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RACE, CLASS, AND FAMILY SUCCESS STORIES: A STUDY
OF TWO MAGNET PROGRAMS IN A SOUTHERN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

Mary Kay Deasy

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
1996

Approved by

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This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Committee Members

Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination
The purpose of this study was to gain understanding about what causes children and their parents stress or anxiety and joy or pleasure in a school setting. This dissertation compares interpretations of schooling through narratives of fifth grade foreign language immersion students and their parents with their counterparts in a cultural arts magnet program.

The research was conducted within the qualitative paradigm using narrative methodology. Narratives from ten fifth graders and their parents were collected and analyzed. Themes of caring and school as family were present throughout the narratives. Individual theories of racism and educational theories were also evident in several of the narratives.

The school was a magnet school located in a predominately African American neighborhood surrounded by low cost and public housing. Current contrasting issues in desegregation are discussed as well as issues in foreign language immersion programs.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great appreciation that I thank my committee. Dr. Kathleen Casey, Dr. Jane Mitchell, Dr. Dee Irwin, and Dr. Barbara Levin have been extremely supportive of my work as a doctoral student. They guided me and yet allowed me to develop my own intellectual path. I have always felt as though I had four coaches cheering me on to the finish line.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This dissertation compares interpretations of schooling through narratives of fifth grade foreign language immersion students and their parents with their counterparts in a cultural arts magnet program. My study consists of ten children and their mothers' stories regarding their experiences in and with the school. Five of the children are part of the Spanish immersion classroom and five are part of the cultural arts classroom. Every child's parent in each classroom was invited to participate in my study. The ten who self selected to participate represent three different social classes and two races. Seven of the children are Black and three are White. Of the ten, two represent the affluent professional class, four represent the middle class, and four represent the working class.

I compared Ray Rist's ethnographic study (1978) with my study. It is my opinion that in the predominately Black school I studied there are no "invisible children." Parents from both races and all three social classes are equally involved in the school and in
their children's lives. This chapter concludes with a discussion of areas for future research.

It was my intention to study what causes children stress and anxiety in school and compare their stories with their parents. The stories of the mothers became much more complex. The mothers of the children told me the stories of their lives and I began to see that my original intention of finding causes of stress was not to be the only finding. I learned that the combination of the children, the mothers, and the school made a complete social system. Within the social system there were several stories to be told.

I discovered that neither social class or race determine what type of discourse I could expect. Three Black mothers who lived in public housing had an educational theory and social theory that was highly sophisticated. Children regardless of race or social class told me basically the same stories regarding school.

Many students in the elementary school are faced with daily stress and anxiety due to the school experience. Children and adults are finding that stress can begin at a very early age in children. The factors that cause stress can involve many different aspects of schooling. Grades, academic promotion, the school teachers, the
school principals, and fellow classmates can all be factors that cause stress in children. Parents of the children can also find that the elementary school can be a source of stress for them too. PTA meetings, decisions regarding what programs their children should and should not attend, and differences of opinion with teachers and school staff can be factors that cause stress in adults.

I am concerned about stress in children at such young ages. There are so many competing programs within schools now that children as young as kindergarten are being tested for Academically Gifted programs. School is more than just reading, writing, and arithmetic. Children in some schools are learning a second language, participating in drama classes, and learning to play the violin. All these programs sound like they are wonderful additions to school but my concern is that too many different things in a young child's life can be another source of stress.

To study this question of stress in children and in their parents I chose to research a school that has two separate magnet programs within the school. The school I chose is a cultural arts/foreign language magnet school. This school is a school of choice for any child in the county whose parents wish to participate in the school.
There is also an attendance zone of neighborhood children who do attend the school. However, any child in this attendance zone has the option of choosing to go to another school close in the county.

With the cultural arts/foreign language magnet school each child receives additional courses in Spanish, drama, and art. There is also an extended day program available where children receive classes in violin, piano, or dance. Within this magnet school there is a separate program. This separate program is a total Spanish immersion school for children in grades K-5. In this immersion program the children receive all instruction in the target language. Students in this program receive classes in English starting in the third grade for forty five minutes a day.

The school is located in a predominately Black\(^1\) neighborhood. Without the "magnet students" the school would be very close to 100% Black enrollment. In this county magnet schools are the alternative method of school desegregation.

