, to overcome the lack of security in their work, and to regain the support of their families and friends. They were living ordinary lives which were suddenly disrupted by a catastrophic event which began a sequence of downward spirals and eventually led to homelessness. The second group is composed of individuals who are homeless through choice. They have rejected the various patterns and lifestyles of many American citizens and elect to live on the margin of society.

It may seem astounding, but no one seems to know just how many people in America are homeless. Marin (1995) suggests that the number of people who are
homeless is perhaps as many as 3 million, but no less that 350,000. Hoffbauer and Prenn (1996) estimate that between 68,000 and 100,000 are children. “But poor children suffer most, and their numbers are growing - 841,000 in 1990 alone. They are the small, faceless victims who have no one to speak and fight for them” (Edelman, 1992, p. 83). What is imperative for grappling with the ambiguity in numbers of people and the complex circumstances which result in homelessness, is understanding the meaninglessness of the term "homeless." In its most simplistic form, it represents the lack of adequate housing. In its most complex form, it encompasses the manifold disenfranchisement from salient social and economic systems which define life in America.

Sullivan (1994) claims that society has an increased awareness of homelessness, yet little is known about how children who are homeless feel about their circumstances. The phenomenon of homelessness is not new, yet awareness of its magnitude has grown in recent years because of the attention people who are homeless and homelessness receive in the media. Sullivan (1994) illustrated how homelessness created a disruption in the everyday life patterns of people and led to deficits in basic needs. Violence, isolation, breakdown of families, and chronic illness result because of and/or in turn, cause homelessness. Children who are homeless are found to exhibit poor school attendance, poor academic performance, and lack a significant support group (Gibel, 1992; Sullivan, 1994). Gibel (1992) discovered that homeless children may have poor attendance in school and do poorly academically because other children do not wish to associate with them. Ironically, Sullivan (1994) found that children did not see themselves as homeless because they felt that the shelter was their home. Their focus was meeting the most basic needs: food, shelter, money, and safety (Sullivan, 1994). Homelessness for the children was not the experience of lacking a home. The children experienced homelessness as
a lack of stable social structures. They expressed feelings which illustrated they lacked a sense of connection to friends, school, and community. These deficits caused further disruptions to learning and social development and had a tremendous impact on their lives (Sullivan, 1994).

Johnson (1992) examined regular school programs and discovered that they are able to meet the educational and social needs of children who are homeless and that regular school programs with non-homeless peers provide opportunities for successful and meaningful peer interactions. However, Gibel (1992) found that research on attitudes toward children who are perceived to be different suggests that homeless children have difficulties socializing with their peers in the school setting because of their peers' perceptions about people who are homeless. Children who were housed tended to develop positive attitudes related to peers based on a child's race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Attitudes toward Black non-poor and poor peers were more negative than the attitudes participants had toward White peers. The researchers also found no significant difference between the participants' attitudes toward homeless peers whether they were Black or White (Gibel, 1992).

According to Lively (1992), educational programs must recognize that two groups of homeless children are in need of services. Programs must be designed to work with homeless children who are of school age and reside with their parents or guardians and homeless children who are emancipated youths. Most of the children I was aware of while teaching in a public junior high school were emancipated youths. They had chosen to leave their families or had been forced out of the home by other family members.

I have found no information about how children who are homeless and their housed peers view children's literature about homelessness or people who are homeless, or how literature-based and whole language approaches to teaching and
learning about homelessness lead to social action or changes in society. Therefore, this explanatory narrative case study will provide evidence that learning and teaching about homelessness is valuable, exciting, and appropriate for young children. I will examine how educators and children change their understanding of homelessness through reading literature and participating in discussions, art, drama, and writing activities based on the literature. In addition, the influence of collaboration on the process of planning and implementing curriculum about homelessness will be discussed. Formal and informal ethnographic interviews and observations will be used to gather data. These data will be retold and interpreted to illustrate changes in understanding which occurred during the study. Ultimately, these changes may contribute to the reconstruction of attitudes and behaviors in society toward people who are homeless.

Rationale for My Involvement in the Study

Homelessness is the result of many complex social, political, and natural phenomena. It has an impact on how teachers and students engage with each other in a classroom setting. "According to the US Department of Education, there are 220,000 school aged homeless children in the nation; 30% of these children do not attend school" (Holland, Marsiglia, & Flavio, 1993, p. 3). As previously stated, we don't know the exact number of people who are homeless. However, estimates from the National Coalition for the Homeless indicate that these statistics should be doubled in order to get a more accurate picture of the actual number of people (Holland, Marsiglia, & Flavio, 1993). The available estimates on the number of children who are homeless "range from 68,000 to half a million" according to Linehan (1992, p. 62). People who are homeless struggle to survive. They experience tremendous, physical, emotional, and mental suffering, sometimes a cause of their homelessness, sometimes as a result, and often as a perpetuator of their condition.
The process of sensitizing teachers and students to people who are homeless and the issue of homelessness has four general components according to a resource tool developed by the Pennsylvania State Department of Education. These elements are: understanding the causes and effects of homelessness; understanding what it is like to be homeless; attempting to dispel the dangerous myths about homelessness; and examining how the government, local communities, and individuals respond to the issue of homelessness and people who are homeless (Pennsylvania State Department of Education, 1990). The curriculum models compiled for this resource, contain or result in service projects or community action "because it sensitizes and motivates teachers and children to get involved in accepting and assisting their homeless peers" (Pennsylvania State Department of Education, 1990, pp. 12-13).

The development of children's self-esteem depends upon how they view themselves and how they are seen by others. It is critical, then, that the school administrators and staff promote respect for all students and create a safe, friendly environment for them. Klein, Bittel, & Molnar (1993) conclude in their study of early childhood programs addressing the needs of children who are homeless that "Perhaps the most critical component, however, is the sensitivity, compassion, and understanding that outstanding early childhood teachers bring to the task of creating a developmentally responsive environment for these highly stressed and at-risk children" (p. 31). According to the Pennsylvania State Department of Education (1990), we have embraced narrowly-defined icons of families and settings through electronic media and print. It is not surprising that the typical image drawn by a child of a person who is homeless is a destitute alcoholic. This erroneous assumption is refuted by Hoffbauer & Prenn (1996) who remind us that the growing ranks of people who are homeless are families, children, and emancipated youths.
Goins & Cesarone's (1993) study of this topic illustrates that teachers are not well-informed about their students who are homeless and/or the child's experiences of homelessness and consequently are unable to bridge the chasm that separates them in the process of learning about or acting on the phenomenon of homelessness (pp. 7-8). Additionally, the lack of understanding and experience teachers have of homelessness and people who are homeless may undermine their effectiveness as teachers. Students are locked out of the educational system when their experiences are not understood or appreciated in the school community. "Teaching young people about important social issues, such as homelessness dispels dangerous myths, teaches social responsibility, and moves students to take action" (Pennsylvania State Dept. of education, Harrisburg. Division of student services, 1990, p. 1).

There are differing views with regards to what actions should be taken, who "the homeless" are, and how they have come to be in their predicament (Finsterbauch & McKenna, 1994; Kozol, 1994; Magnet, 1994). Magnet (1994) cites public policy to curb long-term institutionalization of individuals with mental illness and failed social programs to address their immediate needs as causes which have led to the current trends in homelessness. In addition, the network of shelters, originally designed as a temporary measure of assistance, have become a way of life for those who are unwilling or unable to work (Magnet, 1994). By contrast, Kozol (1994) identifies the lack of affordable housing, increases in rents, and the loss of higher paying industrial employment as the underlying causes of homelessness. Kozol's writings with regards to "the homeless" have drawn considerable attention to their plight. His numerous books and articles express a genuine need for changes in society in order to alleviate the sufferings of people who are homeless. These changes will only come about through re-educating ourselves and altering social policies which discriminate against others.
Through applying the ideas of social reconstruction, teachers and students examine and change their thinking about democracy, the distribution of wealth in our country and world, and social structures in society (Apple, 1986; Banks & Banks, 1993; Grant & Sleeter, 1989; Stuhr, 1995). Students and teachers engage in curricular activities in order to promote cooperation among people, develop/rethink ideas, and begin to understand the nature of power and oppression. Through training and education, children learn to act with equality, liberty, and justice (Banks & McGee Banks, 1989).

The ability children have to grapple with social issues of a difficult nature is thought to hinge on students' levels of cognitive and moral development. However, the exact nature of children's abilities to think complexly and act morally is the subject of some debate (Galbraith & Jones, 1976; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988). Young children have well established thoughts, opinions, and experiences which indicate they possess some innate predisposition of concern for others (Kohn, 1991). A nurturing environment and the creation of personal attachments through family and school experiences (such as reading and responding to literature) leads to concern for others (Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz, 1992).

Reading and responding to literature for children in this study is seen as a vehicle for encouraging understanding of information and developing a sense of enjoyment in the literary arts (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 24-25). However, many teachers focus on a narrow use of literature as a supplement to the reading curriculum (Applebee, 1989, p. 232). This may create a reluctance on the part of some teachers to incorporate literature that has the potential to disturb or disrupt "cozy rosy world of childhood" (Krauthammer, 1995 p. 80).

In addition, Marín (1995) asserts that many individuals think, consciously or unconsciously, of homelessness as a just retribution for disobedience and evil.
Regardless of how we trace these complex historical, social, and philosophical issues to their roots, we must examine our awareness of, fear of, regard for, and response to individuals who are homeless. Consequently, these questions remain. Do we have a social and moral responsibility to individuals in our society who are homeless? If so, what are our social and moral responsibilities to individuals in our society who, for whatever reason, live without adequate housing? How does a teacher address this complex and perplexing social issue with children?

In this study, specifically through my work with a classroom teacher and her students, I have sought to understand 1) How do educators’ understanding of homelessness evolve as a result of their collaborative interactions? 2) How do a teacher and a researcher create a curriculum and/or allow it to emerge in a classroom to instruct students about homelessness? 3) What are the salient aspects (and resulting interactions) of that curriculum in her whole language, literature-based classroom for K - 1 students? 4) How do young children’s interests in, and knowledge about, homelessness and people who are homeless develop through use of a whole language, literature-based approach? 5) Do children's interests in, and knowledge about homelessness and people who are homeless lead to social action and changes in understanding?

In order to address these questions, I have drawn from information in three specific areas of knowledge and research: a) Social Reconstruction and Multicultural Theories, b) Service Learning, and c) An Ethic of Care. These areas have been examined with regard to the nature of collaborative relationships between teachers and researchers, whole-language and literature-based curriculum approaches to learning employed by teachers, and the nature of cognitive and moral development/learning in young children. The process of education is a social intervention which creates awareness of others, and therefore, transforms society. Teachers and researchers
learn to reconceptualize and redefine their roles as educators through their collaborative work in classrooms. Through participation in service learning projects, children are able to examine their notions of society, the human condition, and social justice as well as improve their ability to think critically. A whole-language, literature-based approach using Children's literature, process drama, and children's responses to literature form the basis of the curriculum and are the foundation of the classroom interactions I observed. But ultimately, “The first job of the schools is to care for our children. We should educate all our children not only for competence but also for caring. Our aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people” (Noddings, 1992, p. xiv).

The following definitions and terms will help the reader understand concepts about, and categories related to, people who are homeless and homelessness.

Key Terms and Definitions

Homeless - people or families living without a house or apartment. People become homeless because of a variety of reasons: natural disaster, unemployment, eviction, an accident, health problems, or divorce.

Shelter - a place where homeless people may stay for a short period of time. They may sleep, eat, and wash there. Some shelters, with the help of community resources, may offer additional services.

Transitional Housing - while people are staying in homeless shelters, they can sometimes be recommended to live in "transitional" housing, usually one-family apartments. They can stay there for 3 to 24 months. Most transitional housing programs offer support services which help people prepare to live on their own in decent, affordable housing.

(Project Act: Action for Children and Youth in Transition, Cleveland Public Schools Adult and Continuing Education, p. 8)
The Education for Homeless Children and Youth program was enacted in 1987 as Title VII, Subtitle B of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. The program was amended by the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act Amendments of 1990, and more recently under the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994.

According to the McKinney Act, Section 103(a), a person who is homeless is:

1. an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and

2. an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is

   A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);

   B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized or

   C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

(Project Act: Action for Children and Youth in Transition, Cleveland Public Schools Adult and Continuing Education, p. 1)
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Rationale for Literature Reviewed

Teaching and learning about homelessness and people who are homeless intersects with many complex issues and differing theories. Central to the focus I have taken in this study is how a teacher structured her educational setting and learning experiences for young children in order to help them understand the causes of homelessness and avenues they might try in order to alleviate the suffering of people who are homeless. Three major areas of research literature, Social Reconstruction and Multicultural Education, Service Learning, and An Ethic of Care, are the foundation of literatures which inform my inquiry process and act as a scaffold for my understanding of collaboration and instruction with regard to this issue. I examined ideas of curriculum intervention and implementation of curriculum changes based on the theories of social reconstruction and multicultural education. This was approached through investigating the practice of service learning and collaboration among teachers and researchers. When teachers and students have the opportunity to integrate content area learning with the goals of multicultural education and social reconstruction they share in the process of curriculum and research development. In addition, a salient feature of conducting service learning projects is the development of an ethic of care. I concentrated on how children establish and maintain caring relationships among themselves, with their teachers, and in the broader community.
Through the course of my project, I became aware of how theories of cognitive and moral development in young children, within a framework of an Ethic of Care and curricular approaches to learning, such as, a whole-language, literature-based and/or a project approach to learning have an impact on the decisions a teacher makes concerning curriculum regarding homelessness. In turn, the curriculum choices a teacher makes with regard to the exploration of homelessness and the implementation of learning activities about people who are homeless influence what/how children learn about this topic. Therefore, I have reviewed all of these literatures. These reviews are preceded by a discussion of two differing political and social views of homelessness. It is imperative that people understand the conflicting views underlying the social and political beliefs about homelessness and people who are homeless because these beliefs affect our motivation or lack of motivation to respond to people who are homeless.

Homelessness

In *Freedom and Its Discontents*, Peter Marin (1995) examines historical, social, and philosophical foundations for society's constructs about who "the homeless" are, and what should be done about "them." He believes that ideas and feelings about people who are homeless, for many of us, are closely linked to our social and cultural myths about work, individualism, and the notions we have about success and failure. These ideas are embedded in our religious attitudes and tenets about rewarding good and punishing evil.

As stated previously, no one knows exactly how many people are living without adequate housing. Minimal counts estimate that there are nearly 250,000 people who are homeless. A more inclusive count is between 3 and 4 million (Finsterbauch & McKenna, 1994). The problem with making any accurate count of people who are homeless is deciding who is technically homeless. But, an even more
divisive matter when considering the plight of individuals in our society without adequate housing is: Why? How did homelessness develop and become a seemingly overwhelming problem in our society.

Opposing perspectives were examined in Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Social Issues by Finsterbusch and McKenna (1994). Individuals with opposing political views have continued to point fingers at each other. Some blame failures in our social and economic systems. Others contend that government interventions interfere with the market economy as the root of the current crisis of homelessness. Regardless of these current debates, there have been individuals who, for various reasons, have not been able to gain and sustain adequate employment, and consequently, housing. Magnet (1994) “argues that homelessness has become a national problem because of public shelter building and other forms of state-run charity” (Finsterbusch & McKenna, 1994, p. 189). Kozol (1994) “contends that the homeless mostly consist not of weird social misfits but of individuals and families who are too poor to afford private housing” (Finsterbusch & McKenna, 1994, p. 189).

Magnet (1994) insists that the estimated number of 3 to 4 million homeless people is grossly over exaggerated. These numbers, he contends are completely false and based solely on the whim of advocates for individuals he considers to be suffering from “social pathology and mental disorder(s)” (Finsterbusch & McKenna, 1994, p. 192). He believes, rather than trying to get a fix on the exact number, advocates need to focus on how these individuals became homeless. When considering families who are homeless, Magnet (1994) asserts that the majority of these families are young, single mothers, the illegitimate daughters of single mothers. Males, by contrast, are from minority populations, have criminal records, and abuse drugs and alcohol.
Magnet (1994) cites studies by the National Institute of Mental Health to support his claims regarding the social and mental dysfunction of people who are homeless. Failed attempts to reform overcrowded, state-run hospitals for individuals with mental disabilities has led to their present plight. He also contends that the shelter industry which was created to alleviate the distress of those suffering from homelessness has, in fact, added to their problems through providing an easy way out of self-reliance through employment. He suggests closing public shelters or opening them under private management to handle cases of homelessness due to fire or natural disaster, placing socially and mentally disabled individuals in treatment facilities, and encouraging the general citizenry to act with "tough love" attitudes where the poor and downtrodden are concerned. Some believe the "tough love" attitude has caused the problems we have today (Kozol, 1994; Marin, 1995).

Kozol (1994) writes, "The chilling fact, from any point of view, is that small children have become the fastest-growing sector of the homeless" (Finsterbusch & McKenna, 1994, p. 197). Children account for at least one-fourth of the homeless population of 3 to 4 million which is the estimate accepted by the Coalition for the Homeless. Regardless of the actual number of people who are homeless, their age, or social and mental stability, any number is unacceptable according to Kozol (1994). While legislators and others debate the causes that may lead to homelessness for some individuals, Kozol (1994) asserts, the overwhelming cause is a lack of housing. Employment and job skills are not safe-guards against becoming homeless. Decline of some high-paying industry positions through down-sizing and the rise of low-paying, service employment has made it difficult, if not impossible, for people to find and sustain affordable housing. Rent prices have skyrocketed and start-ups of federally subsidized housing have dropped. Kozol (1994) contends that the level of
homelessness we see in our communities at present is a result of shifts in political and social policies and has only begun to surface.

Sympathy for victims of natural disasters, such as fires and floods, is easy to muster among the general population. Individuals who become homeless through social, political, and economic circumstances are often viewed as less deserving of our good will and generosity. Regardless of how an individual becomes homeless or which view one accepts as a cause of homelessness, a person who is homeless must endure the scorn of society and the stigma of being homeless even from young children. The negative attitudes of children toward individuals who are homeless were explored by Linchan (1992). These negative attitudes are a detriment to all of us. “When millions of Americans are homeless and hungry, those who are comfortable pay a social and moral price. The cost of enjoying plenty while others starve challenges our ability to see ourselves as good people living in a just society” (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997, p. 13). Despite these negative attitudes, Apple (1986) asserts that through interaction with information in a social setting, young children can be “re-educated” and their attitudes changed.

Social Reconstruction and Multicultural Theory

According to the ideas of Apple (1986) students engage in the reconstruction of society through their interaction with information in a social setting regardless of its form. "All forms of education act as social intervention and the implementation of these forms reconstructs society in various ways" (Stuhr, 1994, p. 171). Through their participation in reading and discussion of literature about homelessness and people who are homeless, teachers and students are encouraged to implement changes in their lives and in the lives of people who are homeless.
Just doing the right and decent thing can set the pace for others to follow in all kinds of settings. America is in urgent need of a band of moral guerrillas who simply decide to do what appears to be right heedless of the immediate consequences (Edelman, 1992, p. 68).

Changing one's perspective and creating awareness of disenfranchised individuals is not new in a school setting. "The initial goal of multicultural education was to improve educational achievement for ethnic students who were being disenfranchised by the educational system" (Banks & Banks, 1993). Students who are homeless suffer lower achievement and have a greater difficulty reaping the benefits of the educational system due to their living situations (Walsh, 1990). School achievement and participation in the academic setting may be improved through being re-enfranchised.

Teachers and students engage in multicultural education which "teaches students how to use social action skills to participate in shaping and controlling their destinies" (Grant & Sleeter, 1989, p. 54). Through their investigation of homelessness and reading literature about people who are homeless, students and teachers will exercise control over the direction of their curriculum of studies. The exchange of ideas among participants and their interaction with literature may act as a catalyst for change in their perceptions toward people who are homeless and possibly advance their abilities to think critically about homelessness as a type of oppression, the causes of homelessness, the effects on individuals, and the effects on society.

Homelessness is a type of oppression. Freire's (1995) examination of the imbalance of power (the oppression) that exists between peasant and elite peoples in Brazil led him to the theory of solidarism. Those in solidarity with one another recognize and celebrate their interdependence and common interests for society. These same dynamics are at work in changing our understanding about homelessness.
The conscious awakening and engagement with ideas that promote understanding oneself and others (people who are homeless) leads to social action. Freire (1995) encourages individuals to engage in the process of self-examination and “conscientization” in order to overcome the oppression that exists in the world. As long as there is a lack of conscious thought and self-reflection, there is an imbalance of power; there is oppression. People who are homeless are oppressed individuals. They have essentially been made into objects and/or their existence is ignored. The oppression of homelessness can only be overcome by people when they join in public dialogue (which creates conscious awareness) and self-examination.

The process of engaging children in activities which require critical thinking allows them to enter the public discourse about homelessness. Critical thinking requires the individual to engage in the thought-filled reflection of one’s ideas and experiences. “Thinking is an emancipatory process” (Dillard, 1994). Reflection upon one’s thinking and one’s experiences leads to the transformation of one’s life. Stuhr (1995) reminds us of the significance for developing analytical and critical thinking abilities with students. In her interpretation of the goals of social reconstructionist multiculturalism for children, as outlined by Grant and Sleeter (1989), she reiterates the necessity for students to be educated to

become analytical and critical thinkers capable of examining their life circumstances and the social stratifications that keep them and their group from fully enjoying the social and financial rewards of this country. Or, if they are members of dominant groups, it helps them become critical thinkers who are capable of examining why their group exclusively enjoys the social and financial rewards of the nation. This approach teaches students how to use social action skills to participate in shaping and controlling their destiny. (p. 194)
Thus, teachers and students are able to realize their potential as central to attaining a more socially and economically balanced society. A goal of multicultural and social reconstructionist education is to reform society to create a more equitable distribution of power and resources in the United States and improve academic achievement for all students. The transformation of society and teaching practices happens through the process of dialogue which leads to, and creates more social action, the hallmark of educational practice.

Four practices are the focus of a multicultural and social reconstructionist approach. (1) democracy must be actively practiced in schools... (2) students learn how to analyze their own circumstances... (3) students learn social action skills to increase their chances for success with the first two recommended practices... (4) coalescing, or getting the poor, people of color, and White women to work together for the common good of society. The coalescing of groups across the lines of race, class, gender, and exceptionality is important because it can energize and strengthen the fight against oppression. (Grant & Sleeter, 1989, p. 57)

Multicultural and social reconstructionist education is also "a process whose goals will never be fully realized. Educational equality, like liberty and justice, are ideals toward which human beings work but never fully attain" (Banks & McGee Banks, 1989, p. 3). The elimination of discrimination and prejudice is perhaps impossible in some cultural and social groups. Before discrimination and prejudice are eliminated in an area of society, they have been propagated in another. Yet, the human qualities of discrimination and prejudice can be overcome through constant vigilance and candid training of students to increase their awareness of, and support for their struggles against these socially divisive human foibles (Banks & McGee Banks, 1989).
Stuhr's (1995) explanation of social reconstructivist theory encourages a curriculum that fosters rethinking and reexamining democratic ideas.

In order for students to understand that in a democratic society power resides in the people and is dependent on cooperative political initiative and action, they must be given the opportunity to practice the concept. All subjects in schools, including art, should be taught to fulfill this discovery of democratic ideals (p. 216).

Teachers and students engaged in studies about homelessness and people who are homeless can begin to question the existence of social privilege and/or homelessness as a structure of society rather than believing it is the result of personal inadequacies (Fiske, 1991). However, these explorations must consider whether studies of homelessness are cognitively appropriate for, and socially/emotionally relevant to young children. Many educators have addressed the relevance of social issues like homelessness within the context of service learning projects. Service learning projects provide opportunities for children to develop critical thinking skills and connect their classroom learning experiences with their communities.

Service Learning

Service programs exist at all levels in education. A Queens College service program focused on homelessness. The college students mentored children who were homeless through the Big Buddy project directed by Salz & Trubowitz in 1992. “Each weekend for an entire year, the pairs spent a full day together, exploring educational, cultural, and recreational attractions” (LeSourd, 1997, p. 160-61).

The summer (1997) volume of Theory Into Practice was devoted to recent research in the area of service learning and its impact on social and academic achievement in school age children. Unfortunately, the articles did not address service learning projects for the very young. Although limited in scope, young
children participate in service learning projects too. An example of these kinds of projects will be discussed later in this chapter in connection with literature-based instruction.

Service learning is not a new concept in the classrooms of America. At the turn of this century, educators were exploring the impact of community based learning as a way of connecting classroom learning with the “real” world. Teachers were encouraged to educate children about civic and social issues through participation in service activities in their communities. John Dewey is perhaps the most well known of the educators who recommended immersing children in service to their communities. Social, civic, and environmental projects were seen as a vehicle for creating an informed and involved American citizenry. Due to the concrete nature of the service learning process, what children learned in school and experienced in their communities would have continuity, helping them internalize their lessons. Projects which were practical in nature and action oriented benefited students the most (Hepburn, 1997).

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in service learning. Educators began to explore the links between social and political awareness/action and the development of analytic and critical thinking skills in children. In addition to the scholastic benefits that students reap, Hepburn (1997) credits this renewed interest in service learning to the many changes in family and social structures during the last twenty years. Service projects help us rejoin society. They offer us an opportunity to stem the tide of disinterest in community and they end our personal isolation. Dewey and his contemporaries focused on the value of the service learning experience as a means to promote democratic principles. “Service learning in civic education brings together experiences of both rights and responsibilities, a connection that is essential to democratic communities” (Hepburn, 1997, p. 141). The goals of service learning

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are not simply to school children in social or moral virtues, but to enlighten them regarding the preservation of democracy.

Carver (1997) addresses the underlying theory connected to the practice of service learning and the resulting outcomes for student participants in service projects. She explores how participation in service learning leads to academic and/or social changes in three areas for students. First, students gain a greater sense of themselves as individuals who affect change in society. Second, they discover a sense of belonging through their participation in community based learning. Finally, they develop academic and social competence through their service learning experiences. Through service learning, students begin to view themselves as valued members of the educational community. They are able to co-construct the knowledge about their communities through concrete experience rather than be the recipients of that knowledge. Active participation in service learning provided students real opportunities to draw upon their experiences and scaffold their connections to their future learning experiences. Carver (1997) concludes that the most successful service learning programs balance the student’s need for belonging, her/his development of social and academic competence, and her/his progress of becoming a social and/or political change agent. The interplay of these three elements is essential for selecting and developing service learning programs in schools. Specific programs will be “more beneficial than others for particular students at particular stages in their lives” (p. 149).

According to Battistoni (1997) participation in service learning projects improves and enhances teaching and learning in all areas of the school curriculum regardless if whether the service learning enterprise is philanthropic or civic in nature. Battistoni (1997) examination of the nature of civic programs focused on establishing a sense of “enlightened self-interest” rather than the development of an altruistic
individual (p. 151). In civic service projects, students learn that rights and responsibilities are intermingled and that preservation of self is linked to the exercise of mutual responsibility. The ultimate goal of any civic service learning project is having students grasp the concept of community in all its complexity. “At the very least, service can promote the integration of young people with adults from different age groups and walks of life” (Battistoni, 1997, p. 151).

Battistoni (1997) referred to Alexis de Tocqueville’s work in 1945 to explain the value of establishing service learning projects for young children. de Tocqueville discovered how participation in community projects helped students understand our democratic system and its institutions. Through participation in civic service learning projects, children learned how to become citizens. According to Battistoni (1997), de Tocqueville declared that we are all dependent on one another for assistance and that we must learn to offer our help to others. In addition, participation in service learning allows people to decrease their feelings of powerlessness. They end their social isolation because participation in programs helps people to join others in achieving a common goal and encourages them to find others who are willing to become volunteers as well.

As both students and volunteers, the children are taught to use their ability to reflect on their experiences in a community setting through classroom discussions, school presentations, and other activities. In addition to teaching children about their role and responsibilities as members of a democracy, service learning programs should teach students to speak and write persuasively along with improving their ability to listen as others tell their stories or share their dilemmas (Battistoni, 1997). “When visiting an elderly person, doing an oral history, or tutoring another student, young people learn, in a tangible way, the art of listening” (Battistoni, 1997, p. 153).
A critical component of any service learning project is the use of imagination. When students use their imaginations, they begin to find creative solutions to social ills. Children who have a well developed sense of imagination are capable of seeing an experience from the perspective of another. Consequently, their imaginations enable them to conceive new possibilities, overcome past failures, and find solutions to problems despite tremendously difficult odds. Battistoni (1997) believes “Prejudice and bigotry may simply be the absence of imagination ( p. 153). Perhaps the most difficult aspect of doing a service learning project is establishing a program which is appropriate for the children involved. Too often, teachers may simply discuss the possibilities rather than providing students with and opportunity to actually create change through their service. In addition, when students are part of the planning and organization processes, they have the opportunity to practice their skills as decision makers in the political arena (Battistoni, 1997).

Service learning projects broaden the role of the local schools. The relationship between the community and school becomes more dynamic as the school accepts a role which is more central to activity in the neighborhood. Likewise, the whole community is seen as a resource for the school which can provide information to students. It is imperative to have service learning projects which cross social barriers too. The personal and intellectual skills which are essential for maintaining a pluralistic society are nurtured through these interactions. Students value the connections they make with others through their service experiences (Battistoni, 1997; LeSourd, 1997). LeSourd (1997) reminds us that central to the ideas of democratic life in a pluralistic society is the inclusion of all members languages, histories, and ways of understanding. This can only be accomplished through the practice of listening to one another with open hearts. The importance of these intimate connections children make with others is summarized by Schine (1997).
Quality service learning combines personal and intellectual challenge, fosters pro-social attitudes and behaviors, and enriches the academic curriculum through constructive, age-appropriate activity and ongoing guided reflection. Service learning has the potential, when carefully planned and implemented, to create a new sense of community, make the curriculum come alive, and reawaken students' commitment to their own education (Schine, 1997, p. 174-75)

For LeSourd (1997), providing students with an opportunity to participate in service learning is a necessity. Likewise, Pang (1991) asserts that “Children can be empowered to use their minds, enthusiasm, creativity, and skills to contribute to their communities” through their active participation (p. 179). However, the constraints of the school day, limited experiences of teachers, and the difficulty with the implementation of a service learning project add to the dilemma of constructing a program which is suitable for children. Nevertheless, these problems should not allow educators to underestimate the abilities of school age children.

Participation in service learning projects provides opportunities for young children to extend and/or use their knowledge and exercise their ability to be caring individuals. Therefore, the process of teaching children to be caring, whether caring for self, others, animals, or the physical environment, should be a foremost concern of educators (Noddings, 1992). Pang (1991) reminds us that “Citizenship does not consist solely of voting rights for adult citizens; children can learn about and develop their capability to make changes” (p. 179). Edelman (1992) encourages us to use “political and economic power for the community and others less fortunate” (p. 66). However, in order to respond most appropriately to the needs of others in our communities, we must “understand what the other needs and the history of this need” (Noddings, 1992, p. 23). Noddings (1992) suggests that we learn to see, feel, and
hear what others are attempting to tell us in order to understand what others need. Being able to attend to others is learned through the practice of caring for them.

**An Ethic of Care**

The recent emphasis on the process of developing an ethic of care in children and the practice of “caring” for others has led to a focus on “caring” as an important aspect of the educational experience for children. In addition, the ability to demonstrate care for others has often been thought to be illustrative of, and/or linked to, a child’s stage of cognitive and/or moral development. Furthermore, in the field of moral development some theorists have proposed that females and males have differing orientations, or ways for demonstrating care of others. Some research literature indicates that females generally make moral decisions based on their concern for, or caring for others. While research on males indicates that they generally make moral decisions which express, or have a justice orientation rather than demonstrating concern for others. However, the literature on the development of an ethic of care does not focus on these differences in orientations alone or view them as dichotomous. The literature indicates that when moral decisions are based on an ethic of care and embedded in a particular social situation, females and males express concerns for justice and care regardless of their particular gender. What follows is a brief discussion of cognitive and moral development as these literatures are linked to, and provide a context for a discussion of an ethic of care.

**Cognitive Development**

"Piaget proposed that intelligence develops as a result of the interaction of environment and the maturation of the child. In his view children are active participants in their own learning" (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 1997, p. 45). Phillips (1975) discusses how every child, according to Piaget, progresses through a series of specific stages of development in the same way but at differing rates
eventually culminating with their ability to engage in abstract theoretical thought. Beginning with sensory-motor activities (0-2 years of age), children learn to coordinate and integrate movement; however, their thinking "is relatively restricted to direct interactions with the environment, whereas "a child in the preoperational stage (2-7 years of age) "is capable of manipulating symbols that represent the environment" (Phillips, 1975, p. 62). In the preoperational stage, children assimilate new ideas into their established patterns of reasoning and establish new ways of thinking to accommodate information that does not fit into the already set patterns they have established (Phillips, 1975).

Children in the concrete operational stage (7-11 years of age) of development become more flexible in the thinking and gradually become less egocentric in their thought patterns. They are able to classify and arrange objects according to various criteria. They are capable of taking the point of view of others and they develop their ability to retrace the steps in a process or operation which is commonly referred to as reversibility. Piaget's last stage of development is formal operations (11-15 years of age). At this level the child is able to use cognitive abilities to think of an array of possibilities that are not tied to concrete experience (Phillips, 1975). The constructivist ideas of Piaget have been the basis for much of the format of formal instruction in American schools during the last forty years (Nourot, 1993).

Other theorists support an alternative notion that a child's development may not progress as neatly from one stage to the next as outlined by Piaget. Vygotsky's approach, in contrast to Piaget's approach to cognitive development, takes on more of a social dimension explained as overlapping "zones" of development. "Vygotsky for instance, stresses the ties between development of thought and language, the social aspect of learning, and the importance of adult-child interaction" (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1993, p. 66). Kozulin (1994) writes about Vygotsky's focus on past
experience and the context of cognitive development which is the interaction that takes place between individuals. "All present growth hinges on past growth" (p. 125).

Vygotsky saw the cognitive development of children as a complex interaction between heredity and environmental factors which are situated within a historical context (Kozulin, 1994). Language (the word) is a source of consciousness between people. "A word is a microcosm of human consciousness" (Kozulin, 1994, p. 256).

Individuals learn how to "mean" through social interactions with others (teachers) who help them navigate through new experiences within their "zone of proximal development" (Goodman, 1992, p. 358, & Kozulin, 1994, p. 187).

In recent years, much emphasis has been placed on differing ways in which children demonstrate their cognitive abilities. "Gardner has proposed that there is no single 'intelligence,' but a cluster of at least seven intellectual abilities, or multiple intelligences" (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1993, p. 66). Gardner (1991) argues that generally cognition has been seen by researchers as "unitary" and measurable as a single entity. In addition, he argues that schools have promoted verbal and mathematical cognitive development while ignoring other forms of human intelligences. In addition to the development of language and logical reasoning, Gardner (1991, p. 78) views individuals as having the abilities to "conceptualize in spatial terms, analyze in musical ways, solve problems using our whole body and parts of our body, to understand others, and to understand ourselves." "In my view, all normal human beings develop at least these seven forms of intelligence to a greater or lesser extent" (Gardner, 1991, p. 78) Within his scheme, to qualify as an intelligence, individuals must exhibit isolated cases of the intelligence. Also, there must be features of a "clear-cut developmental trajectory" and "evidence of localization in the brain" (Gardner, 1991, p. 78). There is a reluctance in schools and society to accept and promote all forms of intelligence. This relegates those who fail in the
process exhibiting higher cognitive levels of verbal and mathematical development to be viewed as socially and culturally inferior (Gardner, 1991). Akin to the beliefs many hold about the intellectual/cognitive development of children are beliefs held about the moral development of children.

Moral Development

"The terms, ethics, moral, values, and character, although carrying slightly different connotations, derive from a common tradition" (Burrett & Rusnak, 1993, p. 14). Ethics commonly refers to studying and teaching about right and wrong based on Western philosophical traditions. Morals are generally thought of as the personal behavior or group concerns that reflect individual choices regarding social duties and responsibilities. Values determine the choice of actions people take based on their individual ideas. Character reflects the set of organized beliefs and values an individual employs which influence his/her ethical decisions (Burrett & Rusnak, 1993).

Ethics education implies helping students resolve choices relating to ethical decision. Values education emphasizes identification of fundamental principles or ideals guiding human activity. Moral education is concerned with development of judgments about what is right and with caring deeply about doing right. Character education is concerned with transmitting those cultural traditions that contribute to personal maturation (Burrett & Rusnak, 1993, p. 14-15).