As part of my study I volunteered in two fifth grade classrooms two days per week starting in September. I spent one

\(^1\) Since there is no consensus on the naming of people of African decent I have used the name they called themselves.
day in the Spanish immersion fifth grade and one day in the cultural arts fifth grade. After forming a relationship with the children I mailed letters to the homes of all the children asking for permission to interview both the child and the parent. I received twelve initial responses. The final response consisted of ten children, five from the immersion classroom and five from the cultural arts classroom.

What follows is a comparison of interpretations of schooling in the narratives of five Spanish immersion students and their parents with their counterparts in a cultural arts magnet program.

The children were asked to tell me stories about their school. I then probed for unpleasant stories and pleasant stories. The parents were asked the same questions. The children were always interviewed first and separately from the parents.

In chapter two I share two reviews of literature that are related to my study. The first section is dedicated to the literature on desegregation in schools. There is a brief history of what occurred in the United States prior to the Brown decision. This is followed with multiple and conflicting interpretations of the desegregation project. The second section is dedicated to the literature on foreign language immersion programs. The different types of foreign
language immersion programs are presented. Two examples of foreign language immersion programs are then shared with the reader. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the foreign language immersion program at the school I chose to study.

In Chapter III I discuss my methodology and procedures. The reader is introduced to the researcher and to the participants of my study. My assumptions as researcher are discussed. I conclude the chapter with a discussion regarding narrative analysis and Bakhtin's theory of discourse analysis.

In Chapter IV the narratives are presented in three sections. In the first section I explore the lives of three Black mothers who live in public or low cost housing. Their personal life histories and different theories of education and racism are shared. In the second section I look at the lives and narratives of all the mothers, Black and White. School as family is a common theme that runs throughout the stories. In the third section I share the stories of the ten children. The children tell what they like and dislike about school and give specific examples to support their stories.

In the fifth chapter I present information that is on-going regarding the future of magnet schools in this school district. Local
newspaper articles are used as a source of information. I then present my findings. An ethic of caring is what I discovered as the main theme with both mothers and children when talking about school. If the mother and child feel they are being cared for the result is a school community that operates much like a family.

Finally, a section is devoted to suggested areas for future research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Desegregation

In this chapter I explore through the literature the issue of school desegregation. School desegregation has been an explosive social issue for years in the United States. Between 1890 and 1910, Black people were effectively disenfranchised in every state in the South. Segregation on public transportation was mandatory in many southern states. In 1896 Homer Plessy challenged the right of the East Louisiana Railway to place him in a segregated coach reserved for Blacks. The Supreme Court ruled that this was not a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and thus, the doctrine of separate but equal was maintained.

In 1930, Nathan Margold formulated a plan for the NAACP which outlined a legal strategy designed to eliminate school segregation. It was expected that if the NAACP sued for equal schools the cost of a dual school system would be so prohibitive as to speed the abolition of segregated schools. The Margold plan was
based on the fact that the South had failed to provide equal facilities for Black children. This plan was the blueprint for the battle against school segregation.

The first lawsuit was Murray v. Maryland in 1936. In this case the courts ruled that Maryland must admit Donald Murray to its law school because there was not a separate law school for Black people in Maryland.

By the middle of the century, race relations were beginning to change in both the North and the South. Discrimination in war-related industries and in the armed forces was now banned. During this same time Thurgood Marshall, then the chief counsel for the NAACP, won another school segregation case in Oklahoma. In 1950, Marshall won another case in Oklahoma involving higher education. George McLaurin was admitted to graduate school at the University of Oklahoma but was segregated within the school. He took classes in a anteroom outside of his classes and was given separate tables in the library and cafeteria. The psychological effect of this "badge of inferiority" was the basis for Marshall's case.
Earlier, in 1935, the psychological effects of segregation were studied by Black scholars. Charles Thompson wrote in the *Journal of Negro Education*:

I think most of us would agree that to segregate is to stigmatize. For we all know that segregation is practically always initiated by Whites, and initiated on the basis that Negroes are inferior and undesirable. Thus, when Negroes allow themselves to be cajoled into accepting the status of the separate school, they do something to their personalities which is infinitely worse than any of the discomforts some of them may suffer in a mixed school. (p. 433)

Up until this point all law suits regarding segregation had been individual suits. In 1954 the most famous law suit regarding segregation took center stage. Brown v. The Board of Education consisted of five separate cases which were ultimately joined together. In all the cases it was argued that segregation itself violated the "equal protection under the law" that is guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.

As part of the court case three psychologists gathered research of 253 Black children. Information regarding children's reactions to White and Black dolls was entered into the case. The information showed that 67% of the children preferred to play with the White
doll, 59% regarded the White doll as the nice one, 60% said the White
doll was a nice color, and 59% said the Black doll looked bad. Dr.
Clark, one of the three psychologists testified that segregation does
have psychological effects (Stephan & Feagin, 1980).

I have reached the conclusion from the examination of my own results and from an examination of the entire field that discrimination, prejudice and segregation have definitely detrimental effects on the personality development of the Negro child. The essence of this detrimental effect is a confusion in the child's concept of his own self-esteem basic feelings of inferiority, conflict, confusion in his self-image, resentment, hostility toward himself, and hostility toward Whites. (Kluger, 1976, p. 353)

In 1954, the Supreme Court struck down the "separate but equal" concept in public education. The Court, under the direction of Chief Justice Earl Warren, accepted one of the primary contentions of the social scientists, that separating children on the basis of their race generated a feeling of inferiority.

So in 1954 the Brown decision set in motion the gradual process of desegregating the schools. And here we are in 1996, forty two years later, and the issue of desegregation is still being discussed and challenged.
The schools have been a main ground for the civil rights action. Yet many Blacks are faced with discrimination in many other places than school. There is housing and employment discrimination facing Black families today while their children are attending desegregated schools. As I write this people in my town are being arrested for protesting the unequal salaries of Black and White workers at a K-Mart Distribution Center.

There are multiple and conflicting interpretations of the desegregation project. Conservatives are opposed to forced school desegregation and feel that "busing" children into schools is not a necessary step in desegregation. They believe that no one should be denied entry into a school based on race, but that schools do not need to be racially balanced in order to achieve desegregation. Liberals believe that the only answer to desegregation is "busing" children to schools outside of their neighborhood. They state that public support by the White majority is necessary for desegregation to occur and that money is needed to properly finance desegregation plans. Others say that in order for desegregation to work it must take place in society and not only in the schools. In addition there must be more than a token population of Black children in a White school.
Lino Graglia represents the voice of the conservative interpretation of desegregation. Graglia (1980) disagreed with the Supreme Court case of Green v. New Kent County, Virginia, that followed the Brown decision. This case made it clear that ending segregation was now not enough. Now he complained the requirement was to make the schools racially mixed. Freedom of choice and of transfer were prohibited by the lower courts. Because of the residential racial concentration of Blacks and Whites, especially in urban areas, the only way to racially balance the schools was by transporting children out of their neighborhoods and away from their neighborhood schools.

Graglia directly addresses the case of Swann v. Charlotte-Mechlenberg, North Carolina Board of Education in which the court ruled that mandatory busing must be set into action. The Fourth Circuit Courts contended that forced busing was required because the existing school racial imbalance resulted from residential racial concentration that was the result of official racial discrimination in housing, and school integration is therefore constitutionally required and justified to overcome that discrimination. Graglia is clearly opposed to this concept of desegregation. He states,
The transfers could not be justified on this basis; they were transfers of Blacks from, and of Whites to, schools that had never been Black segregated schools but that had either not been segregated schools or had been White segregated schools. The court's "objective," it stated, was to ensure that "school authorities exclude no pupil of a racial minority from any school, directly or indirectly, on account of race," but the order the court approved required that pupils of the minority race - and pupils of the majority race as well - be excluded from their neighborhood schools on account of their race. (p. 82)

The use of neighborhood schools, according to Graglia, has many very substantial nonracial justifications, such as that it minimizes the cost and inconveniences of student transportation and facilitates parental supervision of the schools. This is a well know argument against forced busing. However in my school, the parents are involved equally whether or not they are from the neighborhood. Children that travel as much as thirty miles to attend the school have parents that are actively involved in the school.

Graglia is in favor of allowing school boards to make the decision about desegregation. He believes that judges should approach the issue with a strong presumption in favor of the school board's judgment and good faith. Such a presumption is justified because most school boards today are not opposed to integration and make most close judgments in favor of integration (Graglia, 1980).
Gary Orfield represents the voice of the liberal interpretation of desegregation. Orfield (1978) argues that the most successful desegregation takes place in the small and medium size school districts, especially in the South. Since 1970, the increases in the number of Black children attending desegregated schools have slowed if not stopped. Private and parochial schools have absorbed the children of reluctant White parents.

Orfield (1978) states that courts cannot resolve the problem of segregation. Forcing children to attend one school or another is not the answer. He believes the only solution to desegregation is White public support.