From earliest times in Western civilization, the process of education has had two purposes. Schools have attempted to develop individual character and to act as a catalyst for the education of humans. "Education should help us become wise and good people" (Ryan, 1993, p. 16). For Plato, the questions, "What constitutes a good life?" and "What sort of individual should I strive to become?" were the basis
for his exploration of moral theory. At the root of Plato's ethical ideas "is the concept of teleology." Essentially, all things in the world have a "proper function within a harmonious hierarchy of purposes" (Falikowski, 1990, p. 7). The Eastern equivalent of Plato's philosophy can be found in "the Tao."

The Tao guides schools to educate children to be concerned about the weak and those in need; to help others; to work hard and complete their tasks well and promptly, even when they do not want to; to control their tempers; to work cooperatively with others and practice good manners; to respect authority and other people's rights; to help resolve conflicts; to understand honesty, responsibility, and friendship; to balance pleasures with responsibilities; and to ask themselves and decide "What is the right thing to do?" (Ryan, 1993, p. 16).

Thus, in both Western and Eastern philosophies, ethical responsibility is a central feature of human nature. By design, humans are meant to live the morally good life. The morally good life integrates the three parts of the human soul which are reason, spirit, and appetite, according to Plato (Falikowski, 1990). Human unhappiness is the result of a disordered soul. "Plato believes that there is a kind of parallel between society and the individual. Corresponding to each type of imperfect society, there is a certain type of morally degenerate individual or inferior character type" (Falikowski, 1990, p. 8-9).

The just individual (character) has integrated the three aspects of personality into a tranquil whole governed by reason. "Only a life of reason and a disinterested pursuit of truth and goodness is fulfilling in the end" (Falikowski, 1990, p. 12). Knowledge of goodness will lead to happiness and moral virtue. Ignorance leads to unhappiness and moral corruption. Goodness illuminates truth which is the source of intelligibility. (Falikowski, 1990) As in ancient times, many educators today believe
that the role of the schools is to stress development of the moral character as well as the intellect. In Lickona's (1993, p. 6) words, "Character education is as old as education itself. Down through history, education has had two great goals: to help people become smart and to help them become good."

Although many schools struggle with an array of difficulties that are viewed as a lack of values being taught in school, few have enacted programs to address the need for a return to instructing for character/moral development in children (Lickona, 1993). Lickona (1993) reminds educators that earlier in this century students learned social and moral lessons designed to build character along with reading and mathematics. It was during the 1960s and 1970s that changes in American society, particularly the emphasis on individual preferences, made the transmission model of social values education more difficult. Lickona (1993, p. 8-9) explores three causes for the new interest in character education/moral reasoning: "(a) decline of the family; (b) troubling trends in youth character; and (c) a recovery of shared, objectively important ethical values." As Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz (1992) illustrate, in order to understand the basic frameworks of moral development education employed in many school settings today, educators must trace back to Piaget's stage theory of moral development which has been elaborated on by several prominent psychologists. Also, educators must be aware of a keen difference that Piaget noted in the moral reasoning of children which indicates that children experience a separate morality from the morality of adults (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1993). Piaget took a naturalistic approach to understanding the moral world of children.

To get inside the minds of children, Piaget played with them (marbles and hopscotch, for example) and interviewed them. He discovered that the younger children are, the less likely they are to see goodness in thought and behavior in the same way adults do. In fact, his research led him to conclude
that children grow in their understanding of morality in rather predictable stages (Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz, 1992, p. 1).

Piaget's cognitive work with children led him to believe that children could not reason about moral issues that were beyond their respective intellectual stages of development. Piaget demonstrated that young children respond to moral issues in a "heteronomous" (externally controlled) fashion. They are unable to "make knowledgeable moral decisions on their own" before the age of six or seven (Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz, 1992, p. 2). Once children began to take the perspective of others they were able to move to an autonomous position in their moral decision making abilities. Essentially, Piaget's understanding of autonomy in moral decision-making ability parallels the child's cognitive ability to think in an abstract theoretical manner. Piaget's work was the foundation for the research of others interested in the moral development of children. Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz (1992, p. 10) support the notion "that children respond to moral issues at whatever levels of development coincide with their abilities to reason."

Later theories of moral development supported Piaget's idea of stages in moral reasoning for children and have become the underlying structure for many character/moral education programs. Craft (1994), Lamm (1993), Lipkowitz (1995), and Weber (1995) use both Kohlberg's and Gilligan's theories to investigate moral development in children and adults. Also, "The theories of moral development presented by Lawrence Kohlberg as well as Carol Gilligan provide the framework for understanding moral dilemmas and moral actions" (Dana & Lynch-Brown, 1991, p. 13). However, each explores a different facet of moral development which can be seen as complimentary aspects of moral development programs for children (Dana & Lynch-Brown, 1991).
Beginning in the late 1950s, Kohlberg collected data which he used to illustrate a developmental sequence to the social and moral reasoning of individuals. His theory of moral development paralleled Piaget's cognitive theory which began with stages of concrete thought and moved to abstract reasoning.

Kohlberg's theory involves six stages of moral reasoning, each with a particular perspective on social or moral problems. Briefly, the six stages range from a stage 1 concern for punishment and obedience through a stage 4 emphasis on law and authority to a stage 6 focus on certain moral principles such as justice, empathy, and human dignity. Kohlberg stresses that people are at different stages of moral maturity and that understanding how and why individuals respond differently is vital to education (Galbraith & Jones, 1976, p. 6).

Galbraith and Jones (1976) believe when educators understand the moral development of children, they may be able to create opportunities for children to develop moral maturity. Kohlberg's theory may help teachers understand that students cannot be indoctrinated into morally sound principles, but "move through developmental stages as they begin to revise their world view" by the examination of their own processes for deciding issues of morality and encountering the ethical thoughts of their peers (Galbraith & Jones, 1976, p. 7). Students may begin to examine the limits of relativism (the view that ethical truths depend on the individuals and groups holding them) while confronting and working through moral problems that test their thinking as they strive to remedy moral problems. "Kohlberg feels that the classroom cannot afford to be value-neutral. Students need to struggle with individual and social values" (Galbraith & Jones, 1976, p. 7). The social and moral issues of a culture need to be examined systematically and openly. This may be achieved through providing opportunities for students to discuss moral dilemmas.
within the educational setting. The focus of these discussions is on the reasoning used to solve the dilemmas and not on the participants or their behavior (Galbraith & Jones, 1976).

To understand how children develop and use moral reasoning, educators have attempted to design programs similar to those of Galbraith and Jones. Dana and Lynch-Brown (1991) outline the aspects of their program using children's literature in their article on instructing gifted students in moral development. They acknowledge that Kohlberg's framework alone is insufficient.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development cannot be the only framework taught to gifted students as it has been found to offer a view of morality based solely on a component of justice. This somewhat limited perspective is compounded by Kohlberg's selection of only male subjects to develop his theory, and the measurement of moral judgments on the basis of hypothetical situations that present only a limited number of options for resolution (p. 13-14).

Dana and Lynch-Brown (1991) believe that Gilligan's work expanded the ideas of Kohlberg. They illustrate the compatibility of the two theories. Gilligan's theory addresses the issues of "care, connectedness and responsibility, or an 'ethic of care' " which appears to demonstrate a difference in moral orientations based on gender. Individuals evince the ability to reason between understanding dilemmas that require individuals to treat others fairly (or with justice) and to not turn away from those in need (provide care). The attention to these orientation differences along gender lines appears to be an important aspect of school programs. "Recent discussions of sex differences in moral development have confused moral stage within Kohlberg's justice framework with moral orientation, the distinction between justice and care perspectives" (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988, p. 73).
Gilligan and Attanucci's (1988) investigation of moral orientations is an attempt to understand how men and women raise concerns about justice and care regarding moral issues in their lives. Both men and women employ concern for justice and concern for care orientations; however, when facing real-life moral dilemmas both men and women tend to concentrate on and use one orientation. The connection between moral orientation and gender investigated by Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) illustrates that women present a care focus while men present a justice focus. While a moral orientation toward either a justice focus or a caring focus seems, Educators have attempted to use a combination of the theories in their practice. Prager (1993) has designed a course for high school students using both orientations. First, students are introduced to the elements of Kohlberg's and Gilligan's theories. "As the term progresses, we discuss a series of complex subjects, including abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, animal rights, the environment, spirituality, homelessness and poverty, homophobia, and racism" (Prager, 1993, p. 32). Students write reaction papers based on readings and discussions in class. There are no quizzes or tests. The hallmark of the course is the discussion method of sharing and listening to the opinions of peers which is based on the Galbraith and Jones (1976) model. The practice of sharing and listening to others is a valued process for encouraging students' understanding of moral orientations toward justice and care (Prager, 1993). Students essentially become role models for their peers (Davis, 1994). An ethic of care demands that students move beyond class discussions which focus on "caring" to opportunities to practice care for others.

The Practice of Caring

"Caring is a practiced art and skill, primarily born out of focused willing attention, escalating levels of participation, and a sense of evolving personal responsibility" (Oliner & Oliner, 1995, p. 97). The practiced art of caring leads to
the development of good moral character which, in the process of education, is foremost in importance according to Noddings (1992). "The first job of the schools is to care for our children. We should educate all our children not only for competence but also for caring. Before the children are able to become a productive learning community, they must be a vibrant social community (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Our aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people" (Noddings, 1992, p. xiv).

"One of the basic assumptions of character education is that children are capable, even before adolescence, of making moral and political judgments" (Davis, 1994, p. 11). Davis (1994) refers to Robert Coles' research concerning the moral and political lives of children to illustrate that young children seem to evolve creatively in order to address moral and political issues rather than simply reiterating the ideas of parents and teachers. Kohn (1991) may lend insight into what appears to be an emergent process of moral development based on the observations of infants and children. "To start at the beginning, newborns are more likely to cry - and to cry longer - when they are exposed to the sound of another infant's crying than when they hear other noises that are equally loud and sudden" (Kohn, 1991, p. 498). It seems we are born with an innate ability to show concern for others and are capable of demonstrating our empathy for them. However, as Oliner and Oliner (1995) and others illustrate, these inclinations must be nurtured in us.

Based on the research of Sagi & Hoffman, Kohn (1991) suggests that humans are born with a predisposition of discomfort when exposed to the discomfort of others. Sharing, comforting, and helping are reported as regular occurrences in preschool age children. Caring, according to Kohn (1991), appears to be a salient feature of the preschooler's behavior. When four and five year old children, who were observed helping others, were questioned about giving their assistance to
classmates, they responded they offered assistance because it was needed. Kohn (1991) argues that selfishness is not an inevitable quality of human nature and that through proper guidance children grow into caring adults. He further states that the logical setting to provide the moral guidance children need is obviously within the schools where values education is already in place. Also, developing care for others does not eliminate care for oneself but to the contrary helps individuals build popularity and self-esteem, characteristics of individuals who have a prosocial orientation (Kohn, 1991; Richert, 1994).

It is absolutely essential that we rethink schools in ways that honor the core value of relationship. Teachers' professional relationships with one another, their relationships with children, the children's relationships with one another, relationships with parents, with other community members, are all critical to creating school in the image of care (Richert, 1994, p. 115).

Benard (1993) asserts that the caring relationships teachers establish with children and the guidance teachers offer in developing students' compassion for others has a tremendous impact on fostering resiliency in children. Woehrle (1993) reports that students' "efforts to help another person soon blossoms into a personal relationship that gives great fulfillment" (p. 42). Curwin (1993) found that at-risk students react in a responsible and dramatic way when given the opportunity to act as caretakers, tutors, and helpers of people in need. Like students' experiences, Bellah (1994) discovered that caring adults who volunteer in soup kitchens, delivering meals to shut-ins, etc. report that the volunteer activities promote feelings of self-satisfaction because of the prospect of helping others in need. "Caring practices require a community and are seldom stories of heroic, independent acts. Care is relational, creating more than we expect and at other times showing us the limits of 'helping' " (Phillips, 1994, p. 10).
"Care, as we define it, means assuming personal responsibility for others' welfare. To assume personal responsibility for others' welfare means to acknowledge others' needs and to act responsively" (Oliner & Oliner, 1995, p. 2). Oliner & Oliner (1995) explore the relevance of care in society. They assert that developing a sense of care is the primary moral challenge in our society. Individuals develop a sense of community based upon their feelings of care for others and being cared about themselves. A focus on public or social morality rather than private morality enables individuals to form attachments to the wider society. Through the experience of caring and being cared for, individuals develop solidarity with others and feel bound to group norms.

Oliner & Oliner (1995) assert that caring is built on relationships. "Real caring needs to be rooted in both personal attachments to one's groups and inclusion of others outside them" (p. 6). In addition, caring is not a set of specific actions or behaviors. It is a way of being in relationship with others. Furthermore, caring relationships are mutual and reciprocal (Noddings, 1992). "Without care, hope and a sense of investment in a society's future vanish" (Oliner & Oliner, 1995, p. 1). A caring society results when individuals have experienced nurturing through the social institutions of their lives (Oliner & Oliner, 1995). However, schools, one of the social institutions most familiar to children, have structured their curriculums to favor logical-mathematical and linguistic capacities, only two of the seven intellectual abilities defined by Gardner (1993). These two capacities are prevalent among only a few of the children who attend schools (Noddings, 1992). Consequently, it is imperative that researchers collaborate with classroom teachers to understand how teachers have structured their classrooms and to assist teachers in the process of changing the structure of curriculum to make schools more caring.
Teacher and Researcher Collaborations

Professional Development Schools

The school/university collaboration of (1990) encouraged teachers to examine specific issues related to practice in their own classrooms. Teachers who reflected on their practice had a greater impact on the learning in their classrooms. In addition, Allan and Miller (1990) noticed a change in the relationship between the school and university. The barriers which separated the practicing school teachers from university researchers were diminished through their collaboration. Allan and Miller (1990) based their research on the models of action research used by Burton (1986). He found that since each school is a unique environment, teachers tend to solve the problems that they themselves identify as difficulties in their own classrooms and in which they are interested in addressing through reflection on their own practice.

The collaborative project which Allan and Miller (1990) designed with teachers fostered feelings of mutual respect among teacher, reinforced their practice as teachers, and provided recognition for their achievements as teachers. “These three factors, which can prevent teacher burnout or disillusionment according to Lieberman, appear to be at the core of the two cooperative professional development models we have designed” (Allan and Miller, 1990, p. 196).

Allan and Miller (1990) demonstrated how research in the field of reading had a limited impact on what teachers did in their classrooms. In addition, they realized how the traditional models of university professors doing research and school teachers seeking professional growth were having limited impact on creating educational change in classrooms. To promote a change in this traditional dynamic, Allan and Miller (1990) initiated a collaborative project which was based on the work of Johnson, Johnson, and Holbec (1986) and Bruffee (1987) who also demonstrated how cooperative learning and collaborative exploration led to newer avenues of
professional development like those which had been designed by Glathorn (1987)
with students in graduate programs. These collaborations were instrumental in
breaking down the divisions that teachers and researchers experienced between
schools and the university.

Allan and Miller (1990) discovered three distinct phases to creating a
school/university collaboration. In the first phase, the “directive” phase, university
researchers attempted to build positive, interdependent relationships among the
teachers. The second phase was marked by the “cooperative” nature of the
interactions among the teachers who were from various districts and grade levels. In
the “cooperative” phase, they began to acknowledge the attributes of each member of
the group and see each other as resources for professional growth. In phase three, the
“collaborative” phase, teachers began to present their research to other teachers at
conferences.

The teachers we worked with became empowered professionals because they
were given the tools, support, and opportunity to document and demonstrate
their expertise within their own classrooms, within their school communities,
and finally within the professional community (Allan & Miller, 1990, p.
201).

Through the processes of questioning and coaching, the researchers were able
to assist teachers in their methods of documenting the learning of students and
analyzing the data they had collected from their investigations. Teachers were
encouraged to collect samples of students’ work and demonstrate how the selected
samples evinced learning. The teachers began to focus on how their investigations
could benefit other teachers. In order to gain understanding of what information was
most beneficial to teachers outside the cooperative, it became necessary for teachers to
publicly share their findings. “In the exploration of what the unknown audience
would find useful, the cooperative group became a collaborative community of professional colleagues” (Allan & Miller, 1990, p. 201).

Allan and Miller (1990) attribute four qualities to teachers as researchers within the collaborative model. First, they create innovations in their classrooms. Second, through collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, teachers reify their role in the classroom because of their direct impact on student learning. Third, they provide and gain support for the work that is being done in their individual classrooms. Finally, school/university collaborations allow teachers an opportunity to share their knowledge with other professionals as a conference presenter.

McElroy’s (1990) study of the effects of school/university collaborative action research on professional development for teachers focused on the ethical implications of conducting research within a classroom setting. Through collaboration, teachers gained insight into creating better learning interactions with children. They expressed an enhanced professional outlook about their teaching and improved their ability to think critically. In general, (teacher-designed) action research has a significant impact on the professional development of teachers. As a result of conducting classroom research, teachers have an “impact on the current interaction in classrooms but have the likelihood of producing long-term change” (p. 202). In order to produce such a significant impact, teachers and university researchers must exhibit genuine care for one another. Creating a relationship of care is based on the nature of how we interact, or our being “real” in everyday situations with others. McElroy (1990) uses the example of the character the Skin Horse in The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams to demonstrate the need for being “real” in the collaborative relationship. “Being authentic (or real) in relationship with another is at the heart of collaborative action research, and is at heart, a matter of ethics” (McElroy, 1990, p. 207).
According to McElroy (1990), collaborative action research is a collegial relationship, one that empowers teachers to examine, re-examine, and improve their own practice through accepting and sharing the responsibility of interpreting teacher practices from within the collaborative partnership. Conducting oneself in an ethical manner is central to any research exploration within a classroom, but of primary ethical importance is the nature of the teacher-researcher’s relationship to the children. These rules of conduct for research are ambiguous according to McElroy (1997). How research is orchestrated within classrooms and the models of research used by researchers don’t completely address the ethical issues which go beyond the principles established by most institutions. Teachers and researchers must somehow address the ambiguity of the relationship between researcher and student. Justiz (1997) believes that creating partnerships with schools is one avenue which places these ethical principles first and acts to solidify the relationship between the schools and the university. In addition, the collaborative partnerships have the potential to address the growing needs of the schools (see Justiz, 1997) and demonstrate the renewed commitment of the university. According to Justiz (1997) partnerships benefit all who are involved with the process.

Prior to instituting a Professional Development School (PDS), Justiz’s (1997) relationship with the schools and teachers was typical of most university education faculty. He had access to classrooms in exchange for placing students with local teachers. This arrangement changed with the PDS. However, the greatest change occurred with regards to preparing teachers. Through the PDS, the theoretical foundation for classroom practices and the actual classroom practices of teachers were brought together for the university students. University students became part of a supportive, preservice program where field-based research focused on solving specific problems for classroom teachers while providing opportunities for the
teachers' continued professional growth. In addition, the PDS partnership made it easy to share resources, facilities, technology, and professional expertise. Justiz (1997) concluded that collaborative work between schools and universities was profitable despite the slow progress, investment of time, and the people resources needed to create change in classrooms.

Strong collaboration between universities and the K-12 sector is important and worthwhile. Colleges of education, in particular, can bring valuable resources to bear on the problems facing today's schools; similarly K-12 educators' real-world experience is essential to the structuring of effective teacher education programs (Justiz, 1997, p. 38-39).

Justiz (1997) asserts that continued interaction between schools and the university through PDS collaboratives must have three specific elements. The PDS must be collegial in nature, the participants must demonstrate a willingness to experiment with their practice, and participants must reflect on their practice. The research projects should focus on strategies and programs which have the potential to demonstrate immediate improvement in the students' performance and achievement. "The process should be one of ongoing training, practice, feedback, and coaching" (p. 35). Through continued interaction in PDS, teachers have access to theoretical knowledge, continued training, modeling of various learning strategies, and the possibility for trying, adapting, and reflecting on differing practices of teaching and learning. In turn, researchers have the opportunity to explore their role within a collaborative framework and in relation to the type of inquiry they conduct with other educators.

Position of the Researcher: A Participatory Mode of Consciousness

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye" (Antoine De Saint-Exupéry, 1943, p. 70). Heshusius (1994) argues that
in collaborative research, it is impossible to separate the researcher from the interactions that are happening among those being researched. The lack of ability to find and maintain a narrowly defined, objective role, as a researcher in a collaborative process, causes researchers to examine how they can account for their concerns regarding subjectivity. It becomes equally as difficult to identify and account for each of the aspects of their subjectivity. Either, claiming to be procedurally objective, or stating, and accounting for, their subjectivity seems impossible and untenable. It becomes necessary for them to re-think the objectivity/subjectivity dichotomy and how an objective or subjective stance colors the relationship between researcher and researched. Both participate through shared events and interactions as members in a community. “When educational researchers no longer see the possibility of objectivity as a life option, one reaction has been to focus on their subjectivity, to worry about it and to turn it into a set of methodological concerns” (Heshusius, 1994, p. 15).

Rather than engaging in a process of disclosure to state the difference(s) or separation between the researcher’s “self” and those researched, Heshusius (1994) suggests that researchers join the process of discovery. The researcher cannot, and therefore, should not, attempt to segment the knower from that which is known. She postulates that if researchers are capable of identifying their subjective realities, they should likewise be capable of stating which aspects were not subjective. If they view subjectivity as a separate entity which can be controlled and constrained, then they have in fact regained objectivity. Heshusius (1994) contends that researchers must “reorder our understanding of the relation between self and other (and therefore, of reality) and turn toward a participatory mode of consciousness” (p. 15).

Ontologically, researchers cannot identify which parts of themselves are objective/subjective and which parts are not objective/subjective. Attempts to explain,
or account for, either of these procedural positions (objectivity or subjectivity) would be futile (Heshusius, 1994).

Heshusius (1994) suggests that participation is the vehicle through which a researcher comes to know information. The researcher must be totally involved in numerous ways on numerous levels with those being researched. The researcher must be totally aware of her/his efforts to participate and seek to engage in the processes of learning along with those being researched. This type of participatory relationship which seeks to engage has its roots in the work of Schachtel (1959) as described by Heshusius (1994).

The belief that one can actually distance oneself, and then regulate that distance in order to come to know, has also been referred to as alienated consciousness, as the disenchantment of knowing, a mode of consciousness that has led to undreamed of technological advances, but has also left us alienated from each other, from nature, and from ourselves (Heshusius, 1994, p. 16).

Through the process of participating, and discovering how to talk and write about an experience, a researcher comes to understand how participation with those being researched is “allocentric” in nature. Researchers become aware “consciously” of their relationships with others, but attempt to let go of the “perceived boundaries” which separate researchers in their roles and practices. They are then able to concentrate on efforts and interests in teaching and learning about curriculum through classroom activities with each other. Allocentrism, or “participatory consciousness” as Heshusius (1994) calls it, requires individuals to know with their whole being, merging their internal and external realities. Researchers can neither be objective nor subjective in their relationships with others. They are both and neither at the same time. The allocentric view asks that the researcher’s focus be temporarily away from
“self” and that the researcher be completely attentive to another. The sole purpose must be the affirmation of, and attention to, the other. “It involves letting go of the idea of being-separate-and-in-charge altogether” (Heshusius, 1994, p. 18). While researchers make a conscious decision to ignore “egocentric thoughts, feelings, and needs,” they retain their autonomy. Accepting a participatory mode of consciousness allows them to cross the distance that separates individuals in a more personal way. Because it is impossible for researchers to separate out the pieces of themselves as researchers and persons, they must begin to ask different questions about their research. Through participatory consciousness they come to see a kinship to others and consequently begin to interact ethically with them. The focus of research thus becomes a question or an issue of moral conduct “What sort of person am I?” rather than an epistemological concern for collecting accurate data (Heshusius, 1994).

In addition to questioning how to conduct research that is of a caring nature, the researcher begins to examine how to write about the research they have conducted with those they have researched. The process of planning collaborative research, finding a teacher and students to join in a discovery process, doing the mechanics of research, and analyzing data become event-filled episodes. Each event becomes a multi-layered story of its own. The task thus becomes a process of synthesizing these stories into a unified whole which is an explanation of experience and thinking through the entire process. However, the first step in this process of discovering is understanding how curriculum is structured for young children.

Curriculum Strategies to Promote Change in Children

Project Approach

According to Battistoni (1997), young children develop their concept of community through the process of describing “their” community. They create documents of their community which may include photographs of important places
and people in the community. Service projects for older students might include a segment which requires students to analyze the impact of their service learning project on the community and/or on those who benefits from the program. Participation in service learning improves students critical thinking skills and gives them an opportunity to re-think their ideas about social justice, the nature of human beings, and society. Therefore, curriculum can be closely linked to service learning.

For example, students who gain an experience interacting with the guest in a homeless shelter are both able to put a face on “the poor” and test their own and others’ theories about poverty, public policy, and democracy against their actual observations and the real life stories of those with whom they interact in the shelter (Battistoni, 1997, p. 151). Thus, curriculum is not located in the school alone.

Katz and Chard (1993) use the term “project approach” to reflect their view that “projects can be incorporated into the early childhood curriculum in a variety of ways, depending upon the preferences, commitments, and constraints of teachers and schools” (p. 3). The entire curriculum can be devoted to project work or it may be offered on several days a week. It may be an integrated aspect of learning centers for young children or the entire focus of the curriculum.

Project work is more than an approach to early childhood education. It incorporates the content, what is taught/learned, in addition to the ways in which teaching and learning are accomplished. “This approach emphasizes the teacher’s role in encouraging children to interact with people, objects, and the environment in ways that have personal meaning to them” (Katz & Chard, 1993, p. 3). Children learn through their active participation in the process of discovery. The focus of the learning experiences is on familiar topics which the children meet in the world around them. Children in rural schools study the land and development of rural based
products and life. Urban children learn about city life, the social and physical structures that surround them (Katz & Chard, 1993).

Katz and Chard (1993) advocate a “project approach” to education because it provides a broader picture of what the process of education of young children requires. They believe a project approach allows teachers to “cultivate the life of the young child’s mind” (p. 3). The teacher’s role is not limited to academic instruction. A project approach enables the teachers of young children to share in the responsibility of imparting academic knowledge and skills to their charges. In addition, it provides a format for addressing children’s emotional, moral, and aesthetic understandings of life. “An appropriate education for young children should address the full scope of their growing minds as they strive to make better sense of their experiences. It encourages them to pose questions, pursue puzzles, and increase their awareness of significant phenomena around them” (Katz & Chard, 1993, p. 3).

There are four basic goals of a project approach to education. First, teachers must address appropriate intellectual goals which enhance the life of the minds of children. This is accomplished through the process of engaging children’s minds and providing depth for their understanding through exploration of their experiences and their environment. Teachers must acknowledge the intellectual strengths as well as the academic needs of children. Projects and academic experiences must “improve the learners’ understanding of the world around them and strengthen their dispositions to go on learning” (Katz & Chard, 1993, p. 5).

Second, teachers achieve a balance in the curriculum through integration of academic and social experiences. Project work is complementary to the curriculum. It enhances instruction and learning as it builds on the continuity and coherence of the focus of them. While the teacher’s role is one of guiding the learning experiences, due to the emergent nature of project work, children play an active part in negotiating
and/or re-structuring the curriculum. It is often seen as the "creative or spontaneous" aspect of the curriculum for young children. Project work for older children requires the application and fine tuning of academic skills. Third, through the process of doing project work, children come to know that school experiences are related to life. Their understanding of life is not compartmentalized into separate topics which represent specific curriculum areas, but integrated into the fabric of interconnected "whole" events (Katz & Chard, 1993).

Finally, children experience a project approach to learning as a community. They are members of a cooperative group which is dependent on one another for developing understanding of a phenomena, sharing experiences, and contributing to the life of the group. The teacher must promote and nurture the development of the group ethos in order to make it flourish. Each child learns that her/his contributions may be different, but are of value to the success of the group (Katz and Chard, 1993).

**Emergent Curriculum**

"All knowledge emerges in the process of self- and social construction" (Rinaldi, 1993, p. 105). Rinaldi (1993) explains project work as an emergent process which is built on relationships. The child is not viewed just as entity unto herself/himself. The child is seen in relation to his/her own history, parents, teachers, the other children, and the social and cultural milieu where the interactions and communications take place. Within this framework, children are viewed as strong and powerful with numerous ideas and questions which guide their discoveries rather than as needy beings who must have assistance and/or answers. The teacher’s role within an emergent curriculum is not one of deciding specific goals for a project in advance, but instead the teacher structures general educational objectives and activities which allow the children to engage in, and express themselves through, a plurality of ways or "symbolic languages." Consequently, all participants, the children, their
families, and the educators must maintain an ongoing dialogue in the process of structuring learning experiences within this model. Through this dynamic, dialogue approach, Rinaldi (1993) contends, the potential of the children can be realized. By contrast, structuring projects which have an outcome formulated in advance stunts the potential of the children.

Thus, communication and interactions among the participants within this approach are complex. Teachers are constantly observing and evaluating their group’s progress so as to make adjustments in the learning environment and the materials being used by the children. Both parents and teachers act as resource people through their participation in group processes and offer guidance to the children when children want it. They attempt to stimulate and/or nurture the engagement of the children through the creation of cognitive conflicts which, in turn, lead to growth in the learning processes. Rinaldi (1993) explains four considerations which affect the process and success of planning with regard to an emergent approach to learning. First, staff members work in a collegial manner with one another. Second, schools and families value the work the children are doing and work closely with one another to support it and assure the success of a project. Third, great care has been taken to create aesthetically pleasing places and materials for children to work with in the schools. These first three considerations make the fourth consideration, the activities, possible.

It is very important to be able to grow with them. We reinvent and reeducate ourselves along with the children. Not only does our knowledge organize theirs, but also the children’s ways of being and dealing with reality likewise influences what we know, feel, and do (Rinaldi, 1993, p. 111)

Directly related to the creation of a group ethos within and emergent curriculum framework is the natural communication that occurs among children and
the teacher. Various types of literacy and language experiences (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visually representing information) happen when children communicate and refine their ideas and knowledge through the course of doing project work. To be effective, the literacy and language development/experiences children encounter in the process of doing project work must promote and support the intellectual and academic abilities of the children, have a balance of the various types of literacy experiences, reflect real life experiences, and foster the creation of community among children. Many teachers address these criteria through implementing a whole-language/literature-based approach to literacy instruction as a basis for planning a curriculum.

Using Literature and Drama as Curriculum Tools

Whole-language/literature-based instruction

According to Palardy (1997), whole-language/literature-based instruction is holistic. Literature-based programs are characterized by students reading realistic, relevant material and incorporating the use trade books as the main body of reading materials rather than basal readers. The act of reading “real” literature gives students the opportunity to develop their insights and understandings of various cultures and peoples. Students are able to develop their abilities to imagine and visualize stories and they profit from being able to measure their ideas against the ideas they have encountered in books. Furthermore, children discover that they are not alone when trying to understand real life difficulties. Consequently, children's literature is a powerful tool which promotes understanding of, and empathy for, others who are perceived to be less fortunate. In addition, whole-language/literature-based language programs influence the development of writing. “Reading good models of writing and doing activities where the text is used as scaffolding for creating their own stories allows youngsters the opportunity to manipulate language” (Palardy, 1997, p. 67).
Students incorporated the writing ideas and literary forms they were exposed to in their own writing (Maples, 1994, Palardy, 1997).

Whole-language/literature-based instruction may vary from classroom to classroom, but there are three basic components that are held in common (Czubaj, 1997). First, reading is the primary focus of activity in the classroom. Second, students are responsible for selecting their own reading materials from a diverse array of books, etc. which are an important feature of the literature-based classroom. Third, the children are encouraged to interact socially through discussing/debating/comparing their ideas regarding what they have read. An underlying expectation for the children is the exploration of a core set of values such as responsibility, perseverance, and honesty. Palardy (1997) contends that "good literature is characterized by the presentation, confrontation, and resolution of themes involving such values" (p. 68).

Teachers in a whole-language/literature-based program must have a strong working knowledge of many books for children. They must have a solid grasp of curriculum and be adept at planning, organizing, and implementing ideas which will spark the interest of their students. They must have a prodigious supply of children's books which are appropriate for the various reading abilities of the students. Finally, teachers must be able to explain and communicate clearly with parents, other teachers, administration, and the students about the value and process of literature-based instruction (Palardy, 1997).

The benefits of using whole-language/literature-based instruction were explored by Seung-Yoeun (1997). She found that children identify with characters through personal experiences, examine history and culture, and find enjoyment through the process of reading literature. Literature allows children the opportunity to be immersed in language which leads to the discovery and development of language.
Through connecting with literature, children unravel their own stories and become aware of their own voice and ideas. “Therefore, children’s literature can be valuable in many ways for early childhood literacy programs” (Seung-Yoeun, 1997, p. 123). When literature connects to the lives of children, it becomes meaningful to them. They learn about the real world and discover fantastic and powerful information. Best of all, they learn about the world around them and how to get along with others.

“Experiencing stories teaches children problem solving, morals, beauty, values, myths and social relations” (Seung-Yoeun, p. 124).

Children listen to stories frequently in whole-language/literature-based classrooms. They learn through these listening experiences with literature that stories make sense. In addition, they begin to incorporate events and ideas from stories they have heard and read into their own writing. Since teachers use a wide array of books on numerous topics, children get a glimpse into the lives, experiences, and cultures of others. They begin to see the world with a different set of eyes. Their new vision, through literature, provides children an opportunity to “live,” vicariously the experiences of others, become more aware of others through the insights they gain from reading, and have a fuller understanding of them. Children have the opportunity to learn about cultural significance of objects, places, and the individuals they encounter in literature. “Thus, children create and broaden their world, and understand their relationship with others based on vicarious experiences through books” (Seung-Yoeun, p. 124).

Bruneau (1997) has created a visual representation of how teachers using a whole-language/literature-based instruction program would structure their classrooms. Like the food pyramid, Bruneau’s (1997) literacy pyramid illustrates what individuals need to gain and maintain a life of literacy. At the foundation of her chart is the activity of reading aloud to children. Children need to be read to each and everyday.
The process of reading aloud to children everyday stimulates the child’s motivation to read independently and provides an opportunity for the child to obtain greater awareness of the value of books. In the whole-language/literature-based classroom, teachers attempt to balance the interactions children have with books between matching their reading ability so they will read independently and challenging their experiences with literature so they will move along in their level of independent reading. Bruneau (1997) refers to the work of Jalongo in 1992 to outline four components which she contends are central to the importance of reading to children when doing whole-language/literature-based instruction. “Daily read-alouds (a) demonstrate adult involvement in literature, (b) motivate children to read, (c) help children develop a sense of story, and (d) promote awareness of different literacy styles” (p. 59)

In addition to reading aloud to children, teachers provide opportunities for them to work together in small groups or with partners to do reading and writing activities. The teacher guides the process of how children work with others to share reading and writing. Teachers assist students as they engage in creating charts about stories or poems and organize information they have gleaned from their reading. For the very young, these activities may be simply recording the news of the day, creating a list of important events planned for the day, responding or composing letters to others and/or listing the events from a field trip. (Bruneau, 1997; Tompkins, 1997). These activities flow with the natural progression of the day and complement one another. “Shared reading and writing are easily integrated within one time frame” (Bruneau, 1997, p. 158).

It seems the key to successful whole-language/literature-based instruction is the organization of the teacher. Through daily practice of reading and writing, generally referred to as the reading-writing “workshop,” children work
independently, in small groups, or as a whole group. They have the multiple opportunities to engage with the teacher and their peers to learn a specific reading or writing skill. Consequently, teachers may not meet with all students everyday since the children may be engaged with individual activities or may not need to learn or review the specific skill being addressed. Teachers attempt to integrate the activities in a reading and writing workshop classroom to match the general organization of a theme or specific unit (Bruneau, 1997; Tompkins, 1997).

Within the structure of a whole-language/literature-based approach to literacy instruction is the need to address the skills development of children. Minilessons are taught within the context of reading and writing activities. They may focus on building phonetic awareness, spelling competence, and writing mechanics. However, these minilessons are linked to the literature and are taught when they are deemed to be appropriate strategies for the children (Bruneau, 1997; Strickland, 1994). Of primary importance is the focus on a literacy event, the foundation of which is the process of engaging and responding to literature. In conclusion, Bruneau (1997) states, “Just as food groups can be combined to form nutritious meals, literacy events can be combined to form an appropriate literacy curriculum” (p. 160).