How do we make desegregation work? According to Orfield the big answer is with money. Most of the money goes into the cost of transportation, busing. This is just the beginning. Financial support is needed so that educational changes in the schools can be implemented since these educational changes "may be the crucial factor in making desegregation work well in the long run."

Orfield tells us that there is a choice, but not between segregation and desegregation. The choice is whether we desegregate schools peacefully and in a lasting way.
If the nation chooses segregation-and doing nothing is accepting segregation-it faces a future as divided, angry, and separate peoples. If it chooses integration it will demonstrate that the majority in a free society can act to bring about institutional change remedying the enduring consequences of a history of discrimination, moving the cities beyond an issue that has been dividing the people and distracting attention from education, and beginning to build integrated schools. School desegregation may be merely a first bridge across the racial gulf, but it is the only bridge we can build in our generation. We must build it well. (p. 455) 

Of direct relevance to my study, the issue of power and powerlessness is discussed within various interpretations of desegregation. Elizabeth Cohen (1980) explores the theme of power and powerlessness in regard to Black children in desegregated schools. In desegregated schools where the principal is White, where most of the teachers are White, but the teacher's aides are Black, children perceive who has the power. If children see White adults always directing Black adults as to what to do, they will evidently conclude that it is correct for them to behave in the same way. In some schools, children may simply never see interaction among the staff. If, on the contrary, they see equal status problem-solving behavior modeled by interracial groups of adults, it will help to produce equal status behavior among the children. Cohen
recommends team teaching with interracial pairs as a highly
desirable way to model integration and not just desegregation. She
also states,

Desegregation guidelines that call for spreading around the
minority population so that they comprise only a few
members of each classroom should be reexamined. It may
prove impossible to treat the powerlessness that results from
this situation. Especially if the minority student is achieving at
a lower level in basic skills, the problems of producing equal
status behavior or academic improvement are immense.
(p. 276)

Parent power is another dimension of the school environment
which directly relates to my study. If Black parents participate fully
in the power structure of the schools, such as the PTA board, which
does occur in the school of my study, then the students will have
adult models of cooperation and mutual respect. Mercer et al. (1980)
theorize that the dimension of parent power will directly influence
equal status contacts among students as well as have both indirect
and direct effects on self-esteem, school anxiety, sense of efficacy,
cross-ethnic friendships, ethnic stereotyping, and possibly academic
performance.
Charles Lawrence presents another interpretation and definition of desegregation. Lawrence (1980) believed that the only purpose of school segregation was to label Blacks as inferior and thus exclude them from parts of society. In his analysis, mere separation of Black children from White children is not harmful; the stigma of inferiority is. And putting the two groups in one school will not remove this label. Lawrence (1980) states that there are three characteristics of segregation.

1. The first is that segregation's only purpose is to label or define Blacks as inferior and thus exclude them from full and equal participation in society.
2. The second is that Blacks are injured by the existence of the system or institution of segregation rather than by particular segregating acts.
3. The third is that the institution of segregation is organic and self-perpetuating. Once established it will not be eliminated by mere removal of public sanction but must be affirmatively destroyed. (p. 50)

Since, according to Lawrence, the harm in not done by mere physical separation then mere physical desegregation is not enough. "Any remedy that does not take into account the systemic nature of the injury of segregation is bound to fail" (p. 59). Reforms in schools will have little impact on the plight of Black children if they do not take
place in conjunction with reforms in other segments of society. What are schools preparing the Black child to do when s/he get out of school? If reform is not made in society there will be few places for Black children with higher self-esteem and higher academic achievement to work.

The final interpretation of desegregation is that of Joe Feagin. Feagin (1980) points out that Black children do gain in achievement in desegregated schools. This achievement is possible because the children have learned to cope with racism techniques. He also tells us that the best achievement for minority students occurs when there is between 25% to 50% Black students in the school. This percentage is significant enough for the Black child to feel s/he has a role in the school.

Within the school of my study there is more than 50% Black children enrolled. The Black children do see themselves as having a strong role in the school and so do their parents. The PTA has had Black members on the board and has had Black presidents. The parents I spoke with were very active in the school and in their children's lives.
Magnet Schools

Magnet schools have in theory the possibility of normally opposing factions coming to consensus for very different reasons. As an alternative to forced desegregation, magnet schools are generally referred to as "schools of choice." Designated schools in a district will adopt one or more themes such as Science & Technology, Open School Philosophy, Year Round School Year, or Foreign Language & Cultural Arts. Magnet schools can fall into one of two categories. They can be dedicated magnets or partial magnets. In the dedicated magnet school there is no attendance zone and all children who attend that school must apply for admission. In a partial magnet school, the most popular of the two versions, there is an attendance zone. However parents who live in that zone and do not wish their children to attend the magnet program may opt out of the school.

Part of the enrollment in a partial magnet school is made up of children who reside outside of the attendance zone whose parents elected for them to attend the school and therefore made the necessary application. Partial magnet schools are generally located in Black/minority neighborhoods. The goal of the magnet program is to attract White children into the predominately Black school.
Dedicated magnet schools can be located anywhere in the city because their enrollment is dedicated to racial balance regardless of location.

Fleming suggests that it is difficult to get many Whites parents to enroll their children at a formerly Black school regardless of magnet program (Fleming et al., 1982). Rossell (1990) argues that Whites who volunteer for magnet schools in Black neighborhoods will tend to be of higher social class than those who do not volunteer, and that they will prefer more child-centered, nontraditional instructional styles than the general White public school population.

In my research project one White parent I spoke with had all her 3 children enrolled in voluntary magnet schools located in predominately Black neighborhoods. She felt that it was important that her children not view race as an issue in education or in any part of life. She told me that it bothered her greatly when her daughter would tell her that "one of the Black girls did such and such." She did not like her daughter referring to anyone as one of the Black girls or one of the White girls. She said it was a description that was unnecessary in the conversation since she was not describing any physical aspect of a person.
She went on to tell me that she was appalled that children are denied entry into magnet programs because of race and quotas. She understands that one of the goals of magnet schools is to racially balance the school, but feels that if that deprives children from their school of choice it is wrong. Her older son is in a magnet program that is housed in a predominately Black high school. She told me of the problems that occurred in the beginning of this year.

_They had fifteen White kids and fifteen Black kids, but they had thirty more Black kids on the waiting list, but they wouldn't let them in because there were not enough White kids, and it's supposed to be balanced. So, the day before school stated, they let all these other Black kids in._

"This is ridiculous. They've had the interviews. They've got the grades. Why can't they go there? Why can't you let them know the days before school starts? Why can't you let them know a month before?" It shouldn't matter. I suppose that one of the charters of magnet schools is to have a balance, but I thought it was ridiculous.

This White mother has the best of intentions when she says that it is ridiculous, but she is really denying that there is a difference between Black and White children. Differences between the races should not be denied. The differences should be identified and then celebrated.
Are voluntary magnet school programs a better method of desegregation than forced busing? From a conservative point of view, Glazer (1985) has argued that freedom of choice in education is philosophically superior to mandatory assignment, even though freedom of choice might not produce as much desegregation. Abram (1984) agrees,

It may not be fashionable to counsel patience, but patience is necessary. We must acknowledge the historical fact that the progress of a group, once barriers are removed, does indeed take time. Of course, we could accomplish more with greater speed if we were willing to take more drastic measures, turning our back on the Constitution. But we dare not do that. (p. 64)

Others support voluntary magnet programs as the means to desegregation on philosophical grounds, but reject it on practical grounds. Hochschild (1984) writes,

The general attractions of voluntary rather than coerced action are so obvious they do not need explication. No sane political actor would prefer to have policy changes forced on citizens rather than chosen by them who denies that greater good arises from natural integration than from mandatory racial mixing? (p. 70)
Others believe that voluntary magnet schools not only are better means of desegregation philosophically but that they might actually be a more effective desegregation tool if the proper incentives could be found. Meadows (1976) contends that the policy of open enrollment as a means to desegregate the schools still offers a handsome alternative to mandatory busing, which has stirred such intense controversy and perhaps even increased racial tension. What mainly needs to be explored is whether some incentive program that heightens the attractiveness of a transfer plan can accomplish what has not been accomplished by simply offering the option to transfer. (p. 143).

Voluntary magnet programs can produce more desegregation than mandatory plans because the latter plan forces social equality. This will never happen if upper class White families continue to avoid forced desegregation and flee to private schools.

On an average, voluntary magnet schools produce slightly more interracial exposure than do mandatory desegregation plans in big city school districts with high proportions of minority students (Rossell, 1990). Also the argument can be made that magnet schools improve the quality of education in a school system for all the children. It can cause competition among schools in one system.
This competition benefits all. For the staff and administration, the competition provides the incentive to produce high quality education in order to attract more students. From the parent's point of view, they can feel empowered to demand a higher quality of education in return for enrolling their children in the magnet school.