**Responding to literature.** “Through listening to stories, reading, and thinking about characters and situations in literature, children can come to sense what it means, for example, to be kind, honest, or fair. The extensive use of “real” stories provides an opportunity for integrating values education” (Gibbs & Earley, 1994, p. 11).

Rosenblatt (1968) encourages us to think of the child's experience with literature as an exploration in which the reader plays an active role. The exploration is characterized by intense personal interaction with literature. The goal then for teachers is to discover what happens as children become involved in the life of a book. Each child’s process is unique and reflects his or her own set of ideas and fears. In
addition, each literature experience provides an opportunity for children to explore relationships with other people because literature essentially contains every element that people have felt or thought or created. Ultimately, literature has the ability to effect change in children (and adults). "When the student has been moved by a work of literature, he will be led to ponder on questions of right or wrong, of admirable or antisocial qualities, of justifiable or unjustifiable actions" (Rosenblatt, 1968, p. 17).

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks for teachers is to allow children the opportunity to make personal interpretations or examine issues objectively. To present literature or the study of a piece of literature or topic in literature from a completely unbiased approach demands that a teacher separate himself/herself from personal values. If a teacher must simply provide information rather than transmit the feelings connected to the thoughts and ideas she/he would be ignoring the fact that "Language is socially evolved, but it is always constituted by individuals, with their particular histories" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 25). Consequently, the literature selections a teacher chooses to use in the classroom seem to naturally reflect a teacher's bias and values. Therefore, unless a teacher is attempting to just provide information, the teacher's values (emotional ties to beliefs, thoughts, and ideas) are reflected in the choice of topics and types of literature experiences transmitted to the student. Further, the teacher's impetus for teaching a literary work and the manner of instruction of the work reflect the teacher's values. One must remember that language and literature are created by social beings who have been socially patterned and who engage in the process of creating works of art based on "the many experiences that we all have in common - birth, growth, love, death. We communicate because of a common core of experience, even though there may be infinite personal variations" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 28).
The role of literature in the curriculum is complex. Krauthammer (1995) ignores this complexity in his criticism of books like *Let the Celebrations Begin* by Margaret Wild, *Hiroshima No Pika* by Toshi Maruki, and *Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting. He has viewed these books simply as adjuncts to the language arts curriculum and therefore expresses concern over their strong personal message which is evoked through the complex nature of the information they share and the relationship presented between their language and art. He asserts that we must shelter children from the wrenching aspects of social history and protect their "cozy, rosy view of the world" (Krauthammer, 1995, p. 80).

I think all children might like to live in Krauthammer's fantasy neighborhood, but their lives have been shaped by vastly different sets of circumstances that create differing realities. We know from the extensive work of Jonathan Kozol (1991) that life for many children is not cozy or rosy. Our fear should not be that children will read *Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting, or other emotionally painful stories, but that they live the effects of social calamities like homelessness, poverty, and abuse everyday without our concern for their experiences. Kozol provides a glimpse into the experiences of children who live in East St. Louis.

East St. Louis might suggest another world. The city, which is 98 percent black, has no obstetric services, no regular trash collection, and few jobs. Nearly a third of its families live on less than $7,500 a year; 75 percent of its population lives on welfare of some form. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development describes it as "the most distressed small city in America (Kozol, 1991, p. 7).

Some research indicates that whether the story presented to children is painful or not is somewhat irrelevant. "It is the children's ability to take the role of the central characters in books that primarily helps them understand the moral lessons involved in
the story" (Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz, 1992, p. 7). As students mature and change, so, too, should we expect to see growth and change in their responses to literature. Each new literature experience or re-experience of a literary work reflects the child's ever-changing storehouse of information, thoughts, feelings, and ideas. "No longer satisfied with a childlike acceptance of the mere external gestures and trappings, he wishes to experience these things from within" (Rosenblatt, 1968, p. 87). The teacher must provide the challenges a child seeks and the possibilities for further exploration in literature into situations that may offer a glimpse at the world of others and revelations about himself/herself. The demands of change are not always pleasant. "Systematic and regular exposure to quality literature containing moral dilemmas, then, can help children at all stages internalize the reasoning behind developing empathy for others" (Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz, 1992, p. 7).

Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz (1992) believe that responses which evoke actions and behaviors on the part of children are more significant than responses that simply require answers to questions. Responses that illustrate a child's consideration of why a character decides on a specific course of action lead to explorations of issues. When teachers use a literature-based approach to the curriculum they encourage responses that allow children to role play, discuss, share literature orally or in writing, and examine their ideas through creating projects. Also, in addition to exposing children to a variety of wonderful books, evoking response within the literature-based program offers children the "potential for thoughtful reflection about the moral values and issues in children's books" (Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz, 1992, p. 16). The explorations students have with literature seems to have a powerful influence on their subsequent actions.

In our own experiences we have found that children who are in a literature-based reading program want to become activists even in the first grade. They
have joined Greenpeace, adopted manatees, and expressed concern for the homeless. Second graders have prepared meals for a parent coming home from the hospital and started a schoolwide fund raiser for starving children in Ethiopia (Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz, 1992, p. 7-8).

Drama as a Mode of Learning

While young children may lack well developed reading and writing skills, they engage easily with others through drama and pretend play. O’Neil and Lambert (1990) describe drama as a “mode of learning.” Students identify with imagined roles and situations through participation in drama. They learn through their exploration of issues, events, and relationships. The knowledge and experiences children have of the real world enables them to enter the world of make-believe. To address the theme of homelessness, for example, they may draw on their experiences of being separated from the comforts of having consistent, everyday patterns in their lives. Their knowledge and experience may also be broadened through reading literature, from viewing films, and watching television. “At first the make-believe may be superficial and action-oriented, but with the teacher’s guidance and intervention it should be possible for the work to grow in depth” (O’Neil & Lambert, 1990, p. 1!). Children may come to understand themselves and the world around them through the process of engaging in the creation of, and reflection on, their world of make-believe (O’Neil & Lambert, 1990).

O’Neil and Lambert (1990) consider growth in the students’ understanding of themselves, understanding the human behavior of others, and understanding the world around them to be the most significant aspects of learning which is related to drama experiences. A likely focus for using drama in teaching is providing students opportunities to think and feel differently as they adopt the roles of characters from
stories. "Students will grow in their abilities to use drama forms and benefit from using drama as a tool for learning content" (O'Neil & Lambert, 1990, p. 13).

The use of drama has influenced the development of curriculum. Drama activities may promote students' abilities to engage in: "Enquiry, Critical and Constructive Thought, Problem-Solving, the Skills of Comparison, Interpretation, Judgment and Discrimination, Further learning and research" (O'Neil & Lambert, 1990, p. 15-16). "In the primary school it is potentially easier for drama to act as an integrating force in the curriculum and for teachers to draw on different subject areas in order to create a wide range of learning outcomes from the drama" (O'Neil & Lambert, 1990, p. 15-16).

Stabler (1979) contends that drama is not simply a convenient follow-up activity, but a dynamic way of linking curriculum together. Teachers choose to use drama because it is the most appropriate means to achieve the specific kind of learning children need. Drama enables children to explore human experiences through specific circumstances, explore attitudes and opinions, and represent abstract concepts through concrete situations.

Literature and Drama Connections

Teachers work with drama and story in different ways. In drama, a teacher must work to suspend the plot so as to allow the children to live in the present moment. In the typical narrative, the teacher attempts to help children unravel a sequential series of events. Langer (1953) asserted that drama is not a medium which attempts to address a complete reality or a specific event, but leads individuals to make commitments to future experiences and consider possible consequences. O'Neil & Lambert (1990) suggest that learning or changes in understanding which are associated with drama experiences embody these elements in the drama.
Barton and Booth (1990) suggest that the teacher must help children develop thoughtful responses and connections to the stories through providing aesthetic and affective opportunities for them to engage with stories. Thus the children will come to realize the complexity of stories and appreciate the depth of feelings and wondrous possibilities that stories offer to them. “We must design activities that cause children to read carefully, extend their knowledge, elaborate upon first understanding, invent new patterns of thought” (Barton & Booth, 1990, p. 91). When children are given the opportunity to engage with stories and share their ideas, they are more willing to express their true feelings and relay their most real desires. Collaborative responses grow when teachers intervene with activities which extend the personal responses children have regarding a story. These collaborative responses help children generate a wider and more thoughtful appreciation of the story (Barton & Booth, 1990).

Barton & Booth (1990) explain that sharing stories is a “complete experience” and it is not necessary to have children respond through some external means. “Children must be offered the freedom to make their own choices and be given generous opportunities to read, to get lost in a book if need be.” The “communal sharing of literature” builds community among readers (Barton & Booth, 1990, p. 93). However, it is precisely the children’s talk about stories that enables teachers to learn how to teach with stories.

Listening to children, taking heed of what they tell us about stories, can influence considerably how we teach with stories. Children want a good yarn. They want to be drawn into stories, to be part of them, and at times to identify with them (Barton & Booth, 1990, p. 93).

Being pulled into a story implies that an event will follow the process of reading. “When it comes to sharing stories through reading, the important thing is not so much how many books we have read, but whether reading has been a means of
relating the experiences of our lives to those of others" (Barton & Booth, 1990, p. 97). Barton and Booth (1990) suggest that the most important aspect of the reading experience is the action that follows the reading. We must "do something with what we have read" (p. 97).

Students may find a new story inside a story they have read. They may include details in their story that are based on an exact incident, the particular theme, or specific characters they have encountered in an original story (Barton & Booth, 1990). When children engaged with stories through a drama, they shared the responsibility of being in the role of teacher. Consequently, this appeared to help them focus their energies on the process of reading. Their experience not only boosted their stature of themselves as readers but also increased the level of competence they had as readers.

Children need the opportunity to become involved with the story. The process of listening to stories, discussing stories, and interacting with others about stories is essential if children are to comprehend the process of engaging with printed materials at all. The experiences of interacting with stories allow children the opportunity to gain information and come to understand and appreciate the inherent life of a text. Children participate in the process of making the text an oral experience when they have access to models of oral reading available to them (Barton & Booth, 1990). O'Neil and Lambert (1990) discuss four elements (using theater elements, working in role, questioning, and discussion and reflection on drama experiences) which demonstrate the importance of drama as a form of oral reading for children. The unpredictable nature of dramas illicit spontaneous responses from any audience. Consequently, we are forced to engage with the drama through our thoughts and feelings which is the intention of drama.
To capitalize on engaging the thoughts and feelings of children in a drama experience through using theater elements, a teacher must provide:

a precise focus for the action, identify and build on the emotions inherent in the situation, create effective moments of surprise, use the device of contrast to vary the pace of the drama, build a sense of atmosphere and occasion and add to the tension, and employ objects which can help to build belief in the situation and which, with appropriate action, may also come to symbolize meanings beyond the particular context of the drama (O’Neil & Lambert, 1990, p 137-38).

When the teacher adopts the role of a character, the children must work together to find a remedy for situation. This drama strategy demands that the children respond spontaneously because they have not had time to plan a specific outcome in advance. However, “some children may not find it easy to function as members of a large group or to face the challenges which the role presents” (O’Neil & Lambert, 1990, p 139). Adopting a role is an effective device for creating a drama, yet there are times when working in role does not work. O’Neil and Lambert (1990) suggest that it may be necessary to stop the drama when the role is not working and sort out the difficulties through a discussion. Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of using the role device is the opportunity children have to see reality and gain new ideas through the process of drama. They learn to build on their experiences and knowledge of others in the group also (O’Neil & Lambert, 1990).

Group discussion time is critical in the drama process. Teachers must provide opportunities for children to discuss and reflect on their drama experiences. O’Neil and Lambert (1990) refer to Gavin Bolton to speak specifically of the importance of reflection as a process for using drama effectively with children. “Gavin Bolton has said that ‘experience in itself is neither productive nor unproductive; it is how you
reflect on it that makes it significant” (O’Neil & Lambert, 1990, p. 144). Reflection on a drama is most productive when children take an active role in the drama. To assist children in their process of reflecting on a drama, they may become a visitor to the classroom, act as a commentator for the drama, or pretend to be an outsider of the community in which the drama is happening (O’Neil & Lambert, 1990, p. 144).

Thus, using drama as a learning mode and a whole-language, literature-based instructional format are complimentary approaches which facilitate learning. In addition, “thoughtful discussions, writing, reflecting, and sharing books can help children acquire more sophisticated aspects of moral behavior” (Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz, 1992, p. 12). Reading children’s literature and engaging in drama provide opportunities for children to create a network of vicarious explorations which may facilitate the understanding and experience the child seeks.

Summary

Teaching and learning about homelessness and about people who are homeless in a classroom setting with young children is complex. Differing social and political beliefs about the causes of and responses to homelessness have been presented to illustrate the difficulties teachers, children, and society in general have in understanding and addressing this issue. Social Reconstruction and Multicultural Theory, Service Learning, and An Ethic of Care form the foundation of literatures reviewed for this study because they outline processes which lead to social change in schools. These three literatures advance why teaching and learning about homelessness and people who are homeless is an important concern for teachers in classrooms with young children and how the process of teaching and learning about homelessness will effect social, emotional, and academic changes in children. In addition, teacher/researcher collaboration literatures and literatures concerning the position of the researcher in collaborative research have been reviewed because they
form the parameters which guided how the classroom sections of this inquiry were conducted.

Furthermore, research literatures about curriculum planning and the implementation of curriculum were reviewed since the major findings in this inquiry reflect what happened in a classroom when homelessness and information about people who are homeless was introduced to the teacher and her students. The Project Approach to learning and the ideas of an Emergent Curriculum were investigated since these frameworks for processes of instruction were operant in the classroom setting. In particular, the literatures which outline a whole-language/literature-based approach to classroom literacy instruction and the use of drama as a learning tool were examined because they were central to the learning experiences in this classroom and used as instructional tools with the young children in this inquiry.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

History of the Project

Stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems. They banish the indifference often generated by samples, treatments, and faceless subjects (Noddings and Witherell, 1991, p. 280).

In order to understand how I have situated this inquiry within a qualitative narrative framework, it is necessary to know the history of my understanding of, and interest in learning about homelessness and people who are homeless. Nearly twenty years ago I first began to think about the interactions my elementary students had with guests at a homeless shelter during their school-sponsored service project (see Chapter One). I began to notice changes in their attitudes toward people who were homeless and an increase in their desire to interact with them. As time went on, I became more aware of the causes of homelessness. Through reading and my casual contact with service programs, I began to question the reasons for the disparity of resources among those of differing economic and social classes in our society. My curiosity regarding homelessness and society’s treatment of people who are homeless was coupled with my interests in how contemporary social issues in children’s literature were addressed. These experiences led to this formal investigation.
A Qualitative Theoretical Framework

In the second edition of *Designing Qualitative Research*, Marshall and Rossman (1995) outlined several significant research concerns which I consider germane to understanding the theoretical framework of my study. First, a salient feature of some descriptive qualitative research is to document specific events that occur with regards to a particular phenomenon. My inquiry is a description of how a whole language, literature-based approach to classroom instruction promotes understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness. The data have been integrated and interpreted through an emploted narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995). I have attempted to make sense of my participation (Heshusius, 1994) in the events which occurred with a teacher and her students while they engaged in reading and responding to literature about homelessness.

Second, descriptive qualitative research may be a description of the naturally occurring events in a social setting which address the myriad of questions regarding beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, processes and structures which form the milieu of a particular phenomenon (Marshall and Rossman 1995). In my inquiry, I have described events which occurred over the past twenty years, but I have placed particular emphasis on the explanation of events from late February through early June during the 1996-97 school year as they happened in the classroom of a teacher named Karen. Subsequent to these narrative pieces are my interpretations of the “storied lives” or specific behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes which were made evident through a narrative analysis of the data. “The researcher explores a story told by a participant and records that story through the construction of narrative” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 86). The narratives pieces I have constructed reflect a journey that culminates with classroom structures and processes employed by the children, their teacher, and me in the midst of our engagement with the phenomenon of homelessness.
Third, some descriptive qualitative inquiries address contemporary issues (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Homelessness is a phenomenon which some families and children experience. Consequently, schools and teachers must address the needs of children and families who are homeless, understand the causes of homelessness, and engage with other community members to alleviate the suffering homelessness causes. Lindsey (1996) purports that more than a third of the people who are homeless are family groupings. This segment of the homeless population has increased substantially within the last decade. Teachers and children are concerned with the present day phenomena of homelessness because it has an impact on the ideas and lives of children, teachers, and other members in our school settings.

**Narrative Discourse**

In *Designing Qualitative Research*, Marshall and Rossman (1995) assert that “narrative inquiry requires a great deal of sensitivity between participant and researcher. The inquiry should be a mutual and sincere collaboration, a caring relationship akin to friendship that is established over time for full participation in the storytelling, retelling, and reliving of personal experiences” (p. 86-87).

Polkinghorne (1988) argues that humans exist in three distinct realms - the organic realm, the material realm, and the realm of meaning. Narratives are one format that help humans organize the circumstances of their lives into meaningful events. “The narrative attends to the temporal dimension of human existence and configures events into a unity. The events become meaningful in relation to the theme or point of the narrative. Narratives organize events into wholes that have beginnings, middles, and ends” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 183). Narratives are common place. They are an accessible format for presenting information. Narratives have an impact on our construction of lived experiences. They help us frame significant episodes in life and have gained prominence in the study of humans.
Mathematical and logical truth are no longer the only accepted proofs of certainty. Research should strive to produce believable results (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Polkinghorne (1988) discusses two general types of narrative research in *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*. Descriptive narratives are investigations which describe narratives held by a group or an individual. Explanatory narratives attempt “to construct a narrative account explaining “why” a situation or event involving human actions has happened (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 161).

**Descriptive narrative research.** Descriptive Narratives rely on the context and people involved in the narrative to tell and give meaning to an event. These narratives are shaped in form and content by those whose story is being told. They are the result of the collaborative efforts between the researcher and those being studied (Polkinghorne, 1988).

**Explanatory narrative research.** Explanatory narratives are investigative in nature. They are often reports which take a narrative form and link events and actions together to illustrate how individuals arrived at a specific outcome. The researcher must explain why things happened as they did. Explanatory narratives are retrospective in nature. A multitude of connected events and decisions regarding a specific experience are examined to illuminate the conclusion. Significant events and specific decisions are highlighted in explanatory narrative research to illustrate their impact on a particular outcome. An author’s final product may read like a historical account instead of a report (which may show a correlation between various measurement devices). “The narrative research report recreates the history or narrative that has led to the story’s end, and draws from it the significant factors that have “caused” the final event” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 171). This document is a retelling, through explanatory narrative, of the events in Ellen’s classroom with her
students. It reflects their understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness and how they, as a caring group of individuals, respond to people who are homeless.

The goal of narrative research then is to explain why a series of events have happened. Polkinghorne (1988, 1995) refers to Atkinson’s work to explain the elements which must be present in explanatory narrative research. (1) Narratives research should be “intelligible in human terms.” (2) The narrative should have a “unified subject matter.” (3) The narrative should be “causally related.” Ultimately, explanatory narrative research must provide a complete and meaningful answer to a worthy question.

The underlying premise of explanatory narrative research is that humans change the course of events through their intervention and action. A change in human action is the catalyst which sets in motion a different series of events. Explanatory narrative research recognizes the power people possess to be a catalyst of change rather than to simply allowing things to occur. Understanding and interpreting what people do and the ability people have to make things happen through their actions and intervention is the driving force behind the researcher’s work. Because explanatory narrative research is retrospective in nature, the researcher must trace and demonstrate how a series of specific decisions or actions by participants produce outcomes.

A Narrative Way of Knowing

Bruner (1986) suggests that stories must create two images simultaneously. They must reveal the actions of those involved in the story, the plot or story grammar, and they must reveal the conscious experiences (what is known, thought, and felt) of those who are the focus of the story. Most important, “Stories reach sad or comic or absurd denouements, while theoretical arguments are simply conclusive or inconclusive” (Bruner, 1986, p. 14). “So, we need stories that tell of emotions and dangers and the unforeseen, because that is part of the way we understand ourselves.
as human beings” (Rosenstand, 1994, p. 447). The various stories told through my data have allowed me to focus, as Bruner (1986) has, “in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course” (p. 13).

“Humans learn about themselves and each other by telling stories” (Rosenstand, 1994, p. 437). Rosenstand (1994) contends that we are temporal creatures, and thus, think of events and experiences as happening before and after other events, or as a chronology of beginnings, middles, and ends. These story formats bring order to our lives and allow us to make sense of things. Our stories occur through our familial relationships and in the natural social groupings where we find ourselves. These relationships provide the necessary scaffolding we need to be able to comprehend life. However, we are not simply members of a familial or cultural experience, but we share in an historical and contemporary narrative experience with others too. Without a sense of being a member of the narrative experience, we live life "as a series of disjointed events" (Rosenstand, 1994, p. 438).

Greene (1995) contends that the process of telling and retelling our stories is a liberatory experience. This is true especially for those who have been marginalized by the dominant culture. Telling our stories provides an opportunity for us to pose questions about, and understand the how and why of events in our lives. We understand our lives in a narrative form according to Maclntyre (1981) and Taylor (1989). Sharing stories helps us to see our connections to others. Stories allow us to find direction in our existence.

While the focus of my inquiry is on the “storied” events which happened in Ellen’s classroom, my story and the story of others coming to know about homelessness and people who are homeless are intertwined and layered beneath the
classroom and curriculum stories. Noddings and Witherell (1991) suggest that each story is connected to all of the others because,

Stories and narrative, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning and belonging in our lives. They attach us to others and to our own histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character, and even advice on what we might do with our lives (p. 1).

Narrative Writing as Research (Telling a Story)

Explanatory narrative research is retrospective. Therefore, I have constructed narratives of my journey which began nearly twenty years ago and culminated with Ellen and her students in the spring of 1997. Through my journey I (we) came to know about homelessness and about people who are homeless. Over the years, I have collected pieces of these stories, poems children have written, personal experiences, and children’s books. “A narrative researcher’s data - interviews, documents, and other sources - are the traces of past events; they help uncover the events leading up to the phenomenon under investigation” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 174). I have included various documents and images to illustrate or trace how I (we) understand this phenomenon. But, these bits of experiences, documents, interviews, field notes, and images that I have carried away from this experience are a limited story. They are the partial representations of past events but nonetheless helpful in understanding the process of investigating this phenomenon. Polkinghorne (1988) reminds us that “Narrative explanations are based on past facts. These are then organized into a unified story in which the links between the events are developed, and the significance provided” (p. 174).

Barbara Seidl (1996) refers to these pieces of data as “story kernels.” For her, “Reviewing lesson plans, reading materials, and curricular documents contributed toward more complex stories” (p. 127). Witherell and Noddings (1992) speak of
various kinds of stories and narratives. They locate narratives in the conversations and dialogues they hear. I refer to these "story kernels" as narrative pieces. They are pieces of conversations, bits of dialogue, and parts of the story which happened in phases. I refer to them as narrative pieces because, for me, they are pieces of a larger more complex story.

Some of these narrative pieces are portions of informal interviews, bits of conversations, and field notes from observations of the events I participated in with Ellen and her students and excerpts from journal entries about my volunteer experience at a local shelter program. Some of these narrative pieces are parts of interviews that I had with educators and school professionals who are learning and teaching about homelessness and/or professionals working with children who are homeless. In all of the narrative pieces, I have used the voices of those telling the narratives as much as possible and have only provided connecting words or transitions to help the flow of each narrative piece.

Collectively, these narrative pieces tell a story of the plight of people who are homeless and learning and teaching about homelessness. Specifically, it tells about the processes of learning and teaching about homelessness for Ellen, her students, and me. The narrative pieces told by the children incorporate or examine their written and artistic work, the play themes they engaged in, and our interactions based on these experiences and events. Finally, these narrative pieces tell me that we know what to do for individuals who are homeless and how to eliminate homelessness.

Essence of Methodology

The data I have collected and interpreted--interviews, my field notes from observations, audio and video tapes of classroom experiences--are the foundation of the narratives which I interpret in chapter four. However, I did not arrive at a narrative format as a means of looking at my data early in the inquiry process. At
first, I anticipated that I would write a fairly typical dissertation. My goal in this investigation was to help the children question their attitudes about, and actions toward, people who are homeless. I wanted to guide, or structure this project so that, through reading literature with children and implementing activities with them, they would change their ideas and attitudes about people who are homeless.

I believed my interactions and interventions with Ellen, their teacher, would be evolutionary and dependent on our growth as caring teachers and our ability to collaborate with one another. I believed I would be able to promote political and social change in her classroom through the practice of assisting her with the implementation of curriculum. I was essentially helping her to try out practices through the illumination and evaluation of a set of ideas (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972 (see Appendix A)), I assumed that my participation would help her and her students to be more accepting of who “the homeless” are and discover how we can act on their behalf to change our social and political systems for the benefit of people who are homeless.

In order to complete this project, it was necessary that I move through a series of practical and conceptual changes. I had to learn how to become a teaching-partner with Ellen and a learning-partner with her students. In addition, I had to see that my data told a series of stories about how/what children and their teacher learn about homelessness and people who are homeless. Being able to accept these changes helped me to discover my “role” in this process of this investigation. Furthermore, I had to discover how to listen, talk, and write about this experience. First, I will explain the what kinds of data were collected.

Data Collection Strategies

In order to gain a full understanding of the interactions and processes that affect changes in attitudes among the individuals in this case study, I have employed methods of observation and interviewing commonly associated with ethnography.
Wolcott (1988) describes ethnographic methods as a means of creating “a picture of the ‘way of life’” of a group. My methods rely, in part, on Spradley’s (1979) models of formal and informal interviews with “informants” to gain insight into the specific cultural life of a particular group. Also, through the practice of active participant observation, as outlined by Spradley (1980), I became a member of the learning community which allowed me to gain better insight into the teacher and her students’ interactions. Through active participation, I was able to search for patterns that illustrate the “regularity” of what happens, or what is typically the case with a teacher and her students when they engage in curricular activities regarding literature about homelessness and the subsequent activities they employ in order to learn about people who are homeless.

In an effort to validate the information that I have gathered for this project, I have been involved as an active participant (Spradley, 1980). “The active participant seeks to do what other people are doing, not merely to gain acceptance” (Spradley, 1980, p. 60). I have conducted formal and informal interviews with the teacher and her students and have made video and audio recordings of my field experiences with them. These recordings and my field notes have been used in an effort to support my findings and in order to triangulate the data that I have collected. These data were collected in phases from December of 1996 through June of 1997 (see Figure 1, p. 87).
### Chronology of Activities and Data Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of Research</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase One</strong></td>
<td>Site Selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1996 - February 1997</td>
<td>Making site visits, audio taping exploratory interviews, observations, writing field notes, gaining entry to participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase Two:</strong></td>
<td>Planning Curriculum With Ellen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late February 1997 - Mid March 1997</td>
<td>Building rapport through site visits, initial interviews with Ellen, audio and video taping observations and conversations, planning the homelessness curriculum, participating in learning activities, collecting documents from the research site, writing field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase Three</strong></td>
<td>Implementation of Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1997 - Mid April 1997</td>
<td>Participating in learning activities, organizing and coordinating service learning project, audio and video taping observations and conversations, collecting documents from research site, writing field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase Four</strong></td>
<td>Monitoring Lasting Effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1996 - June 1997</td>
<td>Participating in learning activities, audio and video taping observations and conversations, collecting documents from research site, final interviews with Ellen, writing field notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.** Timeline of study and research activities.
Audio tapes were made of all the field visits I made to Ellen’s classroom. To avoid undue interest in, and/or minimize the distraction Ellen and some students might feel about being audio taped, I used a micro-cassette tape recorder. I generally turned it on and placed it on an object which was out of reach of the children who were seated on the floor in the carpet area. I was careful to place it where it would be within range of the children so as to record their voices and interactions. When children were sent to tables or centers to work in small groups or independently, I carried the recorder with me in my shirt pocket.

Special events (pre-planned activities when I had a more central role to play) were audio and video taped. On the occasions when video tapes were made, the tripod was set-up at one corner of the carpet area. A wide angle lens was used in order to capture the interactions of the entire group. If/when children left the group to do work independently, attempts were made to document their interactions through panning the classroom and selecting each group to focus on at a variable interval rate. I reviewed the audio and video tapes to create notes and to clarify ideas and reflect on the process and progress of the inquiry.

The field data that supports this inquiry are twenty-five audio tapes, nine video tapes, photocopies, photographs, slides of the students’ work, and my field note entries. Of the total number of audio and video taped interactions, twenty were partially or completely transcribed and analyzed. The remaining audio and video tapes which were exploratory in nature, helpful with site selection and background information about homelessness and programs which provide assistance to people who are homeless were listened to, but they were not transcribed. I have included a general overview of the research study timeline and research activities (shown above).
Position of the Researcher

Central to this inquiry is my developing sense that I must be a caring person and exercise what Noddings (1992) refers to as an Ethic of Care in my work as a researcher. It is my belief that “Caring is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors” (Noddings, 1992, p. 17). Heshusius (1994) provides more insight into my position as a researcher through her explanation of participatory consciousness. She suggests that participation is the vehicle through which a researcher comes to know information about others. It is futile to attempt to distance oneself and/or attempt to regulate the distance between “self” and others. I came to know information through my involvement in numerous ways on numerous levels with Ellen and her students. I was able to participate and sought to engage in the processes of learning along with Ellen and the students at every opportunity. In addition, my expertise as a teacher, knowledge of children’s literature, especially books with a homelessness theme, and my desire to work as an advocate for people who are homeless were resources I could offer to Ellen and her students.

Becoming Collaborators

I knew Ellen through her participation in the Professional Development School (PDS) when she was doing her student teaching. I was her supervisor from the university and managed to stay in touch with her through social and PDS connections and functions. In addition, my prior work experience with Ellen had laid the foundation for further collaboration. We had worked well together. I felt comfortable with her. Ellen had been an excellent student teacher. She was dynamic in her instructional approach and expressed a deep level of care for the children in her classroom. She had not been teaching for a long time when we began the project, but her previous life experiences, her knowledge as a parent, and her enthusiasm for learning were the great strengths she possessed. These qualities, made it easy for me
to see her as an equal. I saw my role as being a resource person (bringing information to Ellen about homelessness) and I anticipated being less involved with direct instruction of students. At first, I attempted to collaborate with Ellen as “an expert” and saw my role of researcher as an active participant observer as defined by Spradley (1980). However, my role evolved in the process of the research. Through the evolution of the project, my role and the whole course of the project changed, as will be indicated in chapter four.

Classroom Study with Ellen

This project, the classroom observations and interactions I have had with a specific group of K-1 graders and their teacher, Ellen, began in late February of 1997 and went through to the end of the school year. During that time, I visited, on average, two mornings or afternoons each week, and I met with Ellen formally and informally at school and at her home to discuss the progress of our project. In addition, I coordinated activities with the students in Ellen’s classroom and children who were being served in a shelter program. While my intent was to frame a descriptive qualitative inquiry, a typical case study employing ethnographic methodology, the process has been an evolving one which has caused me to question my role as a researcher and the process of doing research in schools. However, the process of locating a research site and the progress of the research were standard in practice.

Research Site and Gaining Access

College Hill Elementary is within walking distance of the university. The school building is perhaps 75-100 years old. It is constructed of brick and has a newer section which includes the gymnasium which was probably built sometime within the last thirty years. The school is nestled in among large, palatial homes which are being used as fraternity and sorority houses and homes which are now
multiplex apartments, having been converted from single family dwellings to accommodate university students. The school’s surrounding play areas are huge by most standards. There is plenty of hard surface area, climbing apparatus, and terraced play space for children at recess time.

College Hill is part of the Central Public School system. It is an alternative school which has a focus on informal educational instruction. Parents elect for their children to attend College Hill, but the school also accepts neighborhood children. Consequently, the students are from diverse socio-economic and racial groups. Due to the school’s location, children of students, staff, and professors, attending or working at the university, send their children to College Hill. The immediate neighborhood was once elegant, but is now in decline. The school is surrounded by large trees and turn-of-the-century mansions. Their stately presence and the school’s convenience make it appear to be from another time period. However, it is sandwiched between two heavily traveled streets which cut through the city on the North/South axis. Located several blocks away from the school, the neighborhoods are less well-maintained. The abundance of multiplex housing units draw a large, transient population of university students and families who are seeking lower rents. These qualities destabilize the neighborhood.

Ellen's Classroom

The classrooms at College Hill are immense. They have 15 foot ceilings and enormous windows. Each window requires two separate shades to cover the top and bottom portions of the window. There are two entrances and exits to Ellen’s classroom. They are at opposite ends of the room and open onto the wide, central hallway which runs the length of the building dividing it into two sections. Ellen’s classroom is located on the first floor at the back of the building and overlooks the outdoor, hard surface play area. It has a large storage and cloakroom area at one end
of the room where Ellen and the children hang their coats, bookbags, etc. Ellen has cupboard space in the cloakroom for storage of books and other teacher materials.

Ellen’s classroom was divided into very distinct areas. For instance, there was a water table located near the sink and painting area. A sand table was located on the opposite side of the classroom and was a favorite play space during free choice. She and the children were not fastidious about keeping materials where they belonged or maintaining a high level of organization. It was not uncommon to find pencils in the puzzles area, etc. There seemed to be a constructive chaos about the room. Many projects and processes were happening simultaneously. Students’ artwork and project work adorned the walls of the classroom and the hallway immediately outside the room. There seemed to be an endless parade of projects and activities going on as children cycled through their writing and painting processes.

Figure 2. Ellen’s classroom, loft area and small group tables.
There was a loft area approximately four feet above floor level which contained socio-dramatic play materials. The housekeeping area was directly below it. At one end of the housekeeping area beneath the loft was the kitchen sink, refrigerator, and stove. Abutting this kitchen area was the writing supply (markers, pencils, scissors, paper, rulers, etc.) bookshelf which opened onto the classroom workspace. Ellen had a rolling cart at the end of the writing supply area toward the central portion of the room where children kept their folders and journals. Ellen and the children had easy access to this supply area, the individual and group work tables, and computers. Near the supply area, arranged about through the center of the room, were various square and circular tables where the children could do their independent work, morning journals, writing responses, and other activities.

At the opposite end from the kitchen section in the housekeeping/loft area were two bookshelves which opened on to the classroom near the cloakroom. This was an “L” shaped area which was filled with numerous kinds of building blocks, puzzles, and interlocking construction type materials. The boys were especially fond of the interlocking construction pieces and continued to create various types of space travel vehicles throughout my time at College Hill. The “Space” theme overlapped in a number of ways with the investigation of homelessness that Ellen and the children did which will be examined in more detail in chapter four.
Figure 3. Ellen’s Classroom, carpet area.

Opposite the loft/socio-dramatic/housekeeping area was the carpeted area and/or group time meeting space where Ellen did most of her instruction with the students. This space was bound on three sides like an open rectangle. On the side nearest the sink, water table, and painting area was a huge two-shelf bookshelf. It was filled to overflowing with books of various genres and reading levels. A swivel bookrack containing paperback books stood at the end of the bookshelf in the central part of the classroom. This rack contained multiple copies of, and the older versions of, the reading materials used for reading instruction. The chalkboard ran along the wall that was adjoining the school hallway and Ellen’s desk, two-drawer file cabinet, and a book display area were located opposite of the bookshelf. Ellen had a free-standing chart where she conducted language experience approach activities, etc. which was in front of the bookshelf and chalkboard at a diagonal angle. A small area
of the chalkboard was used to write daily news messages, calendar of events, etc. The rest of the chalkboard space was used for more permanent displays of children’s work, etc.

In order to have Ellen and the children participate in this inquiry, I was obliged to have signed consent forms on file with The Ohio State University Human Subjects Review Board. I was also required to have permission from the Central Public Schools in order to conduct research within the county (see Appendix B Consent Form). The parents who agreed to have their children participate returned the signed consent forms to me. I have not used any data from or about children who did not return a consent form. None of the participants, excluding myself, have been identified by their true names. Research is conducted at College Hill on a fairly regular basis. The children and parents are accustomed to having visitors to the classrooms who are working on special projects.

From time to time parents would come in to assist with classroom instruction, pick-up children for special appointments, etc. I did not get to know them well, but I was able to converse with them and gained insight into their feelings and thoughts about our project. While I found these interactions helpful, they were not the focus of my inquiry, and consequently, I did not audio record these conversations, but made reference to them in field notes, etc. The focus of my inquiry was on Ellen and her students, their interactions, and learning processes related to homelessness.

Data Analysis

“Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 111). With regards to narrative research, “The goal of analysis is to uncover the common themes or plots in the data” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 177). In part, the responsibility of the researcher is to recognize how different and various other possibilities would have resulted if the
actions of participants would have happened differently too (Polkinghorne, 1988). The criticism of narrative research is that it is based on the narrow focus of understanding the life of the individual. However, it has the potential to be global in its ability to address “sociological questions about groups, communities, and contexts through the individual’s lived experience” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 87).

Through carefully reading and re-reading my transcripts, field notes, and reviewing the video tapes of classroom experiences, narrative pieces that centered around particular themes or common ideas began to emerge. These narrative pieces were revisited time and again and refined through discussions with my peer debriefing group and dissertation committee.

**The Narrative Pieces Produced From the Data**

The narrative pieces I have created from the data parallel the four phases of my research inquiry timeline which I have presented earlier (see Figure 1, p. 87). They are constructed from interviews and bits of conversations with educators, children, and social service professionals working with people who are homeless and my field notes from observations. In phase one, I will present narrative pieces which examine changes in understanding about people who are homeless. In addition, the first phase of narrative pieces examine how children’s and adult’s conceptual knowledge of what it “means” to be homeless differs.

In phase two, I will present narrative pieces which examine changes in understanding and how being homeless carries a stigma that can have terrible social repercussions with peers for children, and/or create psychological distresses for adults, who are homeless. In addition, the narrative pieces in phase two examine the development of curriculum about homelessness and demonstrate that the development of curriculum is dynamic and/or emergent when addressing homelessness issues and that collaboration among teachers and researchers is an effective and powerful way of
teaching and learning about homelessness. Furthermore, the narrative pieces show continuing changes in understanding about people who are homeless.

In phase three, I will present narrative pieces which illustrate how children and adults demonstrate care for individuals who are homeless through their encounters with others and through their creation of art, drama, and writing focused on homelessness. Finally, in phase four, I will present narrative pieces which illustrate some successes and failures of learning and teaching about people who are homeless and about homelessness (see Figure 4, pp. 103-04).

The Interpretation of the Narrative Pieces

The narrative pieces are followed by an interpretation based on the following criteria. 1) How do they represent information children and adults have learned about the feelings and experiences of people who are homeless? 2) How do they reflect the learning of adults and children concerning the physical and emotional needs of individuals who are homeless? 3) How do they represent learning about the curriculum, and/or employing curricular approaches, which link content area learning and skills learning to the goals of multicultural education and social reconstruction? 4) How do they demonstrate the abilities young children have to think critically about homelessness, and/or act in a caring manner toward people who are homeless?

Peer Debriefing

Early in the process of my inquiry, I became involved with a group of doctoral candidates who were engaged in conducting research in elementary classrooms. We began to meet an average of three hours each week to discuss the process and progress of our work. While each of us was engaged in different research projects, under the direction of different advisers and committees, we shared common threads of research interests in the areas of literature, literacy, and culture. All of us were
engaged in case study projects and were at similar places in the process of gathering and analyzing data.

Our group discussions provided opportunities for us to receive/give feedback from/to one another. We shared our insights and questioned each other about findings, discussed literary styles and formats for data display, read drafts of each other’s chapters in progress, and generally coaxed one another through every aspect of organizing and writing our inquiries. Our group had been meeting for approximately six months when I accepted a teaching position at another university.

I made infrequent visits for meetings with the group during fall and spring semesters, but was able to maintain a fairly regular level of discussion with the group through contact via e-mail. In addition, I was able to attend meetings with the group when I visited during breaks and when I had scheduled to meet with my adviser.

Once I had settled into my teaching position at another university, I began meeting with a colleague who was also in the process of writing her dissertation. We began to meet on a weekly basis. This experience proved to be helpful to both of us. During weekly meetings we focused on setting writing goals to finish specific sections, we shared articles and books which gave support and further credibility to our research, and we provided feedback to one another on the process and progress of our work.

It was through meeting with my peers that I discovered how to think and write about my inquiry process. I had realized while doing observations in Ellen’s classroom that our relationship and roles as teachers and participants had been more flexible (or so it seemed) than those experienced by my peers. However, my peers were the catalyst which helped me to explore these differences and find ways to talk and write about them. My peer debriefing group(s) has(have) been an invaluable
resource. My peers have provided expert advice and criticism which have improved my ability to discuss my research and the quality of my writing about it.

While it is perhaps impractical or impossible to establish and maintain a peer debriefing group for some researchers, the experience of meeting with others to examine the content, the process, and the progress of “doing” inquiry has been extremely beneficial for me. My peer debriefing group has helped me to examine and reexamine my data to locate and validate the narratives it tells.

Limitations

The written portion of this inquiry represents only a small segment of the depth, detail, and impact of this research on the thinking and lives of Ellen, her students, and me. I was available for observations and interactions that happened between and among Ellen and her students, but there were countless episodes which occurred during my absence. Ellen reported to me about how the children demonstrated their thinking, talking, and engaging with one another about the issue of homelessness.

While our focus may have been limited due to other curriculum demands, or instructive in nature, the children began to incorporate “homeless” themes in their play and writing. These connections are clearly displayed in the artifacts I managed to document. I was able to verify them in my discussions and interviews with Ellen at the close of the study.

Summary

“The research methods we choose say something about our views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge and our perspective on the nature of reality” (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 5). Consequently, I have situated my study of teaching and learning about homelessness and people who are homeless with young children and their teacher within a qualitative narrative framework. Through the course of this
investigation, I have employed the ethnographic methods of observation and interviewing to collect data. These data were then retold and interpreted through an explanatory narrative format. I have examined my role as a researcher and my understanding of homelessness and people who are homeless as a participant within the context of this classroom study. Each facet of this research project, the construction of my theoretical framework, conceptual and practical shifts in my thinking regarding the research process, and the written product have been shared with a peer group and advisory committee who have helped me to hone and clarify its content. Ultimately, the narrative pieces which follow “reveal my values and attitudes, my sense of my own cares and responsibilities” (Pagano, 1992, p. 199) with regard to teaching and learning about homelessness and people who are homeless.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS
Narrative Pieces and Interpretations

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) define data analysis as the process of “organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned” (p. 127). I have organized and presented the data as a collection of narrative pieces which are arranged in chronological phases and unified into a complete story by their focus on specific aspects of learning and teaching about people who are homeless and the phenomenon of homelessness. The narrative pieces provide evidence that learning and teaching about homelessness is appropriate and valuable for young children. These narrative pieces are followed by my interpretation of them. “Stories call us to consider what we know, how we know, and what and whom we care about” (Noddings and Witherell, 1991, p. 13). Consequently, the narrative pieces that I have retold and interpreted demonstrate what, and how, adults and children know about homelessness and how they care for people who are homeless.

These narrative pieces are my sense-making of the experiences from the lives of children and adults who are learning and teaching about people who are homeless and about homelessness. After careful scrutiny of the “events and happenings” (their experiences), I constructed “a coherent developmental account” of their unfolding (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). It is through linking these narrative pieces together that a unified story emerged. This story making process allowed me to see how learning and teaching about homelessness unfolded in a classroom setting, what experiences informed
people, and how new learning helps reconstruct prior ideas and experiences effecting change in the lives of children and the adults working with them.

Interpretive Frames / Iterative Process

The basic questions I sought to answer are: (1) How do educators’ understandings of homelessness evolve as a result of collaborative interactions? (2) How do a teacher and a researcher create curriculum and/or allow it to emerge in her classroom to instruct students about homelessness? (3) What are the salient aspects (and resulting interactions) of that curriculum in her whole language, literature-based classroom for K-1 students? (4) How do young children’s interests in, and knowledge about, homelessness and people who are homeless develop through use of a whole-language, literature-based approach? (5) Do children’s interests in, and knowledge about homelessness and people who are homeless lead to social action and changes in understanding?

To address these questions, I have presented narrative pieces which have some, or all, of the following four elements. First, the narrative pieces represent the feelings and experiences of people who have had interactions with people who are homeless. Second, the stories reflect what adults and children learn concerning the physical and emotional needs of people who are homeless. Third, the stories provide ideas which help focus the development of curriculum and curricular approaches, align them with the goals of multicultural education and social reconstruction, and link these goals to content area learning and skills learning. Fourth, the stories demonstrate the abilities young children and adults have to think critically about homelessness and/or to act in a caring manner toward people who are homeless.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of Research</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
<th>Relevant Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase One</td>
<td>Site Selection</td>
<td>Changing Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1996 -</td>
<td>Site visits, audio taping exploratory interviews, observations, writing field notes, gaining entry to participants</td>
<td>There Are Homeless People Here; Everyday People; I Am Somebody Special Because Somebody Cares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1997</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase Two</td>
<td>Planning Curriculum With Ellen</td>
<td>Changing Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late February 1997 - Mid March 1997</td>
<td>Building rapport, site visits, initial interviews with Ellen, audio and video taping observations and conversations, planning the homelessness curriculum, participating in learning activities, collecting documents, writing field notes</td>
<td>More Than Bricks and Mortar; Riding the Bus; People Just Like Me; Any One of Us</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing A Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We Can Touch People's Souls; What I Had Intended to Do; Why Homelessness? Finding the Thread; Doing Their Best; The Broader Picture</td>
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**Figure 4.** Chronology of research study and relevant narratives.
Continuation of Figure 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase of Research</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
<th>Relevant Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase Three</td>
<td>Implementation of Curriculum</td>
<td>Art, Drama, and Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1997</td>
<td>and coordinating service learning project, audio</td>
<td>The Power of Pretend; A Drama Is Amazingly Good; Helping People Who Are Homeless; Getting Started; The Homeless Cat; The Homeless Girl on the Street; When We Were Homeless; Sleeping on the Sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and video taping observations and conversations,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>collecting documents, writing field notes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Four</td>
<td>Monitoring Lasting Effects</td>
<td>The End of This Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1996 -</td>
<td>Participating in learning activities, audio and</td>
<td>The Scam; The Future Part I; The Future Part II; Peripheral Stuff, But What Really Happened; A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1997</td>
<td>video taping observations and conversations,</td>
<td>Lasting Image; Let's Build a House; Eggs; Deborah Writes About Homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>collecting documents, final interviews with Ellen,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>writing field notes</td>
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</table>
Learning About People Who Are Homeless

These first narrative pieces come from a variety of sources. Some of them are exploratory in nature and are from interviews with teachers and administrators who are involved with service learning projects. Some of the narrative pieces are the result of conversations with individuals who work as directors in the after school program in a shelter for people who are homeless. Some of the narrative pieces are excerpts from the field notes, interviews, and observations I conducted with Ellen in her classroom. In general, the first phase of narrative pieces tell about changes in understanding and the importance of caring relationships. “There Are Homeless People Here,” “Everyday People,” and “I Am Somebody Special Because Somebody Cares” provide insight into how individuals begin to learn about people who are homeless and about the destructive nature of homelessness. They demonstrate how children and adults view the experience of homelessness differently and explore how knowledge about, and interaction with, people who are homeless lead to changes in understanding. “More Than Bricks and Mortar” is a phase two narrative which examines similar ideas, but marks the beginnings of my collaborative relationship with Ellen. In addition, it provides insight into the importance of creating and sustaining caring relations with others. “Riding the Bus,” shows how the fundamental aspects of empathy and sympathy apply to caring for people who are homeless and illustrates how prejudice and/or the lack of caring in our society destroy and limit our willingness and ability to care for others. “People Just Like Me” and “Any One of Us” demonstrate how, over time and through our association with “others” through literature and service learning, we begin to understand “others” and consequently, no longer see them as “strangers.”
Changes in Understanding

There Are Homeless People Here

In the exploratory stages of my investigation. I met with various teachers and administrators who provided insight into the importance of addressing the issues of homelessness in a school setting. These first narrative pieces helped me to understand Freire’s (1995) idea that “True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the ‘rejects of life,’ who extend their trembling hands” (p. 27). Ann is a teacher in a suburban Columbus school district. She and the other faculty members, staff, and families from her school were involved in a long term, service learning project which provided aid to families who are homeless. She spoke to me about her experiences with the project and her own experience of being homeless.

Ann’s Story. I was shocked. The person who presented the workshop gave us statistics of how many people are homeless, how many children. Sitting there in their office, and I don’t know if you have ever been to Habitat’s office, it makes our lounge look nice. Bottom floor of an empty school building, one light, we sat on old chairs that rocked back and forth. This was obviously an organization where they weren’t putting all their money in their administration. As that person began to talk about things, and I started to take notes, my principal had his briefcase, he opened it up and he and I both started at the same time to take notes. This was Columbus, Ohio. It wasn’t Washington. It wasn’t St. Louis. My God, there are homeless people here (Interview, 12/1996).

Mark is the principal in the school where Ann teaches. He and Ann were responsible for establishing the Service Learning project on homelessness in their school. He spoke to me about his changing impressions about people who are
homeless. These changes were a direct result of his interaction with the service program that they conducted with their students.

**Mark's Story.** Before our program, my perceptions were no different than other adults. I think it changed for me and I think it changed for the kids. Before, I would say homeless people are perhaps homeless because they are lazy or they don’t want a job and you just fill in the list of negative personal attributes, which all of them sound like their fault. Some of these people are homeless because some big medical situation drained them of all their resources. They didn’t have insurance, or their insurance was all used up and so they literally sold everything they had for a family member. That’s what we learned about. Unfortunately, there are problems in family relationships. Parents break-up. Mom may not have been out in the work force and dad or mom leaves town. It could have been either parent that leaves town and all of a sudden, they can’t pay their rent, and they aren’t people who don’t want jobs or whatever, or who are lazy. I think it did, it caused us, and certainly me, to take a look at what homelessness is all about. That wasn’t the first time I had thought about it. One of the things that had occurred earlier this year. Ann and I took the Beltway Tour. It had some kind of Freeway-Beltway name and you visit these sites where there is evidence of very important community service projects in action. They had a little promotional video regarding Habitat and it really told about the folks that didn’t have housing. They kind of gave a profile and they had met with some unfortunate circumstances, so it was a good eye-opener too. One of the things that I have learned in the 18 years working at a school, if you want to cause change in the minds of kids and teachers, about an attitude or value of beliefs about something, that change has to occur with you first. You can’t fake them out. You don’t want to fake them out. This was real important for me.
Wow, there is some need out there and we have some families and some teachers that could provide some help. Not only could we, it’s the right thing to do (Interview, 12/1996).

After considerable searching and talking with various teachers, I began meeting with Ellen who is a teacher in the Columbus Public School System. She is originally from Britain where her experience of homelessness was very different from what she has encountered here in the US. Ellen expressed particular interest in working with me on this inquiry. She shared these insights with me in an informal interview at her home after I had made a brief visit to her classroom.

Ellen’s Story. It happens more in Britain now, but until recent times, there really wasn’t much of a problem with homelessness and a lot of the people who were actually homeless were chosen. Chosen is really not the right word, but they didn’t necessarily need to be homeless. Now they have a big homeless problem in the cities. So it wasn’t something I really ever confronted and I felt extremely uncomfortable in the beginning and when I came here first of all, everybody that stopped and asked me for money, I gave them money. I just handed it over. In New York was the first time I was confronted. I was extremely uncomfortable then, but after when it happens so frequently, you just turn your eyes away. When the library was in a different location, and the children’s section was smaller than it is now, we would often go there and there would be a homeless person sleeping. My children wouldn’t even bother. It was like the person wasn’t there (Interview, 2/1997).

Everyday People

Ellen’s Story. A friend of mine who lives in the suburbs used to bring her children down here to play with my children. We would go to the library and they would freak out to see a homeless person. They would freak out to see a
black person because this was not part of their life experience. My friend fed the homeless one Christmas and she said this woman had had oodles of money, but what shocked her was that she had an image of homelessness, she didn’t realize that they were regular, everyday people. It could be a carpenter, somebody who was skilled, had an accident, fell sick, couldn’t pay the rent. I guess she had her ideas that they were lazy. They were stupid. They were mentally deficient. They were drunk. What really shocked her was just how normal and average and everyday they were, and actually how on the margin so many people lived (Interview, 2/1997).

**Interpretation**

These first few narrative pieces illustrate the lack of knowledge educators have about people who are homeless and homelessness. Ann, Mark, and Ellen each told me about their feelings of shock when they realized the magnitude of homelessness in the immediate community. In addition, Ann and Mark talked about how their ideas and stereotypes of people who are homeless changed as a result of learning more about homelessness. Ellen spoke of the changes in understanding that her friend experienced after volunteering during the holiday season. The changes in understanding expressed by Ann, Mark, and Ellen demonstrate that it is difficult to care for others who are at a distance physically from us which is supported in the research of Noddings (1992). To understand the magnitude of homelessness within our own community, we need to be in contact with people who are homeless. Real contact does not happen easily as Ellen illustrated in her story about her own children passing people who are homeless and not noticing that they were even there physically. It seems, the first step to changing our understanding will be simply acknowledging that people who are homeless do exist and exist in our own community.
Not knowing about people who are homeless leads to the continuation of homelessness in our community and the uncaring treatment of people who are homeless. Mark and Ellen spoke of the assumptions they and others made about people who are homeless. Mark expressed ideas which indicate he felt no compunction to care for people who are homeless because they were associated with negative stereotypes or labeled as drunkards, drug addicts, and lazy drifters. Ellen told about similar feelings expressed by her friend. In addition, Ann, Mark and Ellen were able to distance themselves from people who are homeless, or think of people who are homeless as undeserving of care. They didn’t know anyone who was homeless and had little contact individuals in the community who were working with people who are homeless. But, Ann, Mark, and Ellen’s lack of understanding about homelessness was changed through contact with people who are homeless and/or service organizations and agencies that offer assistance to people who are homeless. The distance Ann, Mark, and Ellen had expressed about people who are homeless before their personal contact is not uncommon among the general public according to Link, Phelan, Stueve, Moore, Bresnahan, and Struening (1996).

The lack of understanding we have about homelessness and the distance we maintain from people who are homeless leads to a greater lack of caring for people who are homeless. In chapter one, I shared part of my own story about a man who was living in the topiary garden behind the main branch of the public library. He, like so many others in our community and across the nation, suffer greater hardships because of the legislation enacted to prohibit people who are homeless from congregating on public lands and in public parks. It seems that many states have enacted these laws because of the lack of sympathy or empathy from the general public for people who are homeless Simon (1996). Ann, Mark, and Ellen had the opportunity to examine various aspects of homelessness and change their thinking and understanding through a process of learning.
more about the situations that contribute to homelessness or through coming into contact with people who are homeless.

I Am Somebody Special Because Somebody Cares

The following narrative pieces are about the need children have for comfort, caring, and security. The first one, is an excerpt from my journal about my tutoring experiences at the Volunteers of America program. Edwardo was a new child in the program. This reflection is about his first visit to the program and the impact he had on me. Edwardo taught me that children think differently about being homeless. Unlike adults who are concerned with independence and autonomy, "More Than Bricks and Mortar" illustrates that children seem concerned with the loss of, or changes in, caring relationships which often means grave emotional and social discomfort, a lack of caring, and a loss of security because they become homeless.

It is Mid-March. I made a visit to the Volunteers of America (VOA) center tonight after meeting Colleen at the library. When we arrived, we found some of the children already involved with activities (looking at books, coloring pictures, putting coats away). We filtered into the rooms and began greeting the children we knew from previous weeks, interacting with different ones who seem like old friends, and introducing ourselves to new children who have come to the program for the first time tonight. Colleen quickly locates J.D., a child about 5 years old, whom she has established a very strong attachment to in recent weeks. He is the sort of child that makes your heart turn to Jell-O because he is so cute and cuddly. I begin to interact with various children whom I recognize from prior visits. I dole out hugs to eager recipients and greet new faces who peer at me with trepidation.

Beverly Clemmens (BC) and Olivia, the directors of the after school programs, are both involved in getting materials set out on tables and in setting
activities up for the children. They extend a cheerful hello that borders on mock enthusiasm. Their voices seem to be filled with uncertainty about the new children and what the events of the evening will hold. I mention to BC about the letters from Ellen’s students and suggest that some of the children at the center may want to respond. “There are lots of things to do.” She says. BC seems a bit non-committed to the writing project. I can almost hear her unspoken concerns. Most of the children struggle with recognizing their own names, forming letters, and completing simple writing tasks. I can also see that she doesn’t want to disappoint me as she smiles broadly in my direction laying paints and brushes on the folding table for another of tonight’s projects.

BC calls the group of children to circle and leads us in our standard greeting and opening gathering activity. Most of the children have arrived and laid aside their coats. We are standing in a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder. The group of tiny bodies is intermingled with adult volunteers who seem equally as nervous about what will happen next. In her loud, clear voice, BC begins a fairly lengthy “respect oneself” speech. We repeat after BC in the designated pauses. “I can be anything,” I hear myself saying. “I am somebody special,” I repeat after BC. The volume and force of our speech rises with each of her utterances and our refrain. Our speech includes information about helping others, keeping our hands to ourselves, the power of believing in ourselves, our abilities, and in our need to assist one another, etc.

BC’s natural flow of encouraging phrases seems to carry the children and adults along whether we are cognizant of our words, the value of the words we are speaking, or the words themselves. Her enthusiasm is intoxicating and forceful. Listening and repeating makes me feel as if I am a part of some dynamic peace rally or that each of us are members of the winning Olympic team.
As the words and ideas roll off my tongue, they grow in volume and energy. I feel a bit frightened almost. My own, somewhat quiet, good white boy nature feels threatened by this strong, make-a-difference language as I am nearly shouting now. I am hesitant to let myself be too carried away by the chanting, rhythmical nature of the speech. It has a preacherly cadence and spiritual force to it that demands to be heard and responded to as well. The children also seem surprised by the volume and power of BC and our moving repartee.

I am a bit stunned as it occurs to me that my position regarding social action or community involvement is generally low-key, one of fixing the problem, or finding a solution rather than claiming my victory in the process. In a sense, this voluminous self appreciative chanting, allows me to see BC’s philosophical approach to helping the children combat the stigma and degradation of being homeless. We are demanding to be noticed. We are claiming our place of power and greatness in the scheme of human interactions. We are getting in the game through creating a voice for ourselves. We can hear our friends and neighbors next to us. We are all shouting to be heard, frightened because of our voices, too often silent, are booming and echoing in the tiny room. We are frightened by this new sense of strength and self-worth, yet empowered by it because we have voices that refuse to go away quietly anymore. BC is getting us in the game which is as good as winning the game. Isn’t playing just as important as winning I ask myself. Isn’t the victory attained by being involved in the process of creating change for ourselves?

Our chanting subsides and we all appear a bit spent of energy. BC has several activities going on which she explains. The students are all earning “points of greatness” for behavior and taking risks because we are attempting to answer her questions. BC refers to each of us a Señor or Señorita as the case
may be. She tells me later that she is attempting to build on our awareness of
diversity and the need we have to recognize and value differences among our
neighbors and friends.

We seem to push through a number of activities at lightning speed and at
a high pitched, enthusiastic volume. The children share books they had looked at
prior to beginning tonight’s circle program. They recall information from
previous sessions and listen as BC reads a story. Once these preliminary
activities are finished, the children are given choices about what they may do. To
my delight, many choose to write letters back to the students in Ellen’s class. I
gather a small group about me and make a cursory explanation of the process of
writing letters. Most of the children need assistance with doing their letters. BC
and Amy, another volunteer, and I write for individual children as they dictate
the content of their letters and simultaneously help other children by organizing
and spelling things for them. I am particularly impressed with Edwardo. He is
enthusiastic about writing to a child in Ellen’s class. He did not attempt to hide
that fact that he did not know how to write and would need assistance although
he was at least several years older than the children he is writing to in Ellen’s
class. It becomes evident to me as he dictates his letter that his lack of skills are
directly linked to his limited and probably sporadic school attendance. He is
obviously a bright child which is evident from the content of information and
depth of feeling in his letter. He is simply lacking a structured school
experience?

Edwardo seems proud of his letter when he is finished looking over it.
He hands it to me, anxious to send it off immediately. When will he receive a
response? His hopeful enthusiasm for this letter exchange is made clear to me
because of his questions regarding a reply. But when I explain that it will be a
week before he receives a response he does not seem hopeful anymore. The urgency to receive a reply has left his voice. I see that he is disappointed, his shoulders droop. I sense he has little trust in this process of writing letters and receiving replies. He seemed driven in his determination to make lasting contact with another child, but now he seems to be almost certain that this attempt will produce no result. It appears that he has a terrible wisdom about how temporary his life situation is even though he is only nine. He seems to understand the harsh reality of life as a child who is homeless. A reality that I understand only from literature. He asks again about a response. Why will it take so long? He appears almost desperate in his desire or need to make lasting contact with another, to be in relationship with others is how Ellen and BC describes it to me.

(Journal Entry, 3/1997)

More Than Bricks and Mortar

Ellen teachers children who are in a K-1 classroom. Literature is a central element in her classroom instruction with the children. She develops her units of study as it relates to the literature she reads to the them. Ellen told me the following narrative while I was meeting with her to discuss how she would structure learning activities with her students.

Ellen’s Story. I don’t know, but in the beginning I would have said the children talked about homeless people as somebody who has basically no shelter. That was really how we started off looking at it. But then when you start reading the books, you realize, and we have read a couple of books on homes and looking at different homes in different parts of the world, and the way that people define their homes is always more than just the bricks and mortar. When you look at what relationships that develop in shelters, which is not really strictly a home, so I don’t know, I’m thinking that now a home is just something more as
well as bricks and mortar. So I'm not quite sure how I would define it. It would be something that we could figure out at the end of the unit with it. I've already shifted in the sense I don't think of it simply as... I think homelessness is really being without the basic fundamentals of what we need in order to live. I think probably at the end of the day that is probably what I will think of it as. It is more than just shelter and it's more in a sense than just money.

When the kids were doing the book on homes and homelessness, what they would say home meant to them was that home is my mom and dad. I wish I had brought this with me. Home is my backyard and my swing set. They are all thinking of things that are important to them and it wasn't necessarily anything to do with, it was relationship, it was love, it wasn't really the fact that they had shelter over their head and food on their table, all the things that they were coming up with were separate from those elements. So that was the beginning of thinking that homelessness was something other than just those basic common elements of adequate food and shelter.

I don't know much about homelessness, I certainly don't have a great understanding of the history or development of it. Certainly I think it has always been there. It is not always the same. It is not always a stigma either. It is different between countries in terms of why it happens and how it happens and how easy it is to overcome it or not (Interview, 3/1997).
**Figure 5.** Classroom book titled Homes and Homelessness.

Beverly is a director of after school programs at a Volunteers of America (VOA) center in Columbus. She told me the following story about how the children responded to a request from legislators who wanted to know more about what children experienced because they were homeless. She spoke to me informally while we were cleaning-up after a program with a group of children.

**Beverly's Story.** What is home to them and each one, we had no idea what the response would be, but not one response dealt with brick and mortar. Every response was dealing with relationship and the way they would like the situations to be, in a home situation, like one - home to me is planting a garden; home to me is being peaceful; home to me is smelling my mom’s cooking; home to me is playing basketball; home to me is helping my sister. So the beauty of it
was we looked at it, the entirety of experiences and everybody decided to be a part of this, but not one dealt with brick, mortar or wood. That was the beauty.

At first I thought why in the world would anyone involve kids in a process like this and put them through this. When I mentioned it, I told them, we have been asked to respond in a certain way, whatever way you feel about this topic.

Legislators downtown are just curious about what kids think about home. So, let’s just think about it. When you think about home, what do you think about? So that is how it began, then after they all came and gave their ideas, they were actually writing their ideas, we discussed what they felt and then we could hear some similarities coming. They began to write their ideas and after they wrote them they were very anxious to share them. They did pictorial representations of what they had written. These were real exciting. We talked about, is home really more than a house? Oh yeah, why would you call it that? That’s not what it is to me. Then they began to share. Everybody began to share what they felt. I thought, You know what? You’re right, because home, and someone has said it and I don’t know who once said it, is where the heart is. They were looking as though to say, somebody really said that? So this was the beauty of it all, and then we gained closure by saying, so it means that wherever you go, home can be wherever you are and with whomever is special to you and whatever you feel special doing in a certain place wherever you are. Whether it be in a park, in a corner of a room of your uncle’s house, or if you have one room for your family together. That is where your heart, your love, and your concern is. It was so beautiful.

Not one child said he had no home. There were no pity parties. I wondered what would happen when we approached the topic. I did it in a very
candid open way in that I told them that these people were just interested in what
ekids were thinking (Interview, 3/1997)

Ann is a teacher in a suburban Columbus school district. She and the other
faculty from her school are involved in a long term, service learning project which
provides aid to families who are homeless. She spoke to me about her experiences with
the project and her experience of being homeless.

Ann’s Story. About six years ago, and you asked me if I had ever had an
experience being homeless, in a way we have. We live in Dublin and have
woods behind our home. The builders came in and built houses, there was a big
storm and we were asleep in bed. Our son was about 10, pounding on the door
at 2:30 or 3:00 in the morning was the gas company, they told us we had better
check our basement because the street out here is flooded. Our basement was
totally finished with a computer, pool table and all that stuff. The water had
come from behind us, had converged in our backyard, and had blown away the
back basement wall. So when we opened our door to our finished basement, the
water was at the top level. As the result of that our house was condemned. We
had to move out for a month. My parents live a block away. It wasn’t a big
deal. The Red Cross was there the next morning asking what they could do for
us. Do you need money? Do you need food? Neighbors and people that we
didn’t know and the church converged to surround us with, you are not alone.
Eventually it ended in a lawsuit against the builder and we settled out of court.
We were compensated. We didn’t make any money, but we came back to where
we were, except for the emotional. The impact it has made on me every time I
see a flood on television, because we write a check whenever we see a flood.
Anybody that goes through that, it is not really homeless, but that was my first
experience with, I could have been. For five years it took every bit of money we
had to fight the lawsuit. So we were destitute in a way. It was our son’s college money that we had to use to get us through until we could settle. That probably changed my life.

We had an hour to get out of our home and they put the yellow tape around and put the condemned sign on the house. We had to borrow money from my family to get the house excavated so that they could put the wall up. Our son lost everything, his swimming badges, his preschool pictures, everything he had was in the basement. It wasn’t the furniture that I minded, it wasn’t the washer or dryer, what I will never have back are his badges from his swimming or those pictures. Not being able to pick up the phone in my house and having to live in my mother’s house, those kinds of things really did change me (Interview, 12/1996).

**Interpretation**

This collection of narrative pieces helped me to understand the important need children have for creating and sustaining caring relations with others. They illustrate how the loss of shelter destroys or limits the opportunity to create and sustain caring relations with family members and friends. Children who are homeless do not lack just the comforts of home, they lack the caring relationships or the possibility of caring relationships that happen within homes. It was painfully clear to me through my visit with Edwardo that he was troubled by the lack of connection he had to others. He desired contact with others, a peer group, friends who cared, the volunteers at the shelter program. Furthermore, Ellen’s and Beverly’s stories illustrate how children’s concepts of the loss of home are synonymous with the loss of caring relations with others. It does not seem to matter whether the child is the one to exhibit care or receive it. Both Ellen and Beverly spoke of caring relationships in the simplest terms, smelling food being prepared, helping a sibling, being with mom and dad. For children, being homeless
meant the cessation of comforts that being in relationship created for people. The feelings expressed by both groups of children, those in Ellet’s classroom and those in the shelter program, focused on the loss of relationship. This differs from the feelings expressed by Ann in her narrative.

Ann’s narrative is one told from the adult perspective. It is a reflection on the loss of independence and autonomy that she experienced when she became homeless temporarily. As an adult, she felt constrained by her lack of freedom, even in her mother’s home. The emotional turmoil she felt has become a strong motivational force which allows her to respond sympathetically/empathetically to others. The sudden loss of her home which meant the loss of cherished artifacts from her son’s childhood, the lack of independence she felt, and financial dependence have galvanized her feelings of sympathy/empathy for/with, and response to other flood victims. She feels a bond with them because they have suffered in a similar way.

The bonds of empathy were constructed and/or made stronger because of the insight Ann had gained from her experience with being homeless as a result of a flood. Those who become homeless because of a flood are a horrible reminder of the emotional turmoil she has suffered because of her own loss. The ability to act sympathetically or to empathize with others is a motivational force as seen in Beverly’s story. The legislators asked the children in the shelter program to tell why they should continue to receive funding for their program. This seems appalling upon first hearing it, but at least hearing the stories the children tell will provide insight for the legislators about homelessness and possibly move them to act in a sympathetic manner. The difference between being sympathetic, giving people what you want to give to them, and Empathizing with others, giving people what they want from you, seems to be rather simple, but expressing either sympathy and/or empathy can have very different outcomes as illustrated in the following narrative pieces, “Riding the Bus” and “People Just Like Me.” Being able to feel
sympathy for others leads to changes in our own understanding, but being empathetic about the struggles others encounter helps them to solve their own problems.

**Riding the Bus**

Beverly, is one of the director of after school programs at the shelter. She demonstrates how good intentions cause humiliation and harm. She told me this story when we were cleaning-up after a program with the children.

**Beverly’s Story.** One of the stigmas that we have become aware of is the Volunteers of America (VOA) logo on the van. Now with the older kids, they are more concerned about it than the younger ones. The older ones actually just duck down in the van because it has become public information, they are Volunteers of America who deal with certain groups. So therefore there is a stigma that is attached to that label itself. Interestingly enough, the kids who come in new are not street-wise enough to know that yet when they first come. This is passed on by word of mouth from others and the older ones. It is beginning to happen more now as we get on toward summer because they are riding the van in the daylight. Whereas, during the school year, on the way here it is light but getting towards winter it is almost dusk when they come. Basically, if you are getting on the van in the hot area, everybody is basically in emergency housing there. If you live in other neighborhoods, like Hilliard or further out west, and there are other houses around, then it would be more noticeable.

Last year when you first came, we had not used property in those areas. We can use property anywhere anymore. So the company has expanded. We have bought homes in those areas. The thinking on the part of our director is that she felt that some of the kids weren’t really able to blend in. Some of the kids have trouble blending in and being like everyone else. The older ones were
getting into fights, they have told me that folks were waiting to beat them up...

Riding a bus that has a logo, the little things.

We have done home visitations, we have been on trips together and I ride
the van on the trips. That is one thing that has dispelled the stigma of the van,
because I was on there. I went on the first trip and I went to every house for
pick-up and when I got to the first house two of the kids peeked out the window
and they said, we see you riding on the van. I said you didn’t expect to see me
did you? They had decided they didn’t want to go, that was some of the older
kids. But, when they saw me, then they said, We’re going (Interview, 3/1997).

People Just Like Me

Ellen’s Story. It is interesting, my kids at the moment, first of all they
didn’t think of shelters. Homelessness is something about people who live in
cardboard boxes and they really are adults and are alone. They have no idea as
yet, that in fact families are homeless, and children can be homeless.

Even though we have read a book, I think it is called Shelter Living, it’s
the one with the zany pictures and they have black and white pictures of the kids.
I know we have read that in silent reading. They still haven’t clicked that families
become homeless. They see it very much as an alone thing. I think they will be
able to empathize and sympathize when they realize that it’s just people like them
that are homeless (Interview, 2/1997).

Interpretation

It seems the majority of society has a negative perception of people who are
homeless according to Simon (1996). This was evident in the narrative pieces of Ann,
Mark, and Ellen. In Beverly’s story these negative perceptions are carried a step further.
Not only must the children in the shelter program deal with the negative perceptions of
society concerning people who are homeless, but they are forced to be wary of icons that
are connected to those negative perceptions. Knowing children may be dealt a physical harm for simply being associated with a logo points to the depths of prejudice toward people who are homeless in our society. But, the difficulties experienced by the children from the shelter who ride the bus indicate an even more troubling problem which is addressed in Ellen’s narrative. Ellen’s narrative illustrates that each of us has a fear and is in jeopardy of becoming homeless. Despite our efforts to provide security through family, work, and friendship, there are no guarantees against natural disasters and/or social and family catastrophes, we just imagine that we are immune to them.

However, the safeguard may be in how we respond to those who experience homelessness. Again, through contact with people who are homeless, we have an opportunity to understand homelessness. As long as we disassociate ourselves from people who are homeless, we are likely to treat them as scapegoats and/or blame them for their unfortunate circumstances. Consequently, the distance we maintain, or the hatred we display toward people who are homeless reifies the fear we feel of being homeless ourselves. Ellen began to help her children “see” themselves as people who “could” be homeless through the books she shared with them. The power of good literature allowed them to come in contact with people who are homeless at a safe distance. Literature allowed the children an opportunity to hear the “stories” of people who are homeless. Through the process of listening to the stories of people who are homeless, the children no longer saw the people who are homeless as strangers, but as anyone of us. Mark’s narrative piece, “Any One of Us,” tells about the changes he experienced in his understanding about homelessness and about the differences he saw in the children in his school after their service learning project.
Any One of Us

Mark’s Story. I would expect the children to tell you some things. I don’t know exactly what words they would use. I think they would have had the stereotype clarified. I think it is the stereotype with many adults that they are homeless because they are lazy. I think it clarified the stereotype. I think kids know there are a lot of reasons why families fall upon real difficult times, the ones that I mentioned. Mom leaves the family, dad leaves the family. There is a medical tragedy that takes all the family’s resources. A house burns down and there is no insurance. In this day and age you just think that everybody has insurance. If you are scraping to put food on the table and get shoes for the kids, to begin with, probably having your house insured and your contents is just not a priority. A fire or whatever breaks out, the kids are all safe but everything is destroyed. You don’t have anything. I think those are the kinds of things the kids would talk about. Any one of us is just sometimes two seconds away from a tragedy, or a split second away from a tragedy. So it may be my neighbor tomorrow. It may be me the next day, or you on Sunday. That is what I learned and I think that is what my kids learned.

There isn’t a mold. An elementary principal could never be homeless, or my neighbor, the physician could never be homeless. Well, it could be. That is real deep for kids to follow. But, I think they get the core idea. I really think they get the core idea. You can’t describe how a homeless person looks and if you get beyond the stereotype, and there is one, let’s face it. There is one and that is kind of what we went at. That was the learning part of it and that is kind of the learning part that we kind of went at rather aggressively. It could be anybody. It could be anybody who has had some tragedy transpire in their life in a way that they couldn’t take care of it (Interview, 12/1996).
Interpretation

Previous to Mark's association with programs which provide support to people who are homeless, Mark held a fairly stereotypical view of the causes and the victims of homelessness. While Mark's intent is not malicious, his previously held views help him to create and maintain social oppression. We are surrounded by negative images of people who are homeless in films and other media (Dennis The Menace, and the Home Alone Series of films are examples of negative depictions of people who are homeless for young children). When the only understanding Mark had of people who are homeless was negative, it was easier for him to continue believing the negative stereotypes he encountered. Furthermore, belief in the stereotypes allowed him or made it easier for him to continue to share in the oppression of people who are homeless because he associated ill-found, negative attributes with them. Before knowing people who are homeless or much about homelessness, Mark could exercise disdain for them because he believed they were to blame for their own difficulties. In addition, the roots of beliefs about homelessness are tied to social and historical ideas about the importance of work and our desire to be independent. Basically, people who are homeless are a reminder to all of us that we are interdependent.

For Mark, his faculty, and students, their service learning project provided an opportunity for them to examine their beliefs about people who are homeless. Mark discovered that the attributes he once associated with people who are homeless are erroneous. This happened through his association with services to alleviate their suffering. Essentially, he has begun seeing individuals who are homeless as victims who need and deserve physical and emotional assistance rather than scorn.
Developing a Curriculum about Homelessness

Planning: The Team Approach

In this phase of the inquiry, I began to see that the process of developing a curriculum about homelessness is a dynamic and/or emergent experience for teachers and researchers. In the narrative piece, “We Can Touch People’s Souls,” a team of artists discuss their ideas about approaching the issue of homelessness in their teaching practice with elementary students. Talking through, and sharing ideas helps them to question the appropriateness of the topic of homelessness and the contexts for presenting it to children. Their conversation illustrates the benefit of collaboration when learning and teaching about people who are homeless and homelessness. The group is able to question the quality and content of their ideas and gain their teaching partners’ reactions and insights. Ultimately, they are able to question the underlying ethical implications for their instructional ideas and propose ways of imparting information to children while attempting to maintain the dignity of others.

I have included this narrative piece to illustrate how collaboration among a group of people seems peppered with inspiration and ideas about how to accomplish learning with children. This group was accustomed to a routine meeting time. Prior to meeting as a group, I had spoken with each of them individually about my project. Thus, they had an opportunity to think about the topic of homelessness beforehand and were in the process of planning individual activities with their students when we decided to meet as a group. What is most noticeable to me in this narrative piece is the explosion of ideas and concerns that the group shares. The conversation moves quickly which is in sharp contrast to the process that I share with Ellen which I will examine in a later narrative piece. The multiple voices and each person’s specific curricular focus adds to the complexity of ideas the group suggests. Finally, the process of collaboration among this group of art specialists seems dynamic and beneficial to all of them.
We Can Touch People’s Souls

Nate is a drama specialist and storyteller. He works in various schools in the Columbus Public School District. He was doing a special project at Douglas Elementary Alternative when I had the opportunity to meet with him and the Arts Team to discuss a curriculum intervention that would focus on teaching and learning about homelessness. Donna, the dance instructor, suggested that I meet with the Arts Team to discuss my project with Ellen. Marcia is the fine arts instructor. Rick the music instructor was unable to be apart of the conversation, but later shared ideas with me about the work he was doing with students. Donna, Marcia, and Rick work closely with one another to create an integrated approach to teaching and learning through their specializations. I shared a bibliography of books with them (see Appendix, C) to help them connect their ideas to literature that is available for children on the topic of homelessness.

Nate. These are such amazingly difficult problems that we can only present the problem. We don’t have solutions. We can only keep bringing it up and saying this is the problem and showing it in different ways. Then, it is up to individuals to figure out what they can do or what part they can play.

Isaac. I think the thing that is scary to me is that individuals don’t know, we don’t talk about this like so many other things in society we don’t talk about homelessness and so consequently people say I didn’t know. How could I do anything if I didn’t know, children especially. What I have found when I talk with little groups of kids, it doesn’t matter what their ages, there is always and immediate response. They want to do a can drive or collect things, or do something. They want to act immediately. I think that is real powerful for me. I think a lot of times adults stand in the way of what children are actually capable of doing.
**Marcia.** Some of the apathy on adults' parts come from looking at this overwhelming problem and saying there is no solution, so I can't do anything. Which is an adult response as opposed to the kid who says I can do something.

**Isaac.** The major issue for me is to help people change their attitudes, even a little bit. There are lots of reasons why people become homeless. Some children are not technically homeless, but they go to a different house every night.

**Marcia.** We had a couple across the street.

**Nate.** Well, you have some here.

**Isaac.** I think it is a difficult issue. It is complicated, not easy to approach within a school curriculum. But, school is often the main source of support and stability for children.

**Donna.** What are you looking to do here?

**Isaac.** I want to see how people, teachers, approach this topic with children.

**Donna.** The classroom teachers tend to be more linear in their thinking, where we are more global in our thinking. It is a lot easier to work this way. We do it anyway, we just kind of add...

**Marcia.** Being aware of the steps as we go along.

**Donna.** Being aware of stuff that you are not doing, maybe not at the time, but maybe later. Then also looking at the field, like the kids we work with, like some working on movement. What works and what doesn't work. If you can't figure it out right then, just to be aware that you are thinking about that actually takes you to a new place. In teaching we don't have a lot of reflection time. It will be interesting for you though because you are going to be observing. You are going to have to find a role then in Ellen's classroom.
Marcia. It might mean that if she is doing a book extension you are
presenting the story and maybe you are the skeletal figure of that particular book.

Nate. You can't sit with a notebook, with your legs crossed. Somehow,
you have to get involved.

Donna. Maybe through the book extension. Even though I am very
interested in this book, maybe somebody else might have a better book. Give the
kids some ownership of the issue and then we can make something with that.
We can eventually evolve as part of the process. I am basing my ideas on what
has worked for me in the past. We might go a different way. We could even end
up with a video, it doesn't even need to be a performance. You know what I
mean. I can even picture kids learning movement phrases and then going on the
street or somewhere and performing those phrases in front of a building or in
front of a homeless person's shopping cart.

Isaac. Certainly, you as a team of artist are going to deal with the topic of
homelessness differently with children than the classroom teachers will.
Teachers are tied to the curriculum.

Donna. When I think of artists, the way we work, I have never really felt
like I have had a home in any job because I have always been like that extra
person. A lot of artists have always had to do their art in order for their voices to
be heard. You could be homeless or poor or this, that or dealing with
environmental issues that conflict with others, or personal issues. That is all in a
sense of not having a center. I think of center like home, family, community.

Nate. Homeless people don't have a face. They don't have a soul. They
are not even really human. They are these things that are out there and they come
alive when we can hear their stories. You don't know their stories, no one
knows their stories. Some of us don't have any idea, but when we can touch
people's souls, these people I'm sure will have stories about their lives and will certainly be a reflection and have a little bit of something that is in our lives too. Maybe we have found better ways of dealing with it than they have, but we are all human and have those feelings. It would be great to do conversations, stories.

Marcia. You might want to go down to a homeless shelter and interview some people. We could use those dialogues for our music for the dancing or our sound score.

Donna. Start with the dancers draped in black cloth and you can't tell who they are. Traces of the pathways of life. Real cold looking to start, a lone narrator speaking or hearing the voices of the homeless talking. They can start moving and then eventually it becomes real.

Nate. As we learn more about them, the black starts coming off and we start revealing that these are real people.

Marcia. It is like telling their stories.

Nate. But we know the end.

Marcia. The end is that they would go back to the black.

Nate. Here we are, we are all nice middle-class people. We have never been homeless. We have no idea, we are talking off the top of our heads. This is what we feel. This is what we are experiencing. Maybe we should talk to people who are also middle-class who work with these people all the time and they could give us a more truer perspective of what is happening and that might generate even more ideas and different kinds of directions to go. They are more in touch. We are doing it as an artistic thing and they might be insulted by that. I don't know.
Isaac: I would be willing to ask some people whom I know are
connected with services for people who are homeless.

Nate: They could come in and sit down with us and tell us what they got
and what we got.

Isaac: What I am hearing you all doing right now is planning and
brainstorming and webbing ideas and figuring out how this can be integrated into
the curriculum. That is where I am going. That is what I am looking for.

Marcia: We might want to present your curriculum through an arts thing.
Like let's talk about movement, and as we are doing it or maybe after we are
done, let the kids tell you how it could relate to other parts of the curriculum.
That might be really an interesting way to do it. To actually go backwards, per
say for you, but forward for us.

Nate: The experience they got out of it.

Donna: What is going to be different about the way we work is that the
whole child is going to be invested in this, their body is going to be invested,
their mind, their soul, their words, their painting, touching the paper, making the
music or whatever. Which is very different than just memorizing.

Marcia: You want them to internalize a pattern of thought. We want
them to no longer see this issue as something over here that has no relation
whatsoever.

Nate: You won't necessarily be able to get something concrete in the end
that they can actually express in words or writing.

Donna: At the beginning, I want them to show me what you picture a
homeless person to be, where do they live, what does this mean and what do
they do? Then at the end of this time period, show me or create a movement
thing for me. Then at the end of it, do it again. Just simply ask the same question and see what results from that.

Marcia. My suggestion is that should be the very first thing. What is homelessness. Make a web with the kids. Then in the middle of the project, what is homelessness? Then when you are all done, what is homelessness? Then you have beginning, during, and after the process. Hopefully you will have some things that will be interesting for you to look at, to see how things change (Conversation, 1/1997).

Interpretation

Through the process of conversation, the participants had an opportunity to question their beliefs and ideas. Nate realized that being able to communicate effectively with children about people who are homeless and homelessness is predicated on really knowing the experiences of people who are homeless, knowing their stories. Donna and Marcia value documentation of the learning process and offer suggestions for ways to document what and how the children are learning about homelessness over the course of time. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of their conversation is an example of how teachers and researchers reveal, share, and question what they assume to be true and how they perceive themselves and others (Noddings and Witherell, 1992).

The nature of collaboration is evident in the lively conversation with this group of teacher artists. They have mutual respect for one another and demonstrate their cooperative nature through sharing curriculum suggestions with a focus on homelessness. Each participant acknowledges the attributes of the other group members. Their interaction provides an opportunity for each teacher to engage with the others as resource people. This, in turn, stimulates their personal and professional growth. In addition, collaboration among this group allows the members to demonstrate their expertise as artists. They are able to question their ideas for addressing the phenomenon
of homelessness in their practice. Each group member speaks of innovative ways for approaching the topic. The group members pose ways for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data related to the project also. Furthermore, the close working relationship they have allows them to share personal thoughts and reflections on their roles as teachers in their school. In this supportive environment, the teachers show their desire to improve their practice as classroom teachers. Finally, they see collaboration on a project which has a focus on homelessness as an opportunity to share knowledge with other school professionals and the community as a whole (Allan and Miller, 1990).

Noddings and Witherell (1992) suggest that a story or conversation is the form collaboration takes and may sometimes be the best way to address specific information for teachers. This seems especially true of the process Ellen engaged in with parents, teacher partners, and me. In the process of conversing with others, teachers are able to interact with one another about learning and teaching methods as well as the content of what is being learned/taught. The collective voices and ideas shared provide more information for teachers. Conversations lead to learning more about specific content and about the thoughts and ideas of others as opposed to teachers who work by themselves. Florio-Ruane (1992) refers to Buchmann’s (1983) work who noted that conversation has a reciprocal quality to it. In addition, participants in a conversation talk about a specific subject matter in greater breadth, there are various and multiple voices heard, and conversations may take unexpected turns or changes in directions.

McElroy (1990) found that teachers who work collaboratively gain insight into the process of creating interactions that promote more effective practices in their own classrooms. Improvements in practice lead to improvements in what children are able to learn. Through the process of collaboration with university level educators, teachers are able to engage in action research which directly influences the quality of interactions among teachers and children in classrooms. Likewise, these interactions between
teachers and researchers produce long-term changes in the practice of doing research. Classroom research is collegial in nature and empowers classroom teachers to examine their own practice. It also promotes the exploration of ethical issues related to conducting classroom research. Finally, collaborations between classroom teachers and researchers leads to the creation of partnerships between schools and the university which benefit all who are involved in the process (Justiz, 1997). The opportunity for collaboration for Ellen, her teacher partners, and me took the form of informal conversations and happened where and when they could. However, they seemed profitable for all of us concerned with learning and teaching about homelessness.

Planning: Bashing It Out On Your Own

In the following pieces, “What I Had Intended to Do,” “Why Homelessness?”, and “Finding The Thread,” Ellen tells me about her process of planning for instruction. These pieces are based on the conversations that I had with Ellen as our project progressed in her classroom. Ellen talks about the difficulties she has with planning because she does not have a common plan time with the other primary teachers. But, she makes use of informal interaction time with them and other resource people (parents) who come to her classroom. The informal exchanges she has with others advance her ideas for classroom practice and allow her the opportunity to share successes or failures. Her processes for sharing ideas and getting feedback are spontaneous and enthusiastic. In “Finding The Thread,” Ellen reflects on how the works of literature appeal to her and prompt ideas for classroom practice. She follows her inclinations with the books she chooses to read to the children and provides opportunities for the children to respond through various modes of learning. “Doing Their Best” and “The Broader Picture” summarize why Ellen thinks learning and teaching about people who are homeless and homelessness are important and what she hopes the children will take away from their study of these topics.
What I Had Intended to Do

In fact, I was reading some books this morning. One of the hard things with kindergarten and first graders, is actually trying to work out what you do with the books, because it’s pretty easy to have discussions, but actually forming them all with some sort of response is really quite difficult, at least for me. It would be nice if I had somebody to bash it out with.

Another teacher and I are both doing a reading unit, then we both had gone on into doing a lot of talk about habitats. So when I was telling her that I was going to do the homeless thing with you and talk about how habitats change, she thought that would be really good closure to the end of her unit. She had one more week that she wanted to work on it. We did some books. I did, Where Once There Was a Wood by Denise Fleming and I thought that was the first one we did to talk about how habitats change.

We don’t have any planning time together, so that is one of the reasons that I never plan with anybody. Partly because I don’t have any scheduled planning time. So we basically had talked about it in passing back and forth (Interview, 2/1997).

Interpretation

Ellen was accustomed to the close interactions that transpired among educators because of her background in the Professional Development School (PDS). She enjoyed the continued access she had to theoretical knowledge, models of learning, and strategies for implementing curriculum ideas. Her participation in PDS was a great benefit to her. She had many opportunities to improve her classroom practices through trying, adapting, and reflecting on different practices which is supported in a collaborative PDS environment (Justiz, 1997). While the lack of a common planning time with the other primary teachers was a detriment for Ellen, she was able to explore
and experiment with various learning practices because of the informal conversations she had with other educators. Since participation is the way a researcher comes to know information (Heshusius, 1994), I made myself available to Ellen for conversations and sought to participate in the process of learning about homelessness with her students in numerous ways. These conversations mostly centered around children’s literature with a homelessness theme and the kinds of activities and learning processes the children might engage in as a result of listening to, or reading, the literature.

Seung-Yoeun (1997) suggests that listening to stories is beneficial for many reasons. Listening to stories helps children to understand that stories make sense. In addition, children begin to use the structures and themes they have heard in stories in their own writing. Through listening to, and reading literature, children have the opportunity to see or experience the world of others. Children are able to make personal connections to characters they read about in literature. These connections with characters and experiences in literature help children become aware of their ideas. Primarily, listening to, and reading literature is a source of enjoyment.

Why Homelessness?

It was a natural link in the events. The last unit was on regions, which is mostly about habitats in different areas of the world. We were scheduled to do African Americans this month. Well, even originally they were homeless. Homeless in a different sense because they were taken away from their home. I’m actually not doing African Americans on homelessness. I’m doing them both at the same time and we are doing some comparing and contrasting. What we have realized, at least looking at homes, home is a very emotional thing aside from, I mean does a house make a home. So, we have started talking about it, and did this with the homelessness thing. Somehow or other, a home is just a little bit more than brick and mortar and a roof over your head. So, we started
talking about the warm, fuzzy things that come to the home. With African Americans, what we talked about was the fact that they were taken straight out of their beds while they were sleeping one night and put in shackles aboard a ship and had a horrendous journey and if they survived that they came here and were sold. They were homeless in the sense that they were taken away from their homeland. Then they weren’t allowed to have a home here, yes they did have a shack, but they weren’t allowed any of the things that free people were allowed, the security that comes with actually having a home (Interview, 2/1997).

Interpretation

For Ellen, the issue of homelessness is a global, socio-political concern. She talks about homelessness as an imposed condition for African Americans which has a long history and horrible ramifications, experienced in numerous ways. It is not an issue that is simply about physical structures although in a general sense, the physical structure provides a locus for interactions and relationships. Ellen reasons that homelessness is not a separate issue, but is linked to our development of knowledge and understanding of habitats, why and how they change.

The connections Ellen makes between areas of study emerge as a result of the social interactions and communication processes she engages in with the children, their families, and other educators as demonstrated in the narrative piece, “Finding the Thread.” She has not set a specific agenda for the curriculum with specific outcomes and a determined endpoint. Ellen is constantly reviewing, revising, and evaluating her students’ progress. The curriculum is allowed to emerge through the rich interactions and communications she has with the students which also stimulates and nurtures their interests. While the level of communication Ellen enjoys with parents and colleagues is limited, her approach to structuring learning experiences for the children connect to the ideas of Rinaldi (1993) regarding the process of an emergent curriculum as illustrated in
the lively conversations and dynamic changes and adjustments she introduces to the
learning process in the narrative below.

Finding the Thread

I started off by talking about homes and neighborhoods. The children
studied that before we went off into habitats. So, we kind of came back to the
beginning and then looked about, first how animal habitats change and then
thought we would go into looking at how the reasons why people’s habitats
change and then go to homelessness after that.

My teaching partner and I both did Silly Tillie. I had read the book and I
told her about the story and she thought that she would like to use it too. We just
decided to talk about what they thought Silly Tillie was like as a person, how she
was treated and to talk about what they would have done or could have done
when they saw Mr. Slotmaker, whatever his name was, laying in the hallway.
My partner actually came up with the tableau response, which I thought was
great. I said to her that I was not really sure what to do in response to this, it was
a great book. She said how about a tableau, and I said yes. We just decided that
we would do a tableau, read the book and talk about it.

I have the son of a drama professor in my class. I met with him when he
happened to bring his son in that morning. So, I said to him. Hey, I am going
to do my tableau today. He gets excited when we do drama and so he asked me
what I was doing and what I intended to do and I told him. Then, he actually
suggested a modification for me. Because he said that we really needed to do
some sort of whole group drama before we went into the tableaux to give the
children ideas basically. Otherwise, some people have lots of ideas, but others
won’t. He suggested we draw an outline of myself on the floor and that could be
Mr. Slotman. That’s actually what we did. I didn’t actually go myself, I just
put one of the kids down there to pretend being this guy. Then I kind of acted a scene and they just came up with suggestions of what they could do. Then after we did this as a whole group, they went into small groups and they talked about what they would do and then they did their tableaux. It worked really well. They were really excited. They really enjoyed doing it. They liked guessing. It was good.

*Seeing Eye Willie* has a lot of potential to it and I didn’t finish it. It was just one of those days when you’re not as prepared as you want to be. But it has a lot of potential in it. Just, I think in terms of making stories up and stimulating the imagination. You have his homeless man and does anybody ever talk to him, which is what I thought about. Everybody makes a bid for ideas about him, but nobody knows anything. Maybe the little boy who is Seeing Eye Willy will be the one who will go up and ask him, because he said he was always ready if Seeing Eye Willy was going to tell him. I actually quite liked the story because the pictures were very bright and vivid and I thought I can really teach some geography with this and we could do some fun stuff. What I had intended to do with it was to start writing a story together as a class and then the kids would go away and they would write a cartoon on how he got one of the things that was on his body, you know the bowl and the spoon. We started the story once upon a time and we started it much the same that is was in the book, and then they would go off to a continent. I was going to put a big map on the wall with Seeing Eye Willy sitting there and then we would have all the stories and paths to Africa and Australia. Then we would start here and travel. We would together write an ending of how the story ended. I quite like the story’s potential.

This one, *We Are All in the Dumps With Jack and Guy*, I was thinking of making some sort of mural. Going over the rhyme and maybe just using it for a
literacy lesson, you know rhyming words and possibly coming up with a poem. I thought the kids could actually make themselves. I have lots of wallpaper and things, they could cut out some clothes and we could use newspapers and they could somehow make a mural of a retelling of the story. I like all of these. There is one illustration that is just terrific in here. It has to do with a cookie. I was trying to think of recreating this somehow and get kids to say something. These are so clever. You have all these homeless kids with all this money about, can you afford your house. Actually they have their numbers wrong. There is all these things about real estate and money over here. It is really quite clever (Interview, 3/1997).

**Interpretation**

The narrative pieces above allowed me to understand the process that Ellen goes through in her development of a curriculum. Schubert (1992) refers to this blending together of theory and practice as *praxis*. Ellen shares in the creation of knowledge of instructional processes about people who are homeless and about homelessness through her reflection on the experiences she has with her students and informal conversations with others. Revisiting her teaching experiences through personal reflection is the catalyst which informs her teaching practice. Schubert (1992) contends that when, or if teachers do not have the opportunity to participate in the creation of knowledge and curriculum, they become “deskilled” and are “akin to participants on assembly lines rather than professionals who conceptualize, act, and reflect on work derived from deep commitment” (p. 210). Ellen’s deep commitment to curriculum development is evident in her willingness to tap the resources available to her. Despite the impediments she faces, the lack of a common planning time with partner teachers, she reflects continuously. Consequently, she has the ability to restructure and redirect future lessons with her students.
Using informal conversations is an example of how good teachers overcome impediments to planning and curriculum development. However, the lack of opportunity to collaborate through on-going planning sessions about curriculum reveals the need for improvements in this educational setting. Ellen struggles with developing ideas for activities to follow the literature selections she reads. Her informal conversations with others advances the organization and implementation of instructional processes for the children. But, she expresses a desire to work with others more closely and feels it would be beneficial in planning her whole-language, literature-based curriculum.

Knowing and having quality literature available is essential to the curriculum that Ellen implements with her students. Each of the narrative pieces above demonstrates the central role literature plays in the emergence of Ellen's approach to teaching and learning about homelessness. As outlined by Czubaj (1997), reading literature is a primary emphasis of the whole-language, literature-based classroom. Children have the opportunity to select their own reading materials and participate in discussions and debates which allows them an opportunity to compare their ideas with others. Ellen has a wealth of knowledge about children's literature. She reads a number of books to the students daily. These books are then made available to the children during independent reading time. Her classroom has a substantial library of literature materials for the children to choose from to satisfy their interests. In addition, the children have the opportunity to engage in daily independent practice in reading and writing. Finally, they are immersed in whole and small group learning experiences through drama and create visual representations of their ideas in works of art.
Figure 6. Small group interactions.

Once the curriculum began to emerge, Ellen employed a project approach to the process of structuring activities for the children in keeping with the ideas of Katz and Chard (1993) and Rinaldi (1993). The content of the curriculum, what the children learned, and the ways teaching and learning were not only accomplished through their classroom interactions, but also through activities which addressed emotional, and moral understandings of life in the social environment of the city (Rinaldi, 1993). In the following two narrative pieces, Ellen tells how and why some of her curriculum decision were made regarding learning about homelessness.

**Doing Their Best**

One of my classmates, I think for some course last year, did something on homelessness. I don’t know if it is something that you might want. They picked up a big bunch of information on homelessness and resources and also
they picked up a tape. On it, I was crying during the tape, because what happened in the tape as far as I can remember, a poor working class family, were moving maybe from east coast to west coast or maybe midwest to west coast because the father had a job, and when he got there the job had fallen through. So they ended up in a shelter, so the story is told a lot through the eyes of the young boy, who really does feel bad because he’s in a shelter, gets abused when he is in school, is laughed a and friendless. It actually ends up getting on the media and has a happy ending in a sense that somebody who has a spare house gives them a spare house, raises money, etc. It is just tragic that we live in a society that where you have to make somebody famous in order for them to get any assistance. Meanwhile there are hundreds and hundreds of people in the exact situation. They were doing their best, going up there to get a job (Interview, 3/1997).

The Broader Picture

Really, I just want to develop some understanding of the concept of homelessness. What it is and just some sympathy and to give them ideas of what they can do. I was thinking, I was going to phone up on Tuesday on my planning time, we are doing the cans for Operation Feed. I wanted to try and see if there was something specific, something small, that the class could do to help.

Most important, I want them to think about what are more important aspects of an issue, or use that information to get them to think about important things. What I would like to get out of the project would be to have the kids think about what homelessness is, who can become homeless and come to some sort of realization that it isn’t a unique situation. They can develop some understanding and appreciation that homeless people are just like them and that it can happen to a lot of people very easily. I want them to understand and have a
more realistic idea of what it is to be homeless and who becomes homeless and really to give them some ideas about what they could do to help (Interview, 3/1997).

**Interpretation**

The work that Ellen was figuring out in her classroom took several months. It was not easy for her to find the time and people to share ideas with and get feedback. It would seem that the opportunity to collaborate with others, especially where social issues like homelessness are concerned, reaps a greater benefit for teachers and their students. Ellen’s desire to assist her students in understanding the causes of, and remedies for homelessness is lofty, yet admirable and an important concern for teachers. Ellen’s planning episodes were in fits and starts. She had many ideas to help children examine the causes of homelessness and how they could do something to end the suffering of people who are homeless, but without the support of others her ideas did not come to fruition the way she had imagined them.

In addition, it was much later in the process of our project that curriculum ideas came together for Ellen. I spoke with Ellen often and was in her class almost daily to drop things off or to spend hours watching and participating in the learning and teaching processes. However, these interactions were limited due to our desire and need to attend to what the children were thinking about and doing in class. Often, our plan for addressing specific pieces of information about homelessness was hatched at the last minute and/or altered mid-stream. With our attention divided between the needs of the children and instructional duties, we were unable to concentrate entirely on the bigger picture at times. The artist team, by contrast, was able to map out a plan for addressing the issue of homelessness with their students quickly. They had a block of time for meeting with one another where they could decide what aspects of the issues of homelessness they could address with their students and how they would go about
implementing curriculum ideas. Their lively discussion provided an opportunity for them to think about ethical issues too.

Things happened slowly with Ellen and me. In addition to figuring out how and what to present to the children, we had to figure out how and when to meet with one another. Despite the fact that the curriculum was not planned and carried-out under the best circumstances, we experienced some success as is described in the following phase of our project. In retrospect, I have to say that our collaborative process was exciting and a bit chaotic at times. We were trying to overcome impossible obstacles it seems, often organizing things around her teaching schedule, our lives outside of school, and my work responsibilities. However, our commitment to the project and the ideas we were trying to understand made the difficulties of collaboration seem minimal.

In contrast, the complex difficulties experienced by people who are homeless can be explained through the following musical chairs analogy. It is used by Koegel, Burnam, & Baumohl (1996) to describe the dynamics of homelessness in our society. It sheds light on how people, by and large, become homeless and what can be done to help them. Only, in the homelessness causing version of musical chairs, the numbers of players increases as the number of chairs is decreased. Consequently, there is an ever increasing number of players attempting to secure the ever decreasing number of seats. Those who are least able to secure a seat, the disabled, ill, and most vulnerable in our society, are the first to be left standing. As the game continues, competition increases and more and more players, those without connections, skills, and friends or family, are without seats. So it is with homelessness. If you are ill, disabled, vulnerable, have few skills, few connections to friends or family, then you are a likely candidate to be homeless. “People may be at risk because of their economic situations, their demographic characteristics, their disabilities, their childhood histories, their access to family and friends, their personalities, or their experiences of any number of situational
crises. Conceivably, any of these alone can trigger homelessness” (Koegel, Burnam, & Baumohl, 1996, p. 33).

Linblom (1996) contends that homelessness cannot be prevented until we directly address its root causes. According to Linblom (1996), there are a number of economic, political, and social changes which are necessary if reduction in homelessness is our goal. Linblom (1996) suggests: (1) Increase wages for individuals who are most at risk of becoming homeless. (2) Create and expand jobs programs, make changes in the tax codes to allow low-wage earners to retain more of their wages, and increase rental assistance. (3) Renovate and construct more low-income housing units. (4) Provide, or increase community-based support programs for individuals with mental illness and/or substance abuse problems. (5) Support two-parent households and hold absent parents responsible for their children. (6) Decrease teen pregnancies, address social problems (domestic violence) which lead to youth homelessness, improve child care and make it available to more working parents. Oliner and Oliner (1996) address how we might make these changes happen.

Oliner and Oliner (1996) cite Marin (1987) who contends that “self-centeredness and sympathy rather than empathy motivate much of the current concern for the homeless” (p. 33). The process of becoming empathic develops through knowing oneself according to Oliner and Oliner (1996). “What can people do to help others develop their potential for empathy? One means is to encourage them to know themselves. Merely asking others to say what they feel and think, and doing so repeatedly, provides such encouragement” (Oliner and Oliner, 1996, p. 35). The young children in Ellen’s classroom demonstrated empathy for people who are homeless by addressing their thoughts and feelings about homelessness. Whether they were able to reduce the incidence of homelessness or the suffering that homelessness causes through their development of empathy may remain unseen for some time. But, the narrative
pieces below in phase three indicate that they have carefully considered their feelings and thoughts regarding homelessness through art, drama, and writing.

Art, Drama, and Writing: Demonstrations of Care for People Who Are Homeless

In this phase of narrative pieces, the children demonstrate their ability to express an attitude of care for people who are homeless through their participation in art, drama, and writing activities. I have divided this phase of narrative pieces into the focus areas of art, drama, and writing because what the children accomplished in the classroom was displayed publicly through these formats. In reality, each of the narrative pieces shared below incorporates elements of artistic, dramatic, and/or written expression and happened as integrated curriculum events. Hickman (1979) revealed that children respond to literature in a variety of ways such as through their physical movement, by incorporating story themes into play, etc. She also discussed the importance of the role of the teacher in establishing context for response to literature. The first group of narrative pieces, “The Slaves Were Homeless,” “Where Do Homeless People Wash?” and “How Would You Feel?” are examples of the depth of feeling and understanding young children are able to convey through, or lead to their artistic expressions. These narrative pieces demonstrate how art is an effective medium of communication for the ideas of children. “I Can Help” provides evidence that young children are capable of thinking critically about the experiences of people who are homeless. Furthermore, it is an example of how children demonstrate the attributes of caring through artistic learning experiences.

The second set of narrative pieces examine how participation in classroom drama provides an opportunity for children to learn about people who are homeless and to practice elements of care for them. In “The Power of Pretend” and “A Drama Is Amazingly Good,” Ellen shares her ideas and beliefs about the potential that is tapped through engaging in drama activities with the children. Drama is a catalyst for thinking
and provides an opportunity for children to be engaged in brainstorming and trying-out ideas on each other. Young children seem to have a natural inclination to pretend and they become involved in doing drama easily. “Helping People Who Are Homeless,” is an example of how a drama unfolded in Ellen’s classroom. It illustrates how drama provides the opportunity for children to model expressions of care for others. Through the course of the drama, the children were able to share ideas and suggestions to help a man who is homeless. Finally, the drama events in Ellen’s classroom did not happen as isolated experiences, but were part of an integrated curriculum approach that Ellen facilitated with her students.

In the third series of narrative pieces, children demonstrate their ability to express sympathy for and/or empathy with people who are homeless through the development of stories with a homelessness theme. “Getting Started,” “The Homeless Cat,” “The Homeless Girl On The Street,” “When We Were Homeless,” and “Sleeping on the Sidewalk” illustrate how young children incorporate the story themes and plot structures of works of literature that they have listened to or read in the classroom. In addition, the children’s written expressions are examples which demonstrate that they have blended several themes together to create new scenarios which incorporate a caring theme for people who are homeless.
Using Art to Engage Children with the Topic of Homelessness

The Slaves Were Homeless

One of the first art projects Ellen did with her students which connected to the homelessness theme was based on the book, *Aunt Harriet’s Underground Railroad in the Sky* by Faith Ringgold. After reading the book, the children created watercolor paintings to depict what they would do to help slaves escape from slavery or hide from slave catchers. Construction paper wheels were added to the paintings which were hung together like a train. The children added captions to their paintings which told what they would to help runaway slaves. This art project was displayed in the hallway outside Ellen’s classroom. Ellen provided the following explanation for the art display.

Room 11 is looking at homelessness. We realized that slaves were homeless in two ways. (1) They were taken away from their homeland - Africa.

(2) They were not allowed to have a home in America (Field Notes, 3/1997).

Figure 7. Example from hall display.
Where Do Homeless People Wash?

We read a really super book called Homes. It is an English book. An artist has done these pictures of homes and they are all in cozy places. She is just wonderful. We actually read the book and in the actual book, the kids are mostly eleven or twelve. They write comments about what homeless means to them. We did it and then we talked about homes and opposites. I made a list of what was in the book, what homes meant to these people and then we looked at the opposites. We kind of made a brainstorm of what homes meant to the children in the classroom and then what the opposite would be. We made a beautiful book out of it, on homes and homelessness. The kids really did begin to think about basic things, about what homelessness meant, like one of the pages in the book was about being able to go to the bathroom, because one of the things they were concerned about is where do homeless people wash. Where do they go to the bathroom? Where do they clean their clothes? They began to think about all the practical problems that homelessness involves (Interview, 3/1997).

Figure 8. Page from the Homes and Homelessness book.
How Would You Feel?

Ellen had the children organized on the carpet area when I arrived. She was finishing-up the morning greeting with them. The children were reading about the morning activities from the board. They were asked to find punctuation errors, capitalization errors, etc. which Ellen had purposefully added into the message. Below the greeting for the day, Ellen had written the spaces for a secret message the children were going to guess hangman style. The children were invited to guess letters in attempts to form words and decipher the sentences. The children guessed randomly through the alphabet until they got enough letters for the message.

After Ellen was finished with the hangman game, she told them they were going to watch a video, titled *Fly Away Home* which was ready to go. She encouraged the children to think about how they would feel if they were homeless like the children in the video. The children made themselves comfortable on the floor to watch the video. Several children laid down, but seemed no less attentive. After a bit, two children seemed to grow especially bored with the video at which point Ellen intervened to have one female child come sit beside her. This seemed to redirect the child’s behavior for a time, but she began to fidget after about five minutes. Ellen began to gently rub her back which seemed to soothe her. The second child, a male student, redirected his behavior when Ellen called his name (Field Notes, 3/1997).

Ellen led a discussion that focused on the feelings being expressed by the children who were featured in the video. On a huge sheet of chart paper she recorded the feelings the children expressed as they responded to her questions regarding the video.

**Ellen:** I asked you to think about how people would feel when they were homeless. Do you remember any words they used when they were talking about being homeless?

**Child:** Scared.
Ellen: Yes, why do you say scared.

Child: Because they are scared because they don’t have a place to live and they don’t know where they are going.

Ellen: Yes, they don’t know where they are going. What else do they feel?

Child: Frustrated.

Ellen: Frustrated. Why do they feel frustrated? I am sure they would be.

Child: Because someone stole all of their money and food.

Ellen: That’s right, they would feel frustrated, right.

Child: They don’t want to help anyone because they think they would make fun of them.

Ellen: Can you think of a word to explain that?

Child: Sad.

Ellen: Sad. Why would they be sad?

Child: Because their home burned down.

Child: Maybe they would be poor and they couldn’t get a job.

Ellen: How did they feel? Think about how they feel about that.

Child: Upset.

Ellen: Upset. That is a great word. Why would they be upset?

Child: Because they lost all their stuff.

Ellen: Yes, because they lost all of their stuff.

Child: Hungry.

Ellen: They are hungry, yes. Remember our story about Robby. Remember, think about it. Think about this, you didn’t have a home. You have all your toys, all your friends, all your family, everything you left there and at night you didn’t have food and it’s cold and lonely. They ignore you. You don’t
have any shoes on your feet, you haven’t eaten for a while. You are wandering around. Open your eyes. How do you think you might be feeling then?

**Child:** Cold.

**Ellen:** You might be cold because you don’t have walls, ceiling, and heat to keep you warm.

**Child:** Lonely.

**Ellen:** Lonely. I would too. Remember in the book, *Fly Away Home*, and in the movie, when you are looking at people being away from their friends, how did he feel?

**Child:** Mad, angry.

**Ellen:** He wanted to push them and say how come you have a home and I don’t?

**Child:** Then people would be mad.

**Ellen:** He didn’t do it, but that’s what he felt like he wanted to go up and push them. He was really angry at his father too. They didn’t have a home.

How did the other children treat them when they went to school? What were they frightened of when they went to school, when they were homeless?

**Child:** Wet.

**Ellen:** Why would they be wet?

**Child:** Because they would be out in the cold and it would probably rain like a couple of days.

The children made a list of about ten words in the large group. Each child then became a member of a group of three and were asked to go off together in group and create a pose (charade) of the emotion they chose. Ellen illustrated several of the emotions for the children before sending them off. The group dispersed and the children went right to work figuring out how to act-out the emotions they had chosen. Ellen
moved from group to group interacting with them to question them about their poses. Most children remained with group members and attempted several different poses. However, a few of the children began to wander about, playing with other materials and interacting with members of other groups. Ellen called them to reorganize in circle after a processing time of about seven to ten minutes. Each small group “performed” their poses and the other students guessed by first raising their hands to be called upon. The students were extremely affective in their ability to portray the emotions they had listed on the chart paper. The larger group was equally adept at “guessing” what emotion was being portrayed. After each child had shared his/her emotion, Ellen passed huge sheets of white paper around and told the children to draw a picture to represent the emotion they had shared. Several finished quickly and were given paints to paint their drawings.

When I left, most of the children were in various stages of drawing. I expected the painting part of the project to last several days. But when I returned on my next visit, the paintings were completed. They had been cut-out and pasted on black paper. The words the students had used to explain and express the emotion of their particular drawing/painting were cut-out and posted above the figure. Ellen had hung the mural in the hallway outside her classroom. Hanging above the mural was the Aunt Harriet’s Underground Railroad in the Sky art display which connected what the children had learned about slavery to what they were learning about homelessness (Field Notes and Classroom Dialogue, 3/1997).
Figure 9. Response to *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky.*

I Can Help

Over time, I began to see that each activity Ellen did with her students seemed to elicit a thoughtful response. After Ellen read the book, *Space Travellers*, by Margaret Wild with the children, she had them make a list of ways they could help a family who was homeless. They used colored chalk on black construction paper and scraps pieces of other colors of construction paper to create a mixed media collage which was a representation of their ideas in response to the book. Once the works of art were completed, the children met in group to discuss what they could do to help the main characters in the story who were homeless. After the brainstorming session, each child generated a list of possible solutions to help the family based on the group writing. They attached their lists of possible solutions to their college pieces. The collage pieces were
displayed throughout the classroom and in the hallway outside Ellen’s room. Ellen hung the following explanation above the collage pieces which were in the hallway.

We read *Space Travellers* and talked about ways we could help the characters move from the rocket in the park to a house with a room of their own (Field Notes, 3/1997).

![Image of a collage titled 'Space Travellers']

Figure 10. Art response to *Space Travellers*.

Interpretation

Vecchi (1993) discusses the role of art in the preprimary school environment. Art is a visual language which leads to the “construction of thoughts and feelings within a holistic education” practice (p. 119). Teachers engage children in the process of doing art to build upon their competence with various art techniques such as drawing, painting, etc. According to Gardner (1991) children demonstrate their learning or intelligence in multiple ways. Learning through the process of doing art is particularly important for
young children. “Children learn best when they are actively involved in their subject matter; they want to have the opportunity to work directly with materials and media; and in the arts, these strengths and inclinations almost always translate into the making of something” (Gardner, 1991, p. 141). When children are engaged in doing art projects, they have the opportunity to learn from one another and the teacher. Teachers likewise grow in their knowledge of art and art techniques through their participation in drawing and painting, etc. with the children (Vecchi, 1993). Planning and organizing art projects that focus on meaningful topics is central to the development of artistic learning. Children should have many opportunities to discuss, reflect, and receive feedback on the art processes they experience. Furthermore, “the arts are also deeply personal areas, where students encounter their own feelings as well as those of other individuals” (Gardner, 1991, p. 143).

Through the process of constructing art, the children in Ellen’s classroom were able to develop their understanding of, or sympathy for, or empathy with, the central characters in each of the stories they listened to or read. Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz (1992) argue that teachers provide an opportunity for students to examine their ideas through creating projects based on children’s literature. In turn, these projects influence the actions of children. In Ellen’s classroom, the process of creating art provided an opportunity for the children to convey their thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding the dilemmas faced by people who were homeless as understood from the literature they encountered. Furthermore, Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz (1992) contend that empathy for others is developed through regular exposure to moral dilemmas which are encountered in quality children’s literature. However, Noddings (1992) suggests that it is difficult to develop care for others who are at a distance. In the series of narrative pieces that follow, Ellen explains her beliefs about the uses of drama to engage the children’s thinking about people who are homeless. Ellen believes drama is a powerful
way of learning. It helps the children organize their thoughts and is a helpful tool which can be used to guide the process of writing. In addition, drama allows the children an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to care for others whom they encounter if even at a distance.

Using Drama to Engage Children with the Topic of Homelessness

The Power of Pretend

It kind of makes sense to me, especially for young kids, because young kids are into pretend. It’s a natural way that they play. Most of them play right now. In many ways what you do is to build on that and if they think of themselves as a dinosaur then they come up with much more profound thoughts than if they sit down at a desk with a pencil and a crayon in hand and have to write something. If they can put themselves in role as to either a real situation around them, it becomes very different. In the classroom right now, when we were ordering supplies for the police station, even the bright kids are beginning to get confused as to whether this is real or not. When we are designing uniforms, are we going to make these tomorrow, are we going to sew them up, are we going to order this equipment, are we really going to have all these computers in our room? Because they get into it.

In terms of the way we teach, the informal way with integrated curriculum and trying to build meaning and connection, etc., etc., etc. There just seems to be a way to do it better. It is not something different, it seems to me it’s just a way to do it better (Interview, 4/1997).

Interpretation

The basis for the dramas that Ellen and her students construct in the classroom is literature. Lehr (1991, p. 155) refers to literature as the “jumping-off point.” Children use it as the catalyst for fulfilling their needs, addressing their questions, and developing
their insights. Also, Lehr (1991) reminds us that response to literature is not limited to the language curriculum. "The power of exploring themes in literature is such that it is not a static experience, nor does it remain in rigidly defined boundaries" (Lehr, 1991, p. 167). Creating opportunities for the children to engage in classroom drama is one way of redefining the boundaries.

According to O’Neil & Lambert (1990), there are five basic elements that students must be able to do to be successful with drama experiences.

• Students must be willing to make-believe with objects
• Students must be willing to make-believe with actions and situations
• Students must be willing to adopt a role
• Students must be able to maintain the make-believe verbally and
• Students must be able to interact with the rest of the group (O’Neil & Lambert, 1990, p. 11-12)

Children learn to adopt roles and move as specific characters through engaging in drama situations. They grow in their understanding and appreciation of these elements through knowing the context for the drama. In addition, to the general aims of drama, teachers may attempt to address other classroom learning needs (content learning, social learning, skills learning, and intrinsic learning) through a drama (O’Neil & Lambert, 1990, p. 14-15). These aims of drama were occurring naturally in Ellen’s classroom. Clearly, she had to act as a facilitator to continue the interests of the children through finding quality literature to help develop the context of the dramas.

A Drama Is Amazingly Good

I like the book, Changing Places, because they actually come up with a solution to problems. It talks a lot about friendship. Sometimes I get ideas when I read something and sometimes it just takes me ages. I was thinking of making
the children somehow being in the homeless shelter and I would be the new child coming. Maybe that would be something that I could do with just me and them.

A drama is amazingly good to do before you do writing because when you brainstorm, kids switch off, and so some of the kids don’t need to brainstorm, they have lots of ideas, the kids that really need to be listening and getting ideas from others are the ones that are switched off, and not paying attention. Drama involves them in a way, it gives them something to write a story about (Interview, 4/1997).

**Interpretation**

O’Neil and Lambert (1990) suggest that drama provides opportunities for children to engage in problem solving activities and critical and constructive thought processes about important issues. Drama is not simply a nice follow-up activity, but it is an avenue which leads to specific kinds of learning about various human experiences according to Stabler (1979). In addition, engaging children in drama is a way of integrating various areas of the curriculum as Ellen discovered in her work with the children. Ellen was able to help the children explore their attitudes, voice opinions, and address the seemingly abstract issue of homelessness by constructing dramas with them.

Ellen was able to build on the natural connection between the literature she read to the children and dramas she helped them construct. Although, as Langer (1953) indicates, she worked with each in different ways. The goal of drama is to suspend the plot, while in narrative literature the goal is to uncover the sequence of events (Langer, 1953). This view of drama differs from the view Garvey (1990) presents of pretend play. Children who engage in pretend play are often creating reenactments of previously experienced events in an attempt to find closure (Garvey, 1990). The knowledge children have regarding a specific issue increases when children view films, watch television, and read literature. In addition, when the children engaged in drama, it seems
they began to understand and appreciate the complex nature of stories. Furthermore, when children engaged in classroom dramas, they had the opportunity to share their important feelings and ideas. In addition, familiarity with narrative discourse in books aids children in their ability to adopt roles and pretend with objects (Garvey, 1990).

Helping People Who Are Homeless

Ellen: Is he sleeping?

Child: He looks like he's dead.

Ellen: You know he might need some help. What do you think we should do about it? Would anyone like to go up and talk to him? I think we should send these two people and try to talk to him.

Child: Hello, how are you?

Isaac: I don’t have any money.

Child: Why are you homeless?

Isaac: I don’t have any friends, I don’t have any family. My wife is sick. She is the only friend I have.

Children: We can be your friends.

Ellen: What can we do if we are going to be his friends?

Child: Help him.

Isaac: You would make fun of me, you would laugh at me, point at me and never talk to me.

Child: No we won’t.

Isaac: You are just little kids. You don’t know anything.

Ellen: Carl, do you have an idea of somehow we can help? You know what, we won’t be able to help him if we are all talking at once. Kyle has an idea, let’s listen to Kyle. If you had furniture but didn’t have a home, what would you do with it?
Kyle: We could make him a house.

Ellen: Do you think someone could go and ask him what he needs?

What would you say?

Children: He could live with us.

Isaac: Do you have a house? I don’t have a job. I don’t have any money to buy any food.

Ellen: He doesn’t have any money to buy any food or anything.

Isaac: I can’t pay rent.

Child: I would give him everything I have.

Ellen: Let’s see if he wants to talk to us. Go up to him slowly and talk to him.

Isaac: Hi.

Child: Would you like to go to Angelica’s house? She said you could go to her house.

Isaac: You don’t think your mom would care?

Angelica: My mom don’t care.

Isaac: I haven’t had a bath in a while and I don’t like to go to the shelters. It’s scary there and people steal things from you. I don’t know anyone there.

Child: Don’t worry.

Isaac: So, I can come to your house. What would your mom say?

Child: Come on.

Isaac: Your mom would be okay, your mom wouldn’t care. I can read stories. I like to read.

Child: We can give you a book.

Ellen: We are going to go over to Angelica’s house and we are going to talk to her mother. We are going to take this man over to Angelica’s house. I’m
going to be Angelica’s mom, and you can all be her friends and you are all at her house. I’m going to be the mom. I’m in the kitchen cooking, so I just stay here. Children I want you out of my kitchen, I am cooking. Hello Angelica. Who have you brought home?

Angelica: A man.

Isaac: My name is Isaac.

Ellen: Are you hungry?

Isaac: Yes. I am real hungry. I haven’t had anything to eat today or yesterday.

Ellen: Kathy can take him some food and India can you take him some drink. I’m going to go in the other room with Angelica for a minute. You just give him food. They brought home this man who is homeless. What am I supposed to do with this stinky man in my house.

Child: Give him a bath.

Ellen: We could give him a bath. How long is he going to stay?

Child: Until Wednesday.

Ellen: Until Wednesday. Do you have an idea. What is your idea?

Child: Find him a job.

Ellen: What if it takes him forever to have a job? Maybe he will never get a job. I am not having him living in my house forever. He is probably a thief.

Child: Put him up in the attic.

Ellen: He is stinky and homeless. Nice people are not homeless. Nice people have houses like me. Maybe he’s a thief.

Child: He isn’t a thief. He sold his house and his wife is sick.

Ellen: How do you know he is not a thief?

Child: Because he told us. He was tired.
Ellen: Just because he told you. I can tell you this. Today, I'll feed this man and let him have one bath in my house, but he can't stay in my house. He might not find a job for a long time.

Child: He is not a thief. We will prove it. He does not have any money. You could build him a house outside. He could live in our old house (Classroom Drama/Conversation, 4/1997).

Interpretation

According to Barton and Booth (1990) children will engage with a story when their thoughts and feelings regarding life and the story have been considered as essential elements of the literature sharing interaction. The literature interaction is the foundation for the drama and is built on what children know and have experienced in the “real world.” Barton and Booth (1990) refer to Dorothy Heathcote’s assertion that a teacher’s role is one of helping children divulge what they already know about life with regards to a particular story and provide opportunities for them to want to learn more about both.

The role of the teacher in the drama is one of facilitation. The teacher engages the children in the process by asking questions in order to check on the quality of the learning children experience through the drama. The difficulty of asking questions arises when teachers ask open-ended questions that the students are not capable of answering. To avoid asking questions beyond the capability of the students, O’Neil and Lambert (1990) suggest that teachers structure questions which fit the following categories. First, ask questions which set the scene for the story. Second, ask questions that are seeking information. Third, ask questions which help the children understand elements of time, space, and location. Fourth, ask questions which generate research. Fifth, ask questions that contain information. Finally, ask questions which give control of the drama to the children (O’Neil & Lambert, 1990).
Each of the drama activities was followed by, or included art or writing. In the next section, I will explore how Ellen and the children conducted work in the area of writing about people who are homeless and about homelessness. But first, it is important to understand a little about the diversity that exists in Ellen’s classroom and how she views and values the writing work that her children do.

**Using Writing to Engage Children with the Topic of Homelessness**

Ellen told me the following narrative piece which helped me to understand the complex nature of doing writing in her classroom.

I’ve got at least half the class that write. Then I have a couple that will string letters together, a couple that will sound out, a couple kindergarten children just started writing and then a couple that really didn’t put anything down in terms of what we regard as writing. But, they can all do it in pictures. Then, I go around and put some words and help them sound it out. It works really well (Interview, 4/1997).

Ellen told me about another dynamic which emerged as a valuable outgrowth of the writing the children did in class. In the following narrative piece, Ellen discusses how the creation of books by the children leads to literacy development because of the connection between reading and writing.

Of all the things you do, no matter whether you make something or build something, the thing that really endures after it is really, at least what I am aware of in daily classroom life, the books that you produce. They love to read the books that they write. It starts at reading time. That’s the time that the *Homes and Homelessness* book comes out almost everyday. The children that tend to read the books that they wrote are the children that read less well. Which is nice because really that is who the books are intended for. They have taken a class in writing them, and they have been read to the class. So they know them
reasonably well. The kids who can read well tend to read them once or twice after they have made them and they are really gun ho about the fact that they made a book. The kids that read less well are the ones that go back and read it all the time (Interview, 4/1997).

Ellen began each writing experience as a group process with the children seated on the carpet area in front of the chart. She used a variety of methods, story starters, story mapping, and story charts (Appendix), to help children organize their thoughts or commence the process of writing. In “Getting Started,” the children figure-out the key elements of their stories together. The story writing experience is based on the classroom drama they have done earlier in the week. This narrative piece was a group conversation that Ellen conducted with the students to focus their writing on the content as well as the structure of their stories. While the conversation which proceeded the writing activity is very focused, the children wrote unique stories which incorporated only some of the elements discussed in the group.

The other narrative pieces in this section, “The Homeless Cat,” “The Homeless Girl On The Street,” “When We Were Homeless,” and “Sleeping on the Sidewalk” are examples of stories the children developed after the group story writing session with Ellen. While each child’s story contains elements from the story writing conversation, all have added their unique ideas and/or incorporated elements such as characters from other works of literature, aspects from the classroom drama, and plot lines from the other books Ellen has shared in class.

Getting Started

Ellen: What is the first thing in writing a story? What is the first thing we need to think about?

Child: The title.
Ellen: The title, that’s right. So if we think about the drama that we did yesterday when we found a homeless man, and then we found out some information about the homeless person and then we ended up having a garage sale and giving him stuff and building him a house. What would be a good title for that story?

Child: The Old Homeless Person.

Ellen: The Old Homeless Person.

Child: How about, When I was Walking.

Ellen: When I was walking. That’s a nice one too. Anybody else have any suggestions? The two titles we have are the Old Homeless Man and When I Went Walking. Does anybody else have any other suggestions for a title? Remember, the titles need to be interesting.

Child: When I Was Homeless.

Ellen: When I Was Homeless, the story could be from the man’s point of view. Does anybody else have any other suggestions?

Child: When I Saw a Homeless Man.

Ellen: When I Saw a Homeless Man. What would you say happened then, just to make it more interesting. It’s a good title, but I’m just thinking we have all these “whens” here. Can anybody think of another word or two words we could put in instead of when.

Child: I Saw the Homeless Man.

Ellen: I Saw the Homeless Man.

Child: How about Another Homeless Man.

Ellen: I was actually thinking of doing something like the day I saw a Homeless Man. What was that second title?

Child: Sleeping on the Sidewalk.
Ellen: Sleeping on the Sidewalk, that is so catchy. Sounds like a rap, sleeping on the sidewalk.

Ellen: These are the choices we have right now. We are going through the list. The Old Homeless Man, When I Went Walking, When I Was Homeless, When I Saw a Homeless Man, and Sleeping on the Sidewalk. Who would like the Old Homeless Man, only one vote, now two. When I Went Walking, five votes. When I Was Homeless, one vote. When I Saw a Homeless Man, three votes. Sleeping on the Sidewalk, eight votes. Which is the winner?

Children: Sleeping on the Sidewalk.

Ellen: When you are writing your story, you do not have to use the same title. You don’t have to write the same story. I am going to do one in circle.

Child: Do we have to do Sleeping on the Sidewalk title?

Ellen: You don’t have to do this title. It is going to be your story and you can write any old story that you like so long as it has to do with homelessness. I am going to map the story writing process first, to give you an idea of what you need to do. So this is the title, Sleeping on the Sidewalk. Who can tell me what the setting is of the story?

Child: Something you put in the background.

Ellen: What do we mean when we say setting?

Child: Background.

Ellen: What do you mean by background?

Child: Where the story takes place.

Ellen: Okay that is right. The setting is the place where the story takes place. Now, we have the title, Sleeping on the Sidewalk. So could this story take place in the jungle?
Children: No.

Ellen: No it couldn’t because we have that word sidewalk in the title.

What could be the setting of this story.

Child: The city.

Ellen: Who were the characters in the drama? There was one main character.

Child: The Homeless Man.

Ellen: What happened at the beginning of our drama yesterday? What was the very beginning?

Child: The very beginning of it was when that man was sleeping and we wanted to know if he was dead or not.

Ellen: Okay, so we found a homeless man covered with a blanket. So where did we find him?

Child: On the sidewalk.

Ellen: When we do our story, write a picture in here that will tell you the main event. Write a brief sentence here, found man on sidewalk. Now remember that the story map is just a brief outline of what is going to be a longer story, so we don’t need all the details just enough for you to remember what to write later. What happened next? What was one of the middle things that happened?

Child: The cat died.

Ellen: No we are talking about the drama we did yesterday. We found this homeless man on the sidewalk.


Interpretation

"Very often the urge to write comes from a story shared with a group of children,
chosen by the teacher or read by a child who has authored a text, and this will often stimulate other children to create ideas for writing for themselves” (Clay, 1991, p. 110). According to Wells (1986), stories provide an opportunity for children to “extend the range of their experience” (p. 152). Stories are a source for collaborative talk among children and adults. Listening to stories improves vocabulary and provides opportunities for children to “discover the symbolic potential of language: its power to create possible or imaginary worlds through words” (Wells, 1986, p. 156).

According to Teale and Sulzby (1992), when children are actively engaged with language, their potential for learning literacy skills, especially reading and writing, are greatly enhanced. All literacy skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking are interrelated and develop concurrently rather than sequentially (Teale & Sulzby, 1992). In addition to the literacy learning elements outlined by Teale and Sulzby (1992), Thompkins (1997) discusses the importance of visual representation with regard to children in primary classrooms. These five aspects of literacy learning were integrated into each learning activity and simultaneously operant in Ellen’s curriculum about homelessness. The children’s array of literacy abilities was evident in the stories they created about homelessness and people who are homeless. Furthermore, the children demonstrated their ability to sympathize and empathize with individuals who are homeless through their writing.

**The Homeless Cat**

There was a homeless cat, very homeless. He was a good cat that didn’t sit. Angelica was walking down the street with Isaac. Then they stopped. Isaac petted him up and looked at him. The cat was afraid of the man, Isaac. Angelica looked at the cat. “Look into the eyes,” said Angelica. If Angelica and Isaac picked him up the cat would be sacred. Isaac and Angelica took him and walked
but the cat was still afraid. Then, the cat was not afraid and so Angelica and Isaac took him home (Child’s Story, 3/1997).

**Interpretation**

One of the books that I read to Ellen’s class was *Leo, The Magnificat* by Ann M. Martin. The central character in this story is a stray cat named Leo which is adopted by a church community. There are other characters in the story who are homeless, but these human characters are not as fortunate as Leo, the cat. The book’s stray animal theme seemed to be a very popular story plot line with the children. In addition to writing about people characters who were homeless, many of the children incorporated the theme of stray animals into their stories too. Or, they made their stray animal characters the sole character in the story who was homeless. The animal characters in the children’s stories were treated similarly to the character Leo. The animal characters in the stories the children wrote were all adopted by caring individuals in the story or they were reunited with their rightful owners.

In “The Homeless Cat,” a student has combined elements from the classroom drama with elements from *Leo, The Magnificat* to create a new scenario. According to Seung-Yoeun (1997), it is common for children to incorporate the story themes they have heard and read into their writing. In addition, the writer introduces the notion of sympathy and empathy in her writing about the stray cat. According to Oliner and Oliner (1996) “Caring begins in small steps” (p. 90). The important decisions individuals make to be caring or uncaring happen in tiny increments over time rather than in any one, isolated moment. “Doing good once increases the probability of doing it again” (Oliner and Oliner, 1996, p. 90).
The Homeless Girl On The Street

One day that I had to work, I saw a homeless girl. The homeless girl was asleep on the street. I tried to get the girl off the street. She was too heavy. I woke her up and she was scared of me. I told her, “Don’t be afraid of me.” She told me her name. It was Pitiful. I told Pitiful my name, Satsy. Pitiful said, “Good name.” I figured a plan. Pitiful said, “You better go to work.” “Oh! Pitiful, I don’t want to anyway,” I said. I told Pitiful, “You can come home with me.” “Good idea, come and work with me.” Satsy said. “You can stay here for the rest of your life” (Child’s Story, 3/1997).

Interpretation

Oliner and Oliner (1996) discuss the importance of being able to perceive need in others as a catalyst for action. The greater the perception of need, the more likely we are to act in a caring manner on the behalf. Reading or hearing about the difficulties others experience is helpful, but the greatest response comes from those who have had direct encounters with individuals who need our assistance. But, if the encounters are too frequent we become desensitized to those in need because we are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the need we perceive. “The homeless are a case in point; overwhelmed by their numbers, we have resigned ourselves to their presence, evading our eyes as we pass them on the street” (Oliner & Oliner, 1996, p. 44).

The practice of caring for others reinforces caring values. However, we must learn that the practice of caring is not simply an attitude of rigorous giving to others. The objective of caring is to help those in need learn to care for themselves and demonstrate care for others. If we merely help others, we will likely become resentful. Caring that does not empower those who are being cared for leads to dependency as the “cared for” make more and greater demands (Oliner & Oliner, 1996).
When We Were Homeless

One muddy and wet day in New York City, there lived a girl and a boy called Tom and Molly. They were looking for food but all they found were crumbs from a cereal box. Luckily the pets caught some fish and they sat down to a pretty good meal. After the meal it was bedtime. They tried the alleyway, but they got thrown out. So, they tried to find a house to sleep in for the night. They looked and looked but they didn’t succeed. But they hadn’t looked everywhere, so they looked at one more house. Luckily, not only did Ann and Sam, the keepers of the house, let them stay for the night, Ann and Sam let Tom and Molly and their pets live with them. The End (Child’s Story, 3/1997).

Interpretation

“Whether intended to take care of others or to empower them, effective caring requires competence: a matter often overlooked by those who believe that good intentions are all that matters” (Oliner & Oliner, 1997, p. 79). The beauty and simplicity of the three previous narrative pieces is that they are full of good intentions. At first glance they may be thought of as naive musings by children. In one sense they are just that, but they also indicate the clarity with which the children in Ellen’s classroom were able to see the issue of homelessness. The children expressed their heart felt concern for people and animals who are homeless through their stories. They also expressed a great deal of commonsense, ingenuity, and action with regard to addressing the needs of those who are homeless. People create social and political change when they believe they can make a difference.

Sleeping on the Sidewalk

One day when I was playing, I saw a man sleeping on the sidewalk. I was a little bit scared, but I tried to talk to him. He did not answer me because he was asleep. A few minutes later, he woke up. When he saw me he was scared.
I tried to comfort him. I also wanted to know what was in his bag. I asked to see one thing and he took out a picture of his wedding. He told me that a fire burned his house down. I called some of my friends over and he was scared of them, so we tried to comfort him. Angelica took him home and assigned him to jobs for payment. Then he got a real job and then a home and he lived happily ever after (Child’s Story, 3/1997).

**Interpretation**

The content of this narrative piece closely parallels the classroom drama that Ellen constructed with her students. In addition, it illustrates an important key to addressing the needs of someone who is homeless. In order to create effective, lasting change for individuals who are homeless, it is imperative that we join together in the process of figuring out what each person is capable of doing to address and resolve the complex nature of their individual situation. “Whether the risks are small or life itself, whether the tasks are simple or complex, caring is a practiced art and skill, primarily born out of focused willing attention, escalating levels of participation and a sense of evolving personal responsibility” (Oliner & Oliner, 1996, p. 96-97).

**The End of This Story**

The narrative pieces presented in this phase are a type of summary. They were some of the most memorable narrative pieces for me because they highlight specific successes and failures in the process of our learning and teaching about people who are homeless and about homelessness. In the first set of narrative pieces, I am addressing how educators’ understanding of homelessness evolve as a result of collaborative interaction. “The Scam” and “The Future, Part I” provide some insight into the growth of understanding that was accomplished over the course of the study for Ellen and me specifically. Very simply, Ellen and I developed our understanding of homelessness through the stories we told one another about our experiences with people who are
homeless and through sharing information about the books we had read about homelessness. The first time I met with Ellen to discuss doing the project on homelessness she told me about an experience she had with a man whom she had seen around her neighborhood. He would go around and knock on doors looking for work. But, she met him for the first time at the main branch of the public library.

The Scam

I met him the first time actually downtown. I didn’t know his name was Robert then. He gave me this long story about how his car had broken down and his pregnant wife was in labor and he needed to fill up his car with gas so he could get his wife to the hospital. He was in a hurry to leave. I told him I didn’t believe a word of it, but it was a wonderful story and he had the money. So anyway a couple of weeks later, I’m at the library up here, he stopped at the library. So here he is again, huffing and puffing up to my car, giving me the same story. I said your wife sure does go into labor quite often (Interview, 2/1997).

What impressed me about this story was the fact that Ellen didn’t mind that this particular man was probably trying to deceive her. Ellen explained to me that her willingness to give the man money was not based on her feelings of sympathy for him regarding his situation, but rather because she believed it was right to offer him the money. When she was approached the second time with the same story, she let him know that she was not fooled by his scam. What impressed me most about the two experiences Ellen had with this man is that these negative experience did not change Ellen’s desire to learn more about homelessness or people who are homeless. Ellen was able to think critically about the causes of homelessness and she looked at the causes of homelessness from a global perspective. This particular man and his scam were just one example of the hundreds and thousands of people who are homeless. He did not
represent the entire population of people who are homeless. Ellen explained to me that her interest in learning more about homelessness was linked to knowing more about global issues which influence how individuals become homeless not simply the political and social issues which contribute to homelessness in the US.

The Future, Part I

I think the way that I wanted to tackle it, I wanted to look, and I haven't had a chance to really go and get the books I would like. I would like to look at the different ways in which people become homeless, in different places. A lot of people tend to build their houses, homes, or farms on volcanic soil because it is really great and they become homeless because of natural disasters, and it would be nice I think if they had some sort of bibliography out there that you could look at, the way that natural disasters create homelessness, war. I had one that I saved (Interview, 4/1997).

The focus I had at the beginning of our study was more social and political in nature which differs from Ellen's perspective. The bibliography that I shared with Ellen included an array of books which examined homelessness from many viewpoints, but the primary focus in my bibliography was a social or political one rather than approaching homelessness as a global issue (see Appendix C). Several of the books elude to the fact that people had become homeless because of war or natural disaster, but only one of the books focused on the aspect of war as a primary cause. The global nature of Ellen's thinking helped me to realize the importance of presenting the multiple causes of homelessness.

The second set of narrative pieces examine how a teacher and researcher allow curriculum to emerge in a classroom setting. "The Future, Part II" and "Peripheral Stuff" illustrate the importance of collaboration to the development of curriculum. The process of creating curriculum is dynamic. The informal conversations Ellen and I had
seemed to be a productive means for generating ideas and planning activities with the children. Although these conversations seemed to address more immediate needs rather than providing an opportunity to examine and/or structure curriculum over a long period of time. While Ellen seemed content with what the children learned and how they expressed their knowledge she and I felt there was room for improvement. Ellen offered the following explanation about planning and organizing a curriculum to study on homelessness after we had completed our project with the children.

The Future, Part II

I think if I was going to do it again, I would be less direct with it. We would kind of skirt the issue a little more as we did with the children in the giant project. I would still deal with the issues about how people become homeless, what happens when you become homeless, and how do you stop being homeless. I would just build in a stronger framework to deal with all the issues. A building block to deal with issues surrounding it. A good way would be to maybe make the children, I can’t think of it off the top of my head, experts organizers, people who are expert in dealing with this problem and then build a center for homeless people in the room and then deal with the issues as they arise out of that center. So that we can bring up all the issues of the fact that a lot of the homeless people have to get out of the center for so many hours a day. What do they do? They walk. If you actually build the center, you have to clean it and you have to do this and that and you have to get people out. It will become more real as to why these things occur, why do they have to be out, why do they have to walk. All they know is that they have to not be there. If you chose those indirect issues through creating a homeless shelter, then you will see some of the logic to some of the reasons why these things happen. Maybe you could just create a scenario where somebody that you know has become homeless and then
go from there. You are actually having some sort of focal point in the framework. See the issues through rather than just reading a story about homelessness and responding to it. Just providing a larger framework that you operate within (Interview, 5/1997).

In my final interview with Ellen, she explained how we could have approached things differently to make the learning experience more effective for the children. In addition, she illustrated how the process of learning is an on-going experience for us as well as for the children we teach.

Peripheral Stuff

You learn as you go through and it started off as something we were kind of fitting in because it wasn’t exactly planned on my part. I know now even just to do this drama that I’m kind of learning and experiencing with, there are things that I could do with it to make it much more exciting. There is a lot of work without directly talking about the issue or the way that they deal with it is that you deal a lot with the topic indirectly You don’t hit it head on. You do a lot of peripheral stuff. So, I can really see quite clearly now we could have dealt with the issue and side issues. We could have started off, with all kinds of work about setting up a homeless shelter. We could have talked about what we would need to set it up, what type of jobs we had, a whole new program. We could have done that; dealt with the issue, but indirectly going into it. Because if you go into it indirectly before you hit the issue head on, you build up knowledge and you make connections through their experiences. I know if I was going to do it now, I could do it differently in a way that I could make it bigger and more meaningful. Drama is a very powerful way of doing that. But then I hadn’t had that experience or knowledge before. So if I was going to do it again, I would do it differently (Interview, 5/1997).
Ellen had obviously figured-out some very important aspects of curriculum development. Young children need to build their knowledge background before they are able to address a difficult social issue like homelessness. For young children, the process of learning should happen in concrete ways. Providing a dramatic setting for them (The Shelter) would allow them to make the connections that she perceived to be missing in their thinking processes. In addition, side issues emerge and can be explored through the drama approach which makes the experience less didactic for the children.

As the inquiry progressed, I shared more and more responsibility for doing classroom instruction and planning which is illustrated in the next narrative piece. “But What Really Happened” is an example of the use of literature in Ellen’s whole language, literature-based classroom. What I found most interesting about this narrative piece was that it illustrates how planned curriculum often takes a backseat to the concerns of the children and their uniqueness of response to a work of literature. As with all whole language, literature-based classrooms, there were two major components of Ellen’s curriculum. First, Ellen introduced the children to a number of books which had a homelessness theme. After the children had listened to a book, they had an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas about it in a discussion. In addition, the children were given opportunities to revisit these books by themselves or with reading buddies during their silent reading time. Second, Ellen created follow-up activities for the books that she shared with the children. Each of the activities Ellen structured for the children engaged them in a specific art, drama, and/or writing process or the activities used a combination of all three processes. Overall, Ellen integrated areas of study with the children, but there was a heavy emphasis on verbal, visual, and written communication skills.

Each day, Ellen selected several books to read to the students during whole group reading time. I began to share the responsibility of selecting books with Ellen as a result of our informal conversations. Regardless of additional follow-up activities, each book
sharing was followed by a discussion period. During the discussion time children
shared their ideas or concerns as they related to the book that was read. As my role in
the classroom grew and changed, I was responsible for reading books to the children as
well. The following narrative piece is illustrative of a group discussion period which
followed the book *Leo The Magnificat* by Ann M. Martin.

**But What Really Happened**

*Child 1:* The cat could make a mess.

*Child 2:* Siamese cats make big messes

*Iaac:* Well maybe that is why they chose to make him different in the story.

*Child 3:* The cat didn't die because people remember him.

*Iaac:* What a nice idea. So because other people remember him, in one way he
hasn't really died. How about others?

*Child 4:* Is that the real Leo?

*Iaac:* This is the real Leo.

*Elleen:* Do you think that Leo is going to live forever?

*Child 5:* No, that cat is not real. Other cats die.

*Iaac:* Yes, the real Leo died. There were some other characters in the story. Do
you remember anything about them, what they did in the story?

*Child 6:* They held the cat.

*Iaac:* They held the cat. Yes, and....

*Child 7:* I remember two things. A couple got married and then they had a
funeral for the cat (group discussion, 3/1997).

Although I had stated before reading the book that Leo had been a cat who was
homeless, the children seemed to focus on the cat's demise. Even though I showed them
a photograph of Leo the cat, which was included on the back flap of the book jacket,
some children expressed confusion about whether Leo was a real cat or not. Many of the
discussion ideas centered around images in the book, establishing the accuracy of the story, and checking for details. These aspects seemed to be somewhat didactic to me, but of great concern for the children. However, the children did not focus on these “factual” pieces of the story in their follow-up work.

As a follow-up to this book sharing, the children wrote their own stories about homelessness. Some of the children wrote stories about animals who were homeless. Or, they combined story themes and wrote about people and animals being homeless together. A few children combined several themes and wrote about aliens who were lost or stranded on earth (essentially homeless), but who were eventually given a home.

In “A Lasting Image” and “Let’s Build a House” the children share their insights and interests about homelessness with me. While the children were working at their tables, I had the opportunity to speak with them about their writing and drawings which were done in response to the literature they had listened to in group with Ellen. These informal conversations with the children provided an opportunity for me to understand what information they were processing about homelessness. Their comments demonstrate what they are thinking and taking away from their exposure to the literature about homelessness which Ellen had shared with them. These conversations allowed me to understand what, and/or if, they had internalized caring ideas from the listening, reading, and drama activities Ellen had implemented in her classroom. The narrative piece below illustrates some of what the children were able to grasp and explain after listening to the book, Uncle Willy and The Soup Kitchen, by Anne DiSalvo-Ryan. Ellen asked the children to draw a picture that showed what they could do to help people who are homeless.
A Lasting Image

Isaac: Can you tell me something about your picture?

Child 1: They are two homeless people and it’s night time and they have to sleep on a bench.

Isaac: Why are they sleeping on benches?

Child 1: Because they don’t have anywhere to go. They are homeless.

Isaac: How did these people become homeless and why don’t they have anywhere to go?

Child 1: Because maybe they lose their jobs and can’t pay their rent and they lose their house.

Isaac: What is your picture about?

Child 2: I’m making different pictures. The first one is I could work in a soup kitchen. and the second one is trading stuff, the third one is buying stuff.

Isaac: So, the first one is, I could work in a soup kitchen. Do you think that would be a good job?

Child 2: Yes, and a very tasteful one.

Isaac: A very tasteful job. I agree, I bet it would be. You would find a lot of good things to eat there.

Child 2: Make sure you are not in late.

Isaac: Did you like that line in the story?

Child 2: I like “Make yourself uncomfortable.” That was funny.

Isaac: That was a funny way to say that, wasn’t it. What is your second picture here?

Child 2: That is trading.

Isaac: What are you going to trade?

Child 2: Like stuff that you have, money.
Isaac: Trading stuff that you have, like money. What are you going to do?

Child 2: A piece of gold for a penny. Like that.

Isaac: So you could trade pennies, and then what would you do with all the money?

Child 2: Go out and buy something.

Isaac: Buy something, and then what could you do with the something that you buy?

Child 2: Have fun.

Isaac: In your picture it looks like there are two things you can do.

Child 3: This is giving them shelter and this is giving them food so they won’t be starving.

Isaac: So, there are two things you would give them, shelter and you would give them food right? What did you write here?

Child 3: I could give them food.

Isaac: I was noticing, this looks like the person who is giving the people the food.

Child 3: No, that’s the guy that is waiting outside, that’s the homeless person. He has a smile on his face because he is going to get food.

Isaac: He has a smile on his face because he is going to get food? That is good. I noticed this person over here looks like they are smiling too. Why is that person smiling?

Child 3: Because he might have a party to help the homeless person

(Conversations, 3/1997).

Each of the children had interesting and fairly well developed ideas about why they had constructed their pictures in particular ways. Most had included pieces of the story in their drawings which demonstrated to me a literal comprehension of the book.
However, some ventured away from the story text and content to include elements that were important to them. The idea of trading things relates to the construction of various objects out of the connect pieces the children had in the Block Area of the room. During free play time, many of the children were involved in the process of creating objects and trading them to others. Many of the boys especially liked to save their objects for future free play times.

On a different occasion, I overheard a child playing in the block area while I was assisting another child with her writing. As I listened, I realized that he was involved in a pretend play scenario by himself which had a focus on homelessness. When I was finished helping the student with her writing, I had an opportunity to ask him some questions about the imaginative play in which he was engaged.

**Let’s Build a House**

**Isaac:** I heard you are working on a story.

**Child:** Some construction people were building a road. The people were homeless with no place to go because the construction people cut their house and they won’t have one until May 28 and it’s November. They won’t have a home for six months.

**Isaac:** What is going to happen to them while they are homeless? What will they do and where will they go?

**Child:** They don’t have a single building, so they have to live on the street. They are building no sidewalks, they are just building a street.

**Isaac:** What made you think of doing this story?

**Child:** The construction people knocking down the houses.

**Isaac:** So when construction people knock down houses then the people that live there have to go somewhere else. Is that right?

**Child:** Yes, but this story is about they don’t get a home until six months.
Isaac: It takes a while for people who might be homeless to find a place to live.

Child: Yes.

Isaac: Why is that?

Child: Well, they have no car, they have no money and the construction knocked down their house. They have no food and the fourth one is that they have no mail.

Isaac: I am just a little surprised by your story. What do you know about people who are homeless? What causes them to be homeless?

Child: The most important thing is that they get homeless by fire and no money.

Isaac: So what can you do to help or what can I do to help people who are homeless?

Child: We can build houses on Monday.

Isaac: Okay, so you can build houses, but it takes a lot of money to build a house doesn’t it? How can somebody your size build a house? Do you have lots of money to build a house?

Child: No, but someone in my family always has a lot of money. They have probably a thousand or more.

Isaac: That sounds like a lot of money. Also when you build a house you have to know how to do it. Do you know how to build a house?

Child: With super glue and bricks.

Isaac: So, with super glue and bricks?

Child: A door.

Isaac: You have to have a door, right?

Child: A mailbox.

Isaac: It is important to have a mailbox isn’t it?
Child: I might want to save money and maybe that would be another thing, to give them some money. All the money that I have been saving up.

Isaac: You are pretty small. What can you do? What is one of the good things that you could do?

Child: Well have my parents to help.

Isaac: Maybe to have your parents help, and then what else?

Child: Maybe the people who have lots of money and buy a bed for him.

Isaac: How can we get people to do that though? Do you think you can convince people or to have people understand that you can help?

Child: Understand that we can help.

Isaac: Is it difficult to understand that we can help or is it easy?

Child: It's easy to help. Maybe I could ask everyone in this classroom and everybody's mom in this classroom and ask the teachers to give a note that says how can you help the homeless people. It will say I have an idea, maybe two.

Isaac: Maybe two or three ideas. So if we ask people?

Child: Ask the teachers to give us a note on Monday. We could buy some bricks. We need probably ten or fifteen people to help (Conversation, 4/1997).

When I heard this child engaged in a pretend scenario about homelessness, I was a bit stunned. I was even more surprised when I spoke with him and find that he was so strongly committed to helping people who are homeless. What was even more interesting was that he seemed to have confidence in his approach to solving the problem of homelessness. While he lacked knowledge of how to construct housing and the cost of housing, he was adamant in his opinion that the solution to homelessness was a fairly simple one. You simply bring people together and build more houses. This narrative piece demonstrated for me that the children had taken our study of homelessness to heart. It was not something abstract and distant, but something that they felt empowered to
address head-on. The child in this narrative was able to construct a plan that enlisted the help of his family and school community as well.

In one of the last narrative pieces, "Eggs," the children discuss their ideas about a sharing project they are doing with the children in the shelter program. The egg project coincided with the Easter Holiday. The children had listened to the book, Reshenka's Eggs, by Patricia Polacco. As a follow-up to the story, Ellen had the children color plastic Easter Eggs with markers. When the children were finished coloring the eggs, they wrote letters to the children in the shelter program and filled the eggs with candy. I spoke with the children about why they were doing this project. Most of our talk was about the egg coloring process. This was the second letter Ellen had her children write to the children in the shelter program. I was acting as the go between and would take the eggs and a copy of the book to Beverly, one of the directors of the shelter program, that afternoon. Ellen had supplied the eggs and candy to send to the shelter as well. The narrative piece below illustrates that the children in Ellen's classroom felt they were being helpful. They were excited about the project and it seemed to be a positive experience for them.

Eggs

Child: What are the people's names at the center?

Isaac: I can tell you some of their names, but one of the problems that I find is that so many of the children who come to the center one week, don't come back the next week. One of the children's name is Alexandra.

Child: That's a long name.

Isaac: She is a very nice girl. I met her last week.

Child: That's a pretty name.
Isaac: I think so too. It was really interesting because Alexandra is very new. This past week was her first night to come to the center, but she is an immigrant to America. She just came to America not long ago.

Child 1: Is she meeting lots and lots of friends?

Isaac: She is meeting lots and lots of friends.

Child 1: I would like to give this egg to her.

Isaac: Do you think the children at the center will enjoy getting these?

Child 2: Yes.

Isaac: Why do you think that is?

Child 2: Because they have candy in them.

Isaac: Why are you doing these eggs?

Child 3: For the poor people. People who used to be poor.

Isaac: What did you say?

Child 4: They are homeless.

Ellen: Why are you making these eggs?

Child 4: We are making eggs for the homeless.

Ellen: You are making eggs for the homeless.

Child 5: That used to be homeless.

Ellen: Then what are you going to do with them, are you going to send them or what?

Child 6: We are going to write a note and put candy in them.

Ellen: What kind of note are you going to put in there?

Child 6: An Easter note. We have to think of something that will be nice.

Isaac: Who are you writing to?

Child 7: I don’t know, I don’t know the people.

Isaac: You don’t know the people, but where are the people?
Child 7: They are homeless.

Isaac: Why are you writing this letter to them? Why do you think you are doing this?

Child 8: So they could know they are not homeless, so they could be our friends and we have to give them respect so they can give us respect (Conversations, 3/1997).

A few weeks later, the children received their colored eggs from the children in the shelter program. Beverly had made a video of the egg project that she did with the children at the shelter which was greatly enjoyed by Ellen’s students. Ellen and her children were anxious to receive their eggs and read the notes that had been sent to them. The following is an excerpt from my field notes about the day Ellen’s children received the eggs from the children in the shelter program.

The children all sat on the carpet to watch the video from Beverly. Ellen’s children were especially quiet and attentive while they were watching, but as soon as their names were read by one of the children on the video, the children in Ellen’s classroom became exuberant with laughter or made remarks regarding their delight about sending the eggs. Ellen shared her delight in the process too when Beverly opened the egg sent to her. To my surprise, each egg from the shelter contained a message for one of the students in Ellen’s class. The passing of the eggs was just before free choice time. Before the children were allowed to open the eggs or eat any of the candy, they had to wait until everyone received an egg. Once the eggs were passed, Ellen and I helped the children read the messages they contained. Each child seemed thrilled with the prospect of receiving a personal letter (Field Notes, 4/1997).

The Easter Egg exchange project was successful for several reasons. The children in both the shelter program and Ellen’s classroom had an opportunity to connect
with each other verbally and visually. This helped them to discover that there were few differences between them. The children in Ellen’s classroom had an opportunity to see that there were children just like them who were homeless. The video allowed the children in Ellen’s classroom to realize that the children they were learning about in stories could also be potential friends. The following narrative piece is one Ellen told me in our final interview. It illustrates how the focus on homelessness influenced the work children were doing in her class and that the children continued to explore this issue even after Ellen had switched to a new focus in her curriculum.

**Deborah Writes About Homelessness**

Actually today Deborah came up at writing time because it related to her and the conversation that she had with her mother about the fact that she doesn’t write enough. So she started writing a book on homes today. She has actually chosen that topic and I don’t know what it is she is going to write about yet, but I thought when she came up to me and showed me the book today that she was writing entitled “Home.” So I don’t think it would be something she would be doing if we hadn’t done something on homelessness, because we actually started off on homes. For her, she had picked up as a result of that, a home is something given significance and importance that it might not have had. I think so anyway. Because if we had done some other topics she would be writing about something like space travel instead, or something else. It obviously made some sort of impression on her that she is continuing to use this in her work (Interview, 5/1997).

I thought this was a powerful narrative piece. It illustrates to me that the children feel some level of confidence in their ability to communicate with others about the topic of homelessness. In addition, it illustrates that the curriculum we implemented made a
strong impression on the children because they are still generating stories based on the
information they learned from the activities we did in class.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the data as a collection of narrative pieces which
demonstrate what Ellen, her students, and I have discovered in the process of our
learning and teaching about people who are homeless and homelessness. I have
provided an interpretive frame for selecting these particular narrative pieces which
allowed me to address my questions regarding learning and teaching about
homelessness. Witherell and Noddings (1992) suggest that “The story fabric offers us
images, myths, and metaphors that are morally resonant and contribute both to our
knowing and our being known” (p. 1). The narrative pieces or “story fabric” (images,
myths, and metaphors) I have shared here offer a glimpse into the thoughts, feelings,
and ideas of Ellen, her children, and me. Through the examination of these narrative
pieces, a complete story begins to emerge. In order to learn and teach effectively about
people who are homeless and homelessness, we must first know and empathize with
individuals who are homeless. Shabatay (1992) and Link, Phelan, Stueve, Moore,
Bresnahan, and Struening (1996) reminds us that our attitudes toward others and our
ability to embrace the “stranger” among us is directly linked to our willingness to assist
those who need and deserve our care and concern.

In the process of planning and organizing curriculum, we must consider that
children express concerns for sustaining and maintaining relationships when they
consider how being homeless would affect their lives. Adults, however, speak of the
devastating loss of autonomy and independence when one becomes homeless. In
addition, it is important to consider the advantages of collaboration to structuring and
orchestrating a curriculum about homelessness. Despite the lack of regular, planned
opportunities to discuss and refine ideas, Ellen relied on the insights and ideas other
professional educators shared with her through informal conversations. These conversations helped her to establish and implement curriculum about homelessness as well as reflect on her teaching processes.

Finally, discussions about literature, art, drama, and writing were the primary means of response in Ellen’s whole-language, literature-based approach to implementing an integrated curriculum about homelessness with her children. Through the process of engaging in discussion, art, drama, and writing activities, the children were able to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings regarding people who are homeless and homelessness. In addition, the children were able to engage in the process of educating others about homelessness through the displays of their work in the hallway at their school and at the Alternative School Fair. Ultimately, these learning and teaching processes provided an opportunity for young children to practice the art of caring and to demonstrate their ability to care for people who are homeless.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this inquiry was to investigate the process of learning and teaching about people who are homeless and homelessness. In addition to the exploratory data collected from educators involved in service learning about homelessness, an in-depth examination was made of a particular kindergarten/first grade classroom teacher and her students. Homelessness is caused by complex social, political, and natural phenomena. How teachers and students engage with each other in a classroom setting about this topic is determined by their social, political, and moral understanding of this issue which, in turn, influences the organization, design, planning, and implementation of curriculum with a focus on learning and teaching about homelessness.

The following specific questions were employed as guideposts for research on learning and teaching about homelessness. 1) How do educators’ understandings of homelessness evolve as a result of their collaborative interactions? 2) How do a teacher and a researcher create a curriculum and/or allow it to emerge in her classroom to instruct students about homelessness? 3) What are the salient aspects (and resulting interactions) of that curriculum in her whole language, literature-based classroom for K - 1 students? 4) How do young children’s interests in, and knowledge about, homelessness and people who are homeless develop through use of a whole language, literature-based approach? 5) Do children's interests in, and knowledge
about people who are homeless and homelessness lead to social action and changes in understanding?

Discussion of Findings

Noddings (1992) suggests that the ability individuals have to care for others who are at a distance is built on well established relationships of care and trust. If we do not have close contact with people who are homeless, we are likely to act in an uncaring manner toward them. “The judgments of Americans influence public policies affecting homeless people” (Link et al, 1996, p. 143). Simon (1996) discusses numerous examples of individual states that have adopted policies against people who are homeless with regard to the use of public space. Some policies have made it a crime to beg for donations. And, in some states, people who are homeless are incarcerated for soliciting funds and/or banished from public parks. These public policy responses have led to clashes between advocates for people who are homeless and those who have little sympathy or empathy for their plight.

Link, Phelan, Stueve, Moore, Bresnahan, and Struening (1996) cite evidence from a national survey in 1995 which examined how or if public attitudes about people who are homeless had changed since the late 1980s. In addition, their research revealed public opinion concerning the causes of homelessness. The majority of people surveyed, thought that homelessness resulted from individual alcohol and drug abuse problems. The same group of survey participants cited the lack of affordable housing as a secondary cause of homelessness. In an effort to see if public opinion about people who are homeless had changed to the opinions expressed in 1990, comparisons were made with the latter surveys conducted by the Gallop Organization for the Los Angeles Mission. While public opinion shows there is a slight improvement in the negative attitudes about people who are homeless, there has been little change. “In sum, evidence suggests that public opinion has not changed
markedly since late 1990” (Link et al, 1996, p. 148). Furthermore, “Understandings about a problem shape how people behave toward those who embody the problem” (Link et al, 1996, p. 143). Essentially, what we believe to be true, whether it is true or not, determines what we do.

How Do Educators’ Understandings of Homelessness Evolve as a Result of Collaborative Interactions?

The process of changing the understanding we have of a specific social phenomenon like homelessness is complex. It seems we must develop ways of making connections to “others” which in turn, motivates us to feel empathy for them. Through the narrative pieces shared in phase one and the first part of phase two of this study, I was able to see the changes in understanding of those involved in the process of this research. First, each participant shared ideas which suggested they had become aware of the lack of difference between themselves and people who are homeless. Interestingly, we began to realize that homelessness is not place specific so much as it is circumstantial. In the narrative piece, “Any One of Us,” Mark shared about his realization that anyone can become homeless. Prior to really thinking about or investigating homelessness, the adults shared negative ideas about people who are homeless. Furthermore, in the course of our conversations, they revealed their view of homelessness as being the loss of a place, a physical structure, rather than being without important relationships. The adults also spoke of homelessness as a loss of orientation to structures or freedoms they might enjoy, such as Ann sharing the feeling of discomfort just using the phone in her mother’s house. But, through their encounters with people who are homeless and their interactions with the children they teach or work with at the shelter, the adults came to the realization that homelessness causes the dissolution of relationships, or places a severe strain on them and that each of us is vulnerable to becoming homeless.
Ann’s narrative piece in “More Than Bricks and Mortar” is a reflection on the emotional turmoil she felt when her family became homeless temporarily after a flood in her basement. She spoke of the loss of treasured objects from her son’s childhood, photograph albums (artifacts of relationships), the loss of freedom and independence. The vivid memory of these losses contribute to her feelings of empathy for others. She now willingly sends help to others who are victims of flooding immediately. Her experience with being homeless, the turmoil of being a victim of flooding herself, has allowed her to feel a bond with other victims of flooding because they have suffered in a similar way.

In contrast to the adult educators in this study, the children seem to have had a different insight about the experience of what it means to be homeless. All of the children, whether in the shelter program or members of Ellen’s class, defined homelessness as a change in relationships, or the cessation of an experience that was relationship oriented. From the narrative pieces in the section titled, “More Than Bricks and Mortar,” both Beverly and Ellen reported that children (in the shelter program and in Ellen’s class) said or perceived that they would miss events with others, such as reading a story, smelling their mother cooking dinner, pushing a sibling on the swing set, etc. The children in Ellen’s classroom created a book which elaborated on these ideas entitled Homes and Homelessness. Children spoke of homelessness as the loss of comfort, caring, and security, or they spoke of the practical needs (Where would one wash?) as important issues that would change should they become homeless. However, the physical surroundings seemed somewhat less salient for children. What children would miss would be the comfort derived from the relationship that would be lost or altered because they have become homeless.
I surmise that as we grow up in this culture, we learn to be attached to things such as the size of the house we own, the type of car we drive. The narrative pieces children told me or that their teachers reported to me lead me to think that we have taught ourselves to be attached to things that are ultimately insignificant. What seems to be most important for all of us are the relationships that we have with other people, how we spend our time with them, how we engage with others, rather than the objects that we surround ourselves with in life. The clarity that children seem to have, regardless of their circumstance, is that relationships are really important.

Tangentially, there is support for this speculation in the literature about childhood development and caring with regard to forming attachments and bonding with others (Erikson, 1987; Noddings, 1992; Oliner & Oliner, 1996). The thinking and the experiences of children are fresh; they have not been tainted by all of the “stuff” that occupies the minds of adults. Essentially, the study of homelessness and/or participation in service learning projects about homelessness may work as a type of inoculation against the trappings of consumerism and help us maintain some important understandings about relationships.

Two factors which influenced the evolution of our understandings of homelessness were the elements of collaboration in the research process and feelings of enjoyment that were experienced through participating in service learning. Very simply, there was too much work for any one person to do on her/his own. This became evident to me through the process of doing the classroom study portion of this inquiry. First, the process of conducting collaborative research is dynamic, exciting, and enjoyable (Justiz, 1996). Second, participating in service learning projects is interesting and leads to the development of caring relationships with others (LeSourd, 1997).
The process of collaboration was enjoyable for all concerned. With regard to participation in service learning, people often find that doing things for others contributes to a feeling of pleasure in the service work they do (Bernard, 1993). In phase four of my inquiry, I shared a narrative piece titled “Eggs.” The students and Ellen were totally engrossed in watching the video that Beverly sent of the children in the shelter program receiving the eggs. The students in Ellen’s class demonstrated their interest in the exchange through their body posture during the viewing of the tape. Their response to hearing their letters and names being read by the children in the shelter was also very positive. Ellen and her students expressed their elation through their laughter and in their candid remarks. It was obvious that they were delighted that their gift of a colored Easter egg meant so much to the children in the shelter program. The benefit of finding enjoyment in the experience of service learning strengthens the likelihood that the children will engage in future episodes of service to others (Oliner & Oliner, 1995). If they have had a successful experience once, they would probably anticipate that the next experience would be enjoyable as well.

There were two distinct benefits of this research for Ellen, the primary educator involved in this project. First, Ellen’s collaboration with me freed her from some of the difficulties of finding a project to do and the orchestration of incidental pieces, the connections that had to be made, such as picking things up from or dropping things off to the children at the shelter. Part of my role was acting as a go-between for Ellen and her students and the program at the shelter. A second benefit for Ellen was with regard to the structure of, and creation of, lessons on homelessness. I was able to provide materials, books, video tapes, and assistance, through our conversations, to Ellen in her classroom. This was a great benefit to her and to her students because during my days with her, the children could seek
assistance from either of us. On several occasions, I did reading inventories with particular students whom Ellen had not been able to meet with during the week. I spent time hanging wall displays, typing children’s stories, and engaging in conversations with Ellen which helped her in the process of constructing and refining lessons. My facilitation of the projects we did probably contributed to Ellen’s openness to the project - and therefore to some of the shifts she made in her understandings about homelessness. Collaboration was, then, a key element in this shift.

The collaboration benefited me and contributed to an increase in my own understandings about homelessness. Even though it seems rather mundane to be the delivery person bringing things to Ellen, or making a library run for books, these activities helped to solidify the relationship that Ellen and I shared. The investment of my time through these little tasks made me feel that I was contributing to the work that Ellen was doing with her children. These connections placed me at the center of the interactions where I could be a valued member of the process, not just an additional burden to Ellen attempting to get information. In addition, it demonstrated how the collaborative work we were doing was reciprocal. Furthermore, part of our role as researchers is to improve the lives of children and teachers, the most powerful way of accomplishing improvements is through our direct involvement with the process of classroom instruction in addition to developing curriculum or sharing insights about the teaching process. Many teachers are ecstatic when they have another pair of hands in their classrooms to assist them with the process of educating children.

Through active participation (as defined by Spradley, 1980) in the learning and teaching process, researchers gain insight and information into how teachers teach. In addition, the researcher is contributing to the educational process. Consequently, everyone benefits from a collaborative model. Furthermore,
Heshusius (1994) suggest that the collaborative process requires researchers to examine their role in doing research. It isn’t enough to locate yourself as an insider or outsider in research, one who is attempting to disclose subjective aspects of the research or remain objective respectively. Collaboration demands that researchers choose a “participatory mode of consciousness” to truly make the process collaborative (Heshusius, 1994).

Allan and Miller (1990), Johnson, Johnson, and Holbec (1986), and Bruffee (1987) outline a less traditional, more collaborative model for conducting research which I followed in Ellen’s classroom. The inquiry followed Allan and Miller (1990) three distinct phases: (1) building positive, interdependent relationships, (2) promoting and sustaining cooperative interactions, (3) collaboration with other teachers through sharing documentation of the research. While our collaboration with other teachers was limited, we did promote the ideas we were exploring through the displays of children’s work with teachers in Ellen’s school and parents and teachers who attended the Alternative School Fair.

McElroy (1990) suggests that collaboration between teachers and researchers results in the creation of better learning interactions with children. This was true of the interactions between Ellen and me. Consistent with McElroy (1990), the collaborative nature of this inquiry empowered Ellen and me to examine, re-examine, and improve our own practice by sharing our ideas about what and how things were working or not working. Finally, the collaborative nature of our work supports Justiz’s (1997) notion that collaboration between teachers and researchers is a positive way for universities to address the needs of schools. According to Justiz (1997) partnerships benefit all who are involved with the process which was the case in this inquiry. Collaboration, then, was found to be key to changes in educators’ understandings about homelessness and people who are homeless.
How Do a Teacher and a Researcher Create Curriculum and/or Allow it to Emerge in Her Classroom to Instruct Students about Homelessness?

There are three factors which are relevant to the development of curriculum about homelessness. First, dialogue is an important and productive element in the process of planning and implementing learning activities with young children. In this case, the dialogue between Ellen and me helped us to establish a service learning project with a local shelter. Second, the process for creating curriculum is emergent. Allowing the curriculum to emerge from the interactions with children capitalizes on their understandings and captures their interests in the learning process. Third, the process of emergent curriculum development requires time and reflection.

Ellen and I were able to allow a curriculum to emerge with the children based on the literature that we shared with them. The literature provided an idea or image for us. In a sense, these ideas seemed to spring from the literature and became activities that we used to instruct the children about homelessness. For example, in “Finding the Thread,” a narrative piece in the second phase of the research, Ellen talked about the possibility of creating a wall mural. She was basing her idea for the mural on the work of Maurice Sendak’s book, *We Are All in the Dumps With Jack and Guy*. She had a well formed idea of how she could create the mural using the children’s artwork and setting it against a backdrop of old newspapers. This was basically going to be a re-creation of an image from the book. Therefore, literature with a social issue focus was extremely important as a foundation for the activities we did with the children. This is consistent with the findings of Gibbs & Earley (1994) and Lamme, Krogh, & Yachmetz (1992). What limited our ability to bring some of the literature ideas to fruition were the constraints of time. Ellen and another primary teacher exchanged children for math instruction. So, the process of designing and implementing a curriculum in Ellen’s classroom was hindered by the structure of an
imposed schedule that could not be altered. There were other curriculum demands placed on Ellen too. Specific themes and/or units were supposed to be covered within the space of the year with the children. To focus on curriculum about homelessness, meant taking time away from the development of curriculum on required topics.

One way of overcoming some of the difficulties we encountered in planning and orchestrating a curriculum on homelessness was through making use of informal conversations with each other, finding information on the internet which seemed to be a helpful resource for Ellen, and simply talking with individual visitors who happened into Ellen’s classroom. The children were also a resource. When they showed interest and became engaged, it was easy for Ellen and me to commit more time and energy to the process of their discovery.

The development of the homelessness curriculum paralleled the “project approach” model as outlined by Katz and Chard (1993). Generally we worked on things several times a week when I could be present in the classroom. However, Ellen continued working on activities related to the project with the children throughout the day when I was not there, and reported to me later about the progress of the work the children were doing. The children always worked closely with one another in small groups, sharing ideas and materials and incorporating their personal meanings into the objects they created and writing they constructed, as consistent with the ideas of Katz & Chard (1993).

The curriculum was emergent in nature akin to the ideas expressed by Rinaldi (1993). We did not have a specific goal in mind when we began other than we wanted the children to have the opportunity to learn more about homelessness. The children’s ideas and enthusiasm for learning about homelessness influenced the processes and progress of the curriculum. In addition, I learned to appreciate Ellen’s view of the children as capable learners early in the study through watching her
interactions with them and by becoming aware that they were accomplishing so much within a short period of time. The children had numerous opportunities to express themselves through various symbol systems (primarily reading, art, drama, and writing) which reflects Ellen’s understanding of the work and ideas of Rinaldi (1993) and Gardner (1991). For example, after expressions were made in one symbol system (participating in drama or making a drawing), the children would engage with a different media (writing a story). These opportunities allowed children to explore their strengths as learners. Finally, to create and maintain dialogue with parents, Ellen wrote a classroom newsletter to the parents each week to inform them about the classroom events and activities.

Most processes and interactions in Ellen’s classroom were consistent with the ideas of Rinaldi (1993). Ellen was constantly observing and evaluating what the children were doing so she could make adjustments in the learning environment and bring in materials which promoted additional learning. The inquiry process was collaborative. Ellen and I worked together as colleagues. We shared responsibility for instruction and locating materials for the children. We demonstrated our value of the work the children did by working closely with one another to support learning and to make sure that all of the children would experience success through their learning endeavors.

Consistent with Rinaldi’s (1993) ideas of the construction of emergent curriculum, Ellen and I promoted opportunities where natural communication could occur among children and with us. We structured various types of literacy and language experiences (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visually representing information) which required the children to communicate and refine their ideas and knowledge about homelessness with others throughout the duration of the project. These opportunities (discussion times after stories, drawings based on their
understandings, drama, etc.) were structured so that the children could engage in constructing their knowledge (through revisiting the same ideas again) about homelessness in multiple ways as discussed by Forman, Lee, Wrisley, and Langley (1993). In addition, Ellen and I initiated activities which promoted and supported the intellectual and scholastic abilities of the children (allowing children to use inventive spelling, etc.), included a variety of learning experiences, fostered a sense of community among the children, and reflected experiences children would encounter in real life as Rinaldi (1993) suggests.

**What Are the Salient Aspects (and Resulting Interactions) of that Curriculum in Her Whole Language, Literature-Based Classroom for K-1 Students?**

Literature, art, drama and writing were central to the study of homelessness in Ellen’s classroom. However, literature was the foundation of our learning and teaching processes and had a tremendous influence on subsequent reading, writing, art, and drama activities the children did as is consistent with the ideas of Barton and Booth (1990), Huck, Hickman, Hepler, and Kiefer (1997), and Palardy (1997). The children were engaged in the process of listening and reading stories about homelessness on a daily basis. They had the opportunity to revisit stories during silent reading time and then had many opportunities to explore their own construction of meaning through response activities based on the literature as suggested by Maples (1994), Palardy (1997), and Seung-Yœun (1997). The artwork they created, dramas they participated in, and the writing they accomplished were the most significant aspects of the curriculum we constructed with them. In addition, the activities we structured with the literature reading, creating drama, art, and writing promoted the active involvement of the children, yet these maintained a safe distance for them. Through their active participation and involvement the children were able to place themselves in the position of others. In addition, Ellen’s employment of group
discussions, a process approach to writing, and creations of drama promoted social interactions between the children.

The curriculum involved activities that were related to reading, writing, art, and drama. In phases three and four of the study the children demonstrated their sense-making of homelessness through their participation in discussions and involvement in follow-up activities. Listening to books enabled children to gain information and make connections about the experiences of people who are homeless. However, while some children were able to sustain active attention to the issue of homelessness, others experienced the literature sharings as a passive activity, or they focused on other aspects of the literature that were unrelated to the issue of homelessness. The narrative pieces, "But What Really Happened" and "A Lasting Image," illustrate the diversity of response the children made to the stories. But, in "A Lasting Image" the children have been asked to create images to go along with their ideas. The images they create provided a way for the children to examine the issue of homelessness more closely. The process of creating art seems to help children nudge the distance between themselves and the focus of their study as is consistent with the ideas of Forman, Lee, Wrisley, and Langley (1993) and Lamme, Krogh, and Yachmetz (1992).

I noticed similar parallels between drama and writing which Ellen spoke of in the narrative pieces, "The Power of Pretend" and "A Drama Is Amazingly Good." It seems that drama and listening to literature help children to begin to understand the issues of homelessness, if even from a distance, where as, creating works of art and constructing writing promote understanding homelessness more closely. This was even more evident to me in the narrative pieces, "The Homeless Cat," "The Homeless Girl on the Street," "When We Were Homeless," and "Sleeping on the Sidewalk." The children wrote these stories based on the drama that Ellen and I constructed in
class. However, in each of these stories, the children take an active role as a provider of care for the person (or animal in one story) in the story who was homeless. The process of moving children from a “distant” type of understanding, sympathy, to a “closer” type of understanding akin to empathy is critical if we are attempting to create and sustain care according to Noddings (1992) and Oliner and Oliner (1996). “Caring is a capacity (or set of capacities) that requires cultivation. It requires time” (Noddings, 1992, p. 114).

A subsequent activity was the display of the work children had accomplished in these areas. As a result of displaying the products that the children created, Ellen and I became involved in conversations with other teachers at school and the children in their classes. So, the displays of children’s work in class became an important aspect of the process and were salient to the development of curriculum. The children’s artwork, their narratives, and their letter and Easter egg exchanges traced their participation in the service project with the children in the shelter program and were documented in these displays. In addition, displaying the work the children did made it obvious that what they were doing was valued. The hall displays were essentially a format or a stage where the children could share their ideas and receive feedback. Gandini (1993) refers to “displays” as a process of documentation which promotes and invites communication among the members of the school community. The documents essentially trace the process and progress of the project. Each portion of documentation also serves a number of broader purposes (curriculum planning, instructional accountability, and assessment) according to Forman, Lee, Wrisley, and Langley (1993).

Ellen worked extremely fast with getting the things the children had done up on the walls. In the third phase of the inquiry, I wrote a narrative piece titled, “How Would You Feel?” The children had shared how they would feel if they were
suddenly homeless. When I left her classroom that morning, the children were just beginning the process of painting their drawings. I assumed that they would be working on the painting process for several days, but when I returned a day later, the paintings were finished and mounted on paper and hanging in the hallway with the children’s corresponding feelings mounted beside the paintings they had created for everyone to see. The mural was enormous.

Two issues are important to talk about here. First, Ellen’s efforts to take the work the children had done and display it immediately demonstrates the value she placed on their thoughts and ideas. The second issue relates to the social interactions and dialogues that the displays elicited from the school community about the topic of homelessness. The strong support for their investigation of homelessness contributed to the children’s understanding of people who are homeless and the enthusiasm they sustained as they engaged with the topic. Ellen always attached a very specific message to the displays to tell people what we were doing and why. In addition, two of the displays were taken to the citywide Alternative Fair. This was one way of engaging people outside the school community in the learning process and promoting the notion that study about homelessness is valuable and possible for other educators.

How Do Young Children’s Interests in, and Knowledge about, Homelessness and People Who Are Homeless Develop through Use of a Whole-Language, Literature-Based Approach?

Ellen addressed this in her narrative piece, “People Just Like Me,” which I recorded in the second phase of the inquiry. In it, children went from a very narrow idea of who can be homeless to a broader idea. At first they did not realize that children, as well as adults, could be homeless. Likewise, the educators I interviewed in phase one shared similar notions. Two of them mentioned that they did not realize the extent of homelessness in our community, and they also did not realize that there
was such a large number of children who are homeless. Curricular experiences, in particular service learning curricula that engage children in community agencies, allowed all of us to grow in our understanding of homelessness.

Noddings (1992) reminds us that “A caring relation is, in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings - a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for” (p. 15). In the third phase of narrative pieces, the children in Ellen’s classroom demonstrated their understanding of the important need we have for creating caring relations with others. They helped me to know how the loss of shelter destroys or limits the opportunity to create and sustain caring relations with family members and friends. Children who are homeless do not lack just the comforts of home, they lack the caring relationships or the possibility of caring relationships that happen within homes. This was painfully clear to me through my narrative in phase one “I Am Somebody Special Because Somebody Cares,” about Carlos, a child in the shelter program. He desperately wanted his letter to reach someone. He wanted a reply immediately. He was obviously troubled by the lack of connection he had to others. He desired contact with others, a peer group, friends who cared, the volunteers at the shelter program. Furthermore, Ellen’s and Barbara’s stories in “More Than Bricks and Mortar,” illustrate how children’s concepts of the loss of home are synonymous with the loss of caring relations with others. It does not seem to matter whether the child is the one to exhibit care or receive it. Both Ellen and Barbara spoke of caring relationships in the simplest terms, smelling food being prepared, helping a sibling, being with mom and dad. For children, being homeless meant the cessation of comforts that being in relationship created for people. The feelings expressed by both groups of children, those in Ellen’s classroom and those in the shelter program, focused on the loss of relationship.
Do Children’s Interests in, and Knowledge about Homelessness and People Who Are Homeless Lead to Social Action and Changes in Understanding?

This question is addressed through the final phase of narratives pieces that Ellen and the children shared with me. Two narrative pieces are most memorable. “A Lasting Image” and “Deborah Writes About Homelessness” demonstrate that the children have taken the study of homelessness to heart. Their willingness to share their ideas through the creation of art, drama, and writing illustrates that they have a knowledge base and feel competent to express their thinking about homelessness in concrete ways. In addition, the approach they took to creating art, drama, and writing was very thought filled. After reading the book, Uncle Willy and the Soup Kitchen, the children constructed a list of ideas of what they could do to help people who are homeless. Their ideas were then translated into drawings. I questioned them about their drawings in “A Lasting Image.” When I questioned the children about their drawings, one child said that working in a soup kitchen would be a very tasteful job. Not only did this child express the idea that work in a soup kitchen could be enjoyable, but also work in a soup kitchen is a desirable job to do. The children expressed ideas which moved beyond just feeling sorry for people who are homeless. They expressed ideas which demonstrated that they wanted to do something to help others which is reflective of the ideas of Lamme, Krogh, and Yachmetz (1992).

The children also responded to questions about the causes of homelessness in this narrative piece. When I asked them what causes homelessness, they were able to respond with several scenarios. This confirmed what Mark had told me in his narrative piece in phase one. He noticed a significant change in what the students in his school knew about the causes of homelessness after their service learning project. Mark and Ann both reported that students had shown a generous and genuine outpouring of giving during their collection campaign to aid families who were
homeless. The social action exhibited by Ellen’s children was a great deal more subtle. On several occasions children offered me drawings they had made to take to the children at the shelter. During the process of writing the letters and making the Easter eggs, children expressed a desire to send their letters or eggs to specific children that I had mentioned or whom they had received letters from earlier. Unfortunately, the population of children in the shelter program changed or varied from week to week and these requests were impossible to honor. However small these changes seem, it was evident through the process of reading literature, responding through art, drama, writing, and participating in service activities that the children’s awareness of, and understanding of, the causes of homelessness changed. This was most poignant in the narrative piece, “Let’s Build a House,” from phase four of the inquiry. I overheard the child who shared this narrative piece as he was playing by himself in the block area. He very simply suggested that we build a house. Even though his conception of the process of building a house was very simplistic, he had the right idea. The greatest cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. Fundamentally, we need more housing, which is the premise of Habitat for Humanity.

In addition to what the children in Ellen’s classroom revealed to me about learning and teaching about homelessness, I learned from the experiences of children in the shelter program too. In phase two, Barbara told me how children in the shelter program are stigmatized by others in “Riding the Bus.” The children in the shelter program were afraid and embarrassed to ride the Volunteers of America van because other children had made fun of them and hurt them physically. However, when they saw Barbara riding the van to come and meet them, they were no longer afraid. This narrative piece illustrated two things for me. First, children who are homeless are aware that they are at risk of being harmed through their association with symbols or
logos that represent social service agencies which are established to help them. Second, caring, empathetic adults are able to provide emotional and physical support to children who are homeless which helps them overcome fear and embarrassment because of their situation. Schools and social service agencies need to be aware of the harm caused by negative attitudes toward children who are homeless and help children resist conforming to, or becoming the victims of, these attitudes when they encounter them.

I found the work of the children in Ellen’s classroom to be consistent with the ideas of social reconstruction as expressed by Apple (1986). The students were engaged in activities that required them to think critically about homelessness. As consistent with the ideas of Grant and Sleeter (1989) and Stuhr (1995), interaction with information about homelessness helped the children to reconstruct their knowledge about people who are homeless and therefore create change in society. The artifacts they created were a vehicle for sharing information with others in their school community and creating change in the understanding of homelessness in their peers and other teachers as well. Through their written exchanges and interactions via the Easter egg exchange, the children in Ellen’s classroom established relationships with the children in the shelter program. These exchanges helped create an opportunity for children who are homeless to participate more fully in the educational process with their peers. Opportunities which foster greater participation in education for disenfranchised students is one of the goals of multicultural education according to Banks and McGee Banks (1993) and Walsh (1990).

In addition, the students had the opportunity to engage in reading literature, creating art, drama, and writing processes all of which make use of social action skills according to Grant & Sleeter (1989) and Stuhr (1995). Through their investigation of homelessness and reading literature about people who are homeless, students and
teachers participated in the development of curriculum. The exchange of ideas among
the children and their interactions with literature provided an opportunity for them to
change their perceptions about people who are homeless and demonstrate their
abilities to think critically about the causes and effects of homelessness for/on
individuals and society.

The goals of social reconstruction and multicultural education will never be
completely realized according to Banks and McGee Banks (1989) and Stuhr (1995).
In this case, the children were able to participate in a process of learning about
homelessness which is a small step toward changing how society views people who
are homeless. They illustrated changes in understanding through their engagement in
critical thinking activities: reading literature, creating art, participating in drama, and
constructing writing. The children demonstrated their willingness to share resources
in the narrative piece titled, “I Can Help.” Each child created a list of solutions to the
problem of homelessness which substantiates, to some extent, their ability to question
social/economic stratification in society and choose to share the resources they enjoy
with others who are less fortunate. The process of learning and teaching about
homelessness provided an opportunity for teachers and students to think about and
question whether homelessness was the result of personal inadequacies or the result
of a more complex interplay of variables which are examined by Fiske (1991), Kozol
(1994), and Marin (1995). Furthermore, this inquiry demonstrates that studies of
homelessness are meaningful to and appropriate for young children. In the narrative
piece, “Ellen Writes About Homelessness,” from phase four, Ellen told me that our
project had an influence on what the children feel they are competent to write.
Conclusions

The findings in this inquiry support the following conclusions.

- Changes in understanding about people who are homeless and learning about homelessness is complex. Through close contact with people who are homeless, adults and children are able to overcome the barriers which limit their understanding.

- Understanding how children and adults view homelessness is complex. The data I have gathered indicates that children think of homelessness as the loss of comfort, security, caring, and relationships. The limited data that I have gathered from adults indicates that they think of homelessness as the loss of a physical structure, independence, and freedom.

- Children who are homeless are stigmatized through their association with programs that support their emotional, physical, and educational needs. Relationships with caring adults help children overcome the feeling of being stigmatized by their peers.

- Collaboration between classroom teachers and university researchers is important and productive when learning and teaching about homelessness. Dialogue and conversations are a means to nurture collaboration.

- The format of project work is a good framework for the development of curriculum about homelessness. The open and emergent process of project work allows for the active engagement of the children’s interests and promotes their involvement in the learning process.

- Reading literature, participating in the creations of art, constructing dramas, and doing process writing provide opportunities for children and adults to engage with learning about people who are homeless and homelessness.
Implications for Teachers

The development of understanding about a social issue like homelessness is complex. However, the opportunity to engage with young children about people who are homeless and learning about homelessness is a powerful and dynamic process for teachers and their students. While it may be difficult to figure out the specifics of a service learning project that is appropriate and engaging for young children, it is easy to establish relationships with shelter programs that serve children. Educators will find the process of conducting a service learning experience with children in a shelter program to be rewarding and important work to do. Literature for children is an incredible resource for looking into the topic of homelessness or almost any topic. Young children are able to enter the lives of others through the experience of being read to, or reading independently. Books and dramas with a focus on homelessness allow children to maintain a safe distance emotionally as they begin their exploration of this issue while art and writing provide opportunities for children to engage directly in their own experiences about homelessness. Collaboration is an important aspect of the work that teachers do in their classrooms. Through the process of collaboration, teachers are able to accomplish a great deal more than teachers working individually. The practice of reflection on the learning processes of children leads to refinement of ideas and improvements in curriculum approaches.

Implications for Social Service Workers

It is possible to create links between social agency professionals and educators in schools and universities. Collaborations between educators and social workers provide support for the investigation of a social phenomenon which, in turn, leads to the development of understanding about and/or the influence a social phenomenon has on young children. Links between schools and social service agencies helps to challenge and change the thinking of children and adults. Through collaboration,
social agency professionals and educators have the opportunity to help children and adults confirm the new information they are learning and discard stereotypical ideas. Furthermore, the collaboration between social service agency workers and educators is exciting and improves the quality of instruction in classrooms because children have the opportunity to become active learners in the process of discovering information about a social phenomenon.

Implications for Researchers

This inquiry demonstrates that children are able to think critically about people who are homeless and process information regarding the causes and possible solutions to the crises of homelessness in our nation. My data indicate that adults and children have different concerns about the experience of homelessness. However, the data I have from adult perspectives is limited and requires more follow-up. Two factors which may influence children’s thinking are their age and the interdependent nature of their need for interactions with others. Children have very limited world experience in comparison to adults. Perhaps their developmental need for care from others in relationships makes them better able to identify loss of, or the severe strain on interpersonal relationships as a key aspect of understanding homelessness. In addition, this inquiry addresses the notion that children are able to demonstrate sympathy and empathy for/with others. Furthermore, this inquiry illustrates the positive nature of collaborative research for all participants, the researcher as well as those being researched and supports the notion that researchers must take an active stance when conducting classroom inquiries.

I spent a relatively short period of time with Ellen and her children. It is premature to make broad general statements regarding the application of curriculum about homelessness for children everywhere or even just in an urban setting. However, my study demonstrates that it is possible to work with the topic of
homelessness with very young children and that young children can address difficult or even troubling ideas with creativity and insight. The great value I see in addressing the topic of homelessness with young children is that their ideas can enlighten us about how we need to think about or approach other troubling social issues. In addition, children engage in the process of learning through reading and responding to literature, creating works of art, participating in dramas, and writing stories. Furthermore, these kinds of active experiences provide avenues for children to express their ideas and demonstrate their understanding.
CHAPTER 6

EPILOGUE

What I Have Learned

I took two friends to visit the topiary garden recently. Neither of them had seen it even though both of them have lived in Columbus for at least five years. The three of us had been out to see a movie. It was well after dark. The moon was full and round, reflecting tremendous light in the garden which made the immense topiary figures cast great eerie shadows on the lawn. The air was hot and humid and very still. From where we entered the park, we could not see the figures at first, then they came into view all at once in a beautiful, but disquieting way. This recent visit to the garden was a poignant moment for me in my understanding of homelessness. I will explain how this experience encapsulates most of what I have learned during the past twenty years as a person and teacher regarding the issues of homelessness.

Revisiting the topiary garden seems to be a fitting way of bringing closure to this inquiry about my experience with Ellen and her children. It will remain a symbol and a vivid memory for me of our learning and teaching about people who are homeless and what we can do to alleviate the suffering that homelessness causes.

The gates to the topiary garden are always open, but signs are posted to remind visitors that it officially closes at 10:00 PM. We were all a bit nervous about going into the park. I did not want to be arrested for trespassing. Nor did I want to cause a disturbance to anyone who might be there. But, we entered the park. These thoughts and feelings of apprehension quickly gave way to feelings of delight. The towering figures rose all about us as we wandered in among them, their great silent
shapes dwarfing our own bodies. The brilliant moonlight and quiet surroundings imbued the experience with a strange ambiance. I felt like I was visiting a great cathedral or a natural wonder which had survived for many hundreds of years. The shadows from the figures looming over us and the hot moist air began to settle on us like a dark, thick liquid. I began pointing out the various parts of the topiary to my friends. My nervous voice intermingled with their unbridled exclamations and fascination with the figures being revealed to them in moonlight and shadows. They began to remark about the uniqueness of each of the faux beings. They each spoke of the careful attention the artists had paid to details, the woman carrying a parasol, or the specific body postures of particular figures, the young girl twirling in a circle, which gave each figure lifelike, human expressions. In minutes, we found ourselves getting closer to the figures to really see them, but even getting close to them did not allow us to see them clearly. However, their individual shapes and the armatures which supported the growing bushes were becoming visible to my friends and me. It was as if seeing the figures in moonlight and shadows made them appear to be more real than they have ever seemed in the daylight when I had visited the garden.

As we walked around throughout the garden, we admired the hard work and ingenuity that brought the topiary to life. I gave my friends further details about the site where the garden stands. How at one time the Ohio School for the Deaf had been located there and that much of the rubble from the destruction of the Deaf School buildings was laying beneath the grassy knolls. It was getting later. We turned to exit the park and were near the gate when two men ran down the walkway in our direction. They were obviously crossing through the park. Their sudden appearance surprised us, but they seemed equally surprised by our presence in the garden as well. They spoke hello, or said good evening as they passed by us to leave through the gate where we had entered the park.
I have reflected on this experience for several weeks and realize now why I have found the topiary to be such a powerful symbol of homelessness for me and why I am so compelled to take others to see the garden. Most people who live in Columbus are aware that the topiary exists, but few people have made a special trip to visit it. It is somewhat the same with learning and teaching about homelessness. We know that there are people who are homeless living in our cities, wandering about uncared for, ignored, invisible to most of us. However, we have not taken the time to really know “them” as people. We keep “them” at a distance hurrying through our days doing important work and providing for our families, many of us precariously balancing or avoiding the same difficulties (the loss of a job, unexpected illness, the break-up of a significant relationship) that many people who are homeless have not been able to balance or avoid.

It was easy for me to become involved in working with people who are homeless because there are so many people who need assistance. Likewise, it was very easy to enter the garden. But, all around me were signs telling me that what I was about to do was a bit scary. It seems that society has similar prohibitions or warnings with regards to addressing the issue of homelessness. A visit to the topiary garden at night was dangerous, illegal, and wrong. In recent years, I think I have learned to disregard a similar set of messages that I have been given when I have come face-to-face with people who are homeless. There are a myriad of reasons why people are homeless. But, I have been able to disregard these messages a bit and realized that perhaps the most important and helpful thing I can do to help people who are homeless is get close to them. I need to look at them. I need to see them and acknowledge that they exist. I know this because I have allowed myself to get close to people who are homeless, I have learned that they are not just lazy, drug addicts who are attempting to shirk their personal responsibilities and social duties.
I now realize that each person who is homeless is unique, each situation of homelessness is different. I know that each time I encounter a person who is homeless I have an opportunity to destroy the myths that I and others have learned and continue to believe about them. I have learned from my experiences and from the children in Ellen’s class that what people who are homeless need and want most is to be freed from their isolation and invisibility. People who are homeless need and want to establish caring relationships with others. In addition, we who are not homeless can learn about homelessness and create caring relationships with people who are homeless.

What Went Wrong

I did not arrive at these understandings easily. The process of doing this inquiry was difficult and frustrating at times. But, the knowledge I have gained about the issues of homelessness, myself, and about how to collaborate with others to conduct research is invaluable and has made the entire process extremely rewarding too. First, I had to address the complex social and political ideas that once permeated my understanding of, and response to people who are homeless and homelessness. Before conducting this inquiry, I was often quick to judge people who are homeless. I believed that people who are homeless were lazy and deserved their plight. Now, my first thought is to consider how I might respond in a caring manner. Previously, I would have thought about the political or social ramifications of my response before taking any action. I did not want to give a drug addict money to buy more drugs, etc. The change in my perception about people who are homeless has had a positive influence on my life in general. I respond in a more caring manner to others and I feel better about my response to them, regardless of the circumstances. I attribute this change in my perception to the fact that I know more about the issue of homelessness. I know that the difference in my thinking is connected to my experience of
collaboration with Ellen too. However, I did not learn to respond in a caring manner easily. Nor did I find or learn about true collaboration easily.

In my second year of graduate studies at the university, I was assigned to work in the Professional Development School (PDS) program. Several of us were new to the project and the PDS was in a time of transition. When I first began my work with a PDS, I was told that most graduate students did their research in their PDS schools where they were supervising students and working with classroom teachers. This seemed to be a perfect arrangement. However, this did not turn out to be the case for me.

I had spoken on numerous occasions with the teachers in the school where I was assigned to supervise students about collaborating on a project that would focus on learning and teaching about homelessness. Several teachers met with me formally to discuss how and what we would/could do, but none of the teachers were interested in working on a project. This was terribly frustrating at the time. I had put a lot of time and energy into my work with this group of teachers and had been there to assist a number of students through their programs. I was in my third year of work with the same group of teachers and had worked well with them. But, I was especially disturbed by their reluctance to work with me since the focus of the PDS was collaboration. When it became obvious that I would not be able to conduct my research in the PDS school where I was supervising students, I began to make contacts with other teachers in other schools. Ironically the teacher/artist team which I wrote about in chapter four were in the PDS school where I was assigned to supervise students. They were not connected to the PDS, but were interested in working with me and did projects with their students on the topic of homelessness.

My site-selection search included conversations with directors of curriculum in several different school systems. As a follow-up to a conversation with one of these
directors, I contacted a teacher in the school where Ellen was teaching. After speaking with Ellen’s co-worker several times, that situation did not work either. However, my connection to Ellen’s co-worker led to my collaboration with Ellen.

There seem to be several reasons why I was able to establish a collaboration with Ellen when things did not work with so many others. Even though all the others I had spoken to acknowledged that homelessness was an important topic and that they had encountered students in their classrooms who were struggling with homelessness on a personal level, all were reluctant to do a project that focused on homelessness. Various reasons were offered for their unwillingness to work with me. Some expressed the feeling that homelessness was an inappropriate topic for young children. Others felt that a focus on homelessness would detract from their other curriculum topics. Some did not want to be involved in a dissertation project because it would demand their time.

By contrast, Ellen was committed to learning and teaching about homelessness for a number of reasons. One of her students had become homeless early in the school year after her house was destroyed in a fire. Ellen lived in a neighborhood where it was not uncommon to see people who were homeless. She had several students who were in difficult family situations, where parents had lost their employment, and she felt that their home situations were precarious at best. In addition, Ellen wanted to collaborate with me on this project. Ellen also seemed to see curriculum differently than the other teachers. She seemed to see connections among topics and to make links between different ideas. Perhaps the others did not see these connections and consequently, did not share Ellen’s enthusiasm for doing the project.

In addition, Ellen’s global perspective and her ability to make the connections among topics made it possible for her to link issues and even time periods together,
such as the connections she drew between the issues of slavery and homelessness. Ellen’s divergent reasoning ability was most astounding when the children were reading several *Jack and the Beanstalk* variants. She helped the children to question their way through a number of possibilities that examined why Jack was willing to risk his life to steal things from the giant. One child raised some puzzling concerns in one of these discussions. The focus of the discussion revolved around the idea that perhaps Jack was afraid that he would lose everyone and everything he had and he would become homeless if he did not steal from the giant. Ellen’s ability to help the children puzzle through these connections further illustrates how the creation of curriculum in her classroom was a dynamic, changing process for her rather than a predetermined set of facts or ideas that all children should know or be exposed to at a particular age or grade level. In addition, Ellen’s process of creating curriculum demanded that I continually reconsider what my role in the collaboration would entail and how I would define and redefine it.

**My Role in the Research Process**

My role in the research process evolved rather quickly from that of a participant observer, to that of an active participant observer as described by Spradley (1980). I was involved on many levels through my experience with Ellen and her students and became familiar with several parents who volunteered in the classroom. At times, I was responsible for leading instruction or sharing information with Ellen and the children. When the children were in the midst of their letter exchanges with the children in the shelter program, I was able to provide more information about the children in the shelter program. I made suggestions about books to use in class which promoted the process of learning about homelessness, or was helpful in finding materials to work with on specific projects. I was clearly acting as a political leader and resource person at these times.
At other times, I was Ellen’s assistant. My willingness to be Ellen’s assistant did not lessen my level of participation in the research, in my view, but probably made me more involved in the process. It was necessary to be an active participant in order to get things done. Some of the things I did were mundane by most standards, but valuable contributions to the smooth operation of Ellen’s classroom. On several occasions I took down bulletin boards, or put new work that the children had completed up for display. I emptied, cleaned, and refilled the water table so that the children could use it again. I attended the special track and field day to assist with the events. While each of these tasks seems rather minor in the overall scheme of things, being there to assist Ellen with the mundane tasks allowed her the opportunity to concentrate on the more important aspects of our project. These tasks also provided a way for me to demonstrate my commitment to working with her. Very simply, Ellen needed her water table cleaned, I needed to find out how she went about creating curriculum about homelessness. My active participation demonstrated that I was not just asking for something from her, I was willing to give something in return.

As I have discussed in chapter two, my role evolved as the research progressed. In many instances, I needed to step forward and be an active participant in the learning and teaching process rather than just making observations about what was happening. I have come to think of the emergence of the curriculum and the evolution of my role in the research process as parallels. The more closely and actively I became involved in the research process, the more clearly I began to see the curriculum emerge. Ultimately, the emergence of the curriculum seemed directly linked to, or dependent on, my participation and the evolution of my role in the research process. Essentially, several processes were unfolding at once. I was learning about becoming a researcher in a collaborative setting and Ellen and I were
learning how to make complex social and political ideas about homelessness understandable for young children.

There are four components that seem to be common aspects of the parallels between the emergence of the curriculum and the evolution of my role as a researcher. First, it was necessary for me to become actively involved in the research process. Likewise, it was necessary for Ellen, her students, and me to become actively involved with the issue of homelessness on a concrete level. Second, the collaborative process opened a range of participation possibilities for me as a researcher and collaboration helped all of us to develop our understanding of the needs of people who are homeless. Third, the process of conducting this inquiry has revealed many layers of the instructional process and differing kinds of narrative pieces which include conversations about the literature we read, and the stories we created about our collective learning about people who are homeless and my learning about collaborative research. Finally, the process of learning about homelessness is emotionally charged. Children profit through the use of various forms of expression (art, discussing literature, drama, and writing) and use these media to share their insights, knowledge, and feelings about a particular issue.

Creating art, reading and discussing literature, participating in drama, and writing are active forms of expression. Children seem predisposed to learning through active engagement. When they are given the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings through art, sharing ideas, drama, and writing, the results are vivid and memorable. Rinaldi (1993) reminds us how easy it is to draw comparisons between what children are capable of expressing and the great works of famous painters and cautions us about making such comparisons. In addition, the children in Ellen’s class were asked to address the difficult issue of homelessness. Perhaps their responses are even more intense because the issue is emotionally dense. Reading and
discussing literature and participating in drama provides an opportunity for children to take on the perspective of others. Something wonderful happens in these moments. They develop their understanding of specific characters and may become adamant in their defense of them as was the case in our class drama. When Ellen, who was playing the mother figure refused to let the man, who was homeless, come into the house saying that he was perhaps a thief, the children held their ground and were not moved by her power as mother in the pretend role or her authority as teacher in real life. Children, it seems, have a powerful sense of imagination.

This episode reminded me of a passage from The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint Exupéry. A pilot made an emergency landing in the middle of the desert. The Little Prince, on his journey home through the universe, appeared to the pilot and demanded that he draw a picture of a sheep for him. The pilot refused at first, saying that he had given-up drawing at an early age because grown-ups did not understand his drawings. But, the Little Prince would not take no for an answer. The Little Prince was persistent, the pilot eventually gave-in and drew a picture of a sheep, but the Little Prince found fault with it and demanded that the pilot draw another picture. This continued for several drawings until finally the pilot drew a large box with air holes and said that the sheep was inside. The Little Prince was content with this drawing because he could see the sheep inside the box. By comparison, in the case of understanding homelessness or knowing about people who are homeless, our concern should not be with what we see on the outside. Our concern should be how we can learn to see through that exterior to understand the reality that exists behind what we see.

In the Future

I intend to continue my work in the areas of curriculum development, collaboration, and understanding the issue of homelessness. In addition, I plan to
investigate other social issues with young children. This year I am teaching in an elementary school and working with several first-year teachers as a mentor teacher. In my role as a mentor teacher, I will have many opportunities to work closely with these new teachers to do collaborative work. Finally, I will continue my work as a tutor in an after school program at a shelter.
APPENDIX A

PARLETT AND HAMILTON
PARLETT AND HAMILTON

ILLUMINATION/EVALUATION THEORY

In the beginning, I saw the process of this investigation as a curriculum intervention which would engage the participants in discussions about social justice. I would help Karen introduce information about homelessness. The children would read books and do projects in the classroom and I would watch what happened. My conceptual framework was based on the ideas I had gleaned in a research project with one of my advisors. "Illumination evaluation takes account of the wider contexts in which educational programmes function. Its primary concern is with description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction" (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972, p. 10). Students engage in educational programs. Illumination evaluation theory as explained by Reinhart (1992) enables teachers and students to attempt "to introduce the concept of justice, and to attend to the process, not only the content, of the evaluated program" (p. 191). Students and teachers are members of a community of learners and participate indirectly and directly in the construction of meaning (Greene, 1986) and in the proliferation or cessation of social structures like family and homelessness (Project Act: Action for Children and Youth in Transition, Cleveland Public Schools Adult and Continuing Education, p. 17).

Through the process of introducing information about homelessness and literature about people who are homeless to teachers and children, I thought I would be able to evaluate the value of such an approach because "It [Illuminative Evaluation theory] aims to discover and document what it is like to be participating in the scheme, whether as teacher or pupil; and, in addition, to discern and discuss the innovation's most significant features, recurring concomitants and critical processes" (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972, p. 10). Teachers and students may see a need to increase instruction and discussion of the "institution" of homelessness and the experiences of
people who are homeless. They may engage in social action as a result of their participation in reading and discussion. An emphasis on social action may also lead to changes in instruction and changes in the context for learning which are tenants of the theory. "Central to an understanding of illuminative evaluation are two concepts; the instructional system and the learning milieu" (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972, p. 10).

While the theory of Illumination Evaluation acts as a foundation for my interactions with Karen and her students, it did not help me fully explain my role as a participant in the process, or the format I have used for writing about this experience.
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM
Dear Teacher(s):

Your interest in how children learn about complex social issues is directly linked to my concern for how teachers develop curriculum. I've heard numerous times from teachers that children are much more aware of social issues than we teachers give them credit. In the preliminary work that I've done with teaching children about homelessness, I've found this to be true. In addition, children tend to respond to social issues with immediate action.

Children tend not to see barriers or limits to helping others who are homeless. Although, like many individuals in society, they tend to have a negative opinion of those who are homeless prior to investigating the causes that lead to homelessness and the experiences of those who are homeless. It is interesting to observe the changes in attitudes and opinions that occur within the classroom setting as a direct result of thinking and talking about this complex issue.

I've taught for twelve years in private and public schools. I have participated in volunteer programs that offer academic and social assistance to individuals in our community who for various reasons have found themselves in need of help. I am a specialist in children's literature and have taught language arts (and other subjects) at the elementary level before teaching at the university level. While not much literature is available that has a direct theme or focus on homelessness, I've managed to develop a bibliography of over thirty books that I've found to be helpful in investigating this topic with children.

Currently, I'm in the process of looking for a teacher who would consider investigating the topic of homelessness for herself and figuring out how to present information to children within a classroom context. I would like to meet with you and attempt to create avenues for studying homelessness with your children. You must consent to two two-hour audio taped interviews, allow me to observe in your classroom for 6-8 weeks for approximately 6 hours a week, consent to allow me to seek parental consent and video tape classroom activities. I feel confident in my ability to offer support and resources that would assist in the development of curriculum in this area and which may serve as a model for developing curriculum with regards for other social issues.

Due to the evolving nature of action research, I would need to be a part of planning sessions with teachers, interact with teachers through journal writing, interview teachers about their knowledge and experiences of homelessness participate in classroom activities, and observe what happens in their classrooms with children.

An Inquiry into a Whole Language, Literature-Based Approach to Teaching and Learning about Homelessness
I value your interest in social issues and how teachers influence and effect change in the development of curriculum. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and other teachers at your school to discuss my project in greater detail at a time that is convenient for you.

Thank you for your interest in this topic and your willingness to give me the opportunity to express my ideas. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact either Dr. David Fernie or me at the addresses below.

Sincerely,

Isaac Willis Larison  
Doctoral Candidate  
The Ohio State University  
101 Curl Drive # 1107  
Columbus, OH 43210  
(614) 688-9287

Dr. David Fernie  
The Ohio State University  
333 Arps Hall  
1945 North High Street  
Columbus, OH 43210  
(614) 292-8023

An Inquiry into a Whole Language, Literature-Based Approach to Teaching and Learning about Homelessness
Dear Parents or Guardians,

My name is Isaac Willis Larison. I'm a graduate student working with Dr. David Fernie at The Ohio State University. I've taught for twelve years in private and public schools. I have participated in volunteer programs that offer academic and social assistance to individuals in our community who for various reasons have found themselves in need of help. I am a specialist in children's literature and have taught reading and writing (and other subjects) at the elementary level before teaching at the university level.

During the weeks ahead, I will observe and assist your child's teacher as she/he reads and does activities which focus on learning about people who are homeless. The topic of homelessness will be a part of the regular reading and writing time. The main focus will be on reading, writing, and talking about the books your child's teacher selects to help the children learn about homelessness. I am most interested in how and what each teacher does to teach children about homelessness and what children learn from participating in the classroom activities.

I request your permission to have access to your child's written work and retain photo copies of it until the completion of the research. In addition, I request permission to video tape your child in the day-to-day classroom setting and talk informally with him/her. Informal talks will focus on the content of the stories read and your son's/daughter's reaction to them. The following list of questions will be used to structure informal talks. Did you like the book? Is this a good story? What is this story about? Who are the characters in this story? What happens to the characters in this story? Why? Where and when does this story take place? How does the story begin, end?

All photocopies, video tapes, and information from informal talks will be destroyed upon completion of the research. Please contact me if you have any comments or concerns regarding this project. If you agree to your child's participation, please sign and return the attached consent form.

Sincerely,

Isaac Willis Larison  
Doctoral Candidate  
The Ohio State University  
101 Curl Drive #1107  
Columbus, OH 43210  
(614) 688-9287

Dr. David Fernie  
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(614) 292-8023

An Inquiry into a Whole Language, Literature-Based Approach to Teaching and Learning about Homelessness

Office of Student Services  
614-292-2332

Integrated Teaching and Learning  
614-292-0155

Language, Literacy, and Culture  
614-292-0711 or  
614-292-2445

Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education  
614-292-8765

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Consent For Participation In
Social and Behavioral Research

Protocol No. 97B0141

I consent to participating in (or my child's participation in) research entitled:

An Inquiry into a Whole Language, Literature-Based Approach to Teaching and Learning about Homelessness.

Dr. David Fernie / Isaac Willis Larison has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my (my child's) participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am (my child is) free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me (my child).

All photo copies, audio and video tapes, and information from informal talks will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: __________________________ Signed: __________________________

(Child/Participant)

Signed: __________________________

(Parent/Guardian)

Witness: __________________________
APPENDIX C

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CHILDREN’S BOOKS
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS


In this simplistic fantasy picture book, a young girl discovers a key that opens a door to a beautiful world filled with flowers and hope.


*Mr. Bow Tie* is a nameless street person who lives outside the small store run by a family in an urban setting. *Mr. Bow Tie* never speaks to anyone.


This is a resource book of facts and information about people who are homeless. Statistical data is embedded in the context of the stories of specific individuals who are homeless.


This is a sensitively written and well documented book. Judith Berck interviewed thirty children and recorded their ideas about being homeless.


People are rioting in the streets below. Daniel and his mother watch from the relative safety of their apartment window. The fires spread to their section of the neighborhood and they must leave their home and go to a nearby shelter.

Andrew and his father are homeless. They are living in the airport terminal near a metropolitan area. There are many others also seeking the safety and relative comfort of the airport terminal.


This collection of vignettes is an up-close, personal glimpse into the lives and experiences of children living in a shelter. It was written and distributed by social workers for new children who came to their shelter.


This is an excellent book. It traces the history of poverty in America from colonial times to the present. Coil examines the numerous causes that have led to poverty and homelessness in the past and recounts society's manner for addressing these contributing factors.


This is a very unusual poem about a man who lives in a chicken coop and eats what he finds in the woods. He was trained to make his living in a variety of ways by his father.


Floyd Cooper helps us re-conceptualize our notion of homelessness. His biography of Langston Hughes illustrates how people must feel at home or find
comfort in their surroundings in order to really be at home. Langston Hughes
learned to feel at home in the culture that surrounded him.


Davis examines the experiences of various groups of people living in
poverty throughout the United States. The working poor, who are not covered by
health benefits and who fall below the poverty index, cannot apply for or receive
assistance.


A young boy spends the day with his uncle helping in a local soup kitchen.
This warm, realistic fiction for third through fifth graders will be a great
introduction into the lives of people who work in and use community service
centers. Uncle Willie is an energetic, senior citizen who's good nature and respect
for others will help children realize the humanity in all people.


Margaret Fagan compares the experiences of people suffering from poverty
and homelessness in Great Britain to those in the United States. Both governments
have difficulties knowing exactly how many people are homeless.

boy who brings hope to the homeless. San Francisco: Harper.

Trevor Ferrell was eleven years old when he began a personal crusade
against poverty and homelessness in Philadelphia. His endeavors to help people
who are homeless, hungry, and without hope received national attention.

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Clay is eleven. When both his mother and father disappear from their temporary lodging at a welfare hotel, he must fend for himself. Clay is left with a minimal amount of money and the responsibility of taking care of himself. He too, seeks refuge in the dangerous and lonely streets of the city.


This book chronicles the experiences of immigrant children. It is illustrated with black and white reprints of photographs taken around the turn of this century. It helps readers glean that homelessness, poverty, and other social problems have been dilemmas for a long time.


This is a beautifully illustrated and sensitively told picture book about inner hope and joy. The story, The Lotus Seed, shows how all people cherish the symbols of their culture. For the Vietnamese people, the lotus blossom symbolically represents emperor and the history of their homeland.


A young child ponders what has happened in the life of the man who lives on the street outside her home. She creates a fantastic adventurous life for the man who wears and odd assortment of clothes, has a patch over one eye, and has a dried snake skin draped around his neck.


This is a biography about a young boy and his mother who are homeless. Greenberg has very carefully woven the statistical data about people who are
homeless into the context of the story to illustrate that people who are homeless are ordinary people too.


A young child who is homeless creeps out from under a stairway to look at the stars. He witnesses a wonderful fantasy parade which is bringing a building to the homeless.


Leonora O'Grady is an eccentric woman who travels about town with a huge shopping cart filled with an odd assortment of things that amuse and entertain those who meet her. She sleeps in the park across from her home and feeds the birds with a slice of bread that she places on her head.


This is a sensitive story about a stray cat named Leo who is adopted by a church community in Louisville, Kentucky. Leo resides in the church and participates at all church functions. He becomes well known for his peculiar antics around town and is loved by the entire church community.


This book addresses the numerous issues that face a person who is homeless. It gives examples of the personal and social difficulties that a person who is homeless must cope with on a daily basis.

Milton Meltzer examines the causes for poverty in 20th Century America. He addresses how various presidents and government programs have attempted to resolve the problems that lead to the increase in poverty.


Nichelason recounts the recent historical processes through which the numbers of people who are homeless increased. Prior to W.W.II, most individuals who were homeless were young men in search of work. Many joined the war effort and following the war worked in industry, etc.


This is a powerful retelling of acts of bravery and sacrifice that revisits a terrible episode in our nation’s history. Faith Ringgold’s incredible illustrations provide a rich background for these accounts of escape from slavery.


This is a collection of short stories and poems (one page each) by some of children's literature's most noted authors. All of the pieces share feelings and experiences related to each author's special memories and concept of home.


Jack and Guy find an abandoned child while out causing mischief. They are initially hostile toward the child, but decide to take the child in and care for him.

Seymour-Jones places the concept of Homelessness into social contexts and illustrates how it can be the result of many factors. She provides examples of social calamities like war and natural disasters that lead to the experiences of homelessness.


The Declaration of the Rights of the Child were adopted by the United Nations in 1959. This is an illustrated book which paraphrases the ten principles of that declaration. The illustrators are a representative group of the world's most noted illustrators of children's books.


A mother and her young son take up residence in a city park. Each night they sleep in the upper section of a climbing apparatus which is shaped like a spaceship. When the weather turns cold they finally find a room in the apartment of friends who were once homeless themselves.


People in the neighborhood ignore Silly Tillie or make ugly faces at her when they see her wheeling her shopping cart full of possessions through the streets. Her unconventional behavior and manner of dress often make her the object of public scorn.

Bernard Wolf chronicles the life of eight-year-old, Mikey and his family through the course of several months. Mikey and his family have the good fortune of being accepted at the Henry Street Settlement Urban Family Center.
REFERENCES


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