So perhaps magnet schools are a win-win situation for desegregation. I can only attest to the one magnet school I know from my study. According to 90% of the parents I interviewed, the magnet school is operating well and race is not a factor. Black families have a sense of power in the school. They are proud of the school. The White families who have opted to send their children to the school are working well within the already established Black power frame. The children are fine. They socialize outside of school and have been to each other's homes for slumber parties and birthday parties regardless of race. I have heard of one of the White teachers attending a program in a Black church in order to be a part of her student's life outside the classroom. Another White teacher visited the home of one of her Black students when she was in an accident. So yes, in this particular magnet school desegregation is working for both Black and White children and families.
Foreign Language Immersion Magnet Programs

In this section, I explore through the literature foreign language immersion education. Immersion is a form of bilingual education in which students who speak the language of the majority of the population receive part of their instruction through a second language and part through their first language (Genesee, 1987). Immersion programs vary in the amount of instruction giving in the first language, English, as well as when English is introduced into the program. It is commonly accepted that in order to be considered immersion education at least fifty percent of instruction during an academic year must be through the second language. Any program with less than fifty percent instruction in the second language is considered to be a second language enrichment program.

The age of the children involved is another factor in distinguishing immersion programs from each other. Early total immersion begins in kindergarten and continues through the elementary grades. This type of program was among the original immersion programs in Canada entitled the St. Lambert Experiment. At the beginning of this program in 1965 French was exclusively the language of instruction to English speaking children beginning in
kindergarten through third grade. English was then used as the language of instruction for language arts by another teacher. An important part of immersion education is that the students believe, at least in the beginning, that their teacher is monolingual. When English is introduced into an immersion classroom it is never done by the regular immersion teacher. Later on in the St. Lambert immersion program English was introduced into the curriculum earlier, in second grade. Again English was used to teach language arts for one hour per day by a special teacher.

The goals of the St. Lambert programs were typical of other immersion programs:

- to provide the students with functional competency in written and spoken French
- to promote and maintain the first language development
- to ensure achievement in academic subjects at grade level
- to instill in the students an understanding and appreciation of French language and culture

It is often questioned as to why immersion programs should begin at such an early age. The answer is based on neuropsychological tests that have been conducted with patients who
have suffered brain damage during infancy or early childhood. The tests done by Penfield & Roberts (1959) showed that young children suffered less permanent language impairment than older children and adults with similar injuries. They argued that the human brain is more "plastic" and better able to acquire language prior to puberty. Beyond this stage of development the physiological structures and cognitive processes of the brain become more fixed and are less effective at learning language.

It is also evident from a psycholinguistic point of view that children acquire their first language as toddlers effortlessly up until they reach school age. Some linguists such as Chomsky (1972) and McNeill (1970) believe that children's second language learning ability is innate while others believe that this ability is related to a general cognitive capacity based on their first language learning (Lenneberg, 1976; Slobin, 1973).

Social psychologists also believe that young children are better second language learners because they have fewer attitude problems and are less resistant to something new. In Krashen's terms (1974) their monitor is not as active. In all areas, neurological, linguistics
and social psychological, early intensive exposure to the second language is encouraged.

Instruction in the immersion classroom is based on the grade level requirements for the academic year. The second language is the medium of instruction but not the focal point. When French or Spanish grammar is studied it is done in a natural first language type instruction. Verbs are not isolated for instruction nor is vocabulary. The grammatical rules of the second language are acquired by the students as naturally as they acquired the grammar of their first language. It has been hypothesized that language learning in children is a systematic process that reflects the child's active cognitive attempts to formulate linguistic rules that correspond to adult competence in the language, a process referred to as creative construction (Dulay & Burt, 1978).

In the beginning of the immersion program emphasis is placed on developing oral language and listening skills. The use of materials that the children are familiar with in the first language are often used as the means of instruction. The most vital tool is to make the learning meaningful to the students. During this early period of instruction the children are using English to communicate with the
teacher and fellow students but the teacher is strictly using the second language and encouraging the students to do the same while not pressuring them to do so. Also at this time the teacher does not overcorrect the grammatical errors the students make. By first grade in a total immersion program the children are using the second language in the classroom.

Reading and writing are also a part of instruction in any immersion program. There is no one strict rule for how to teach reading in the second language. Some teachers use a whole language approach while others prefer the phonetic method. If phonics is used to teach reading in the second language, it is recommended that another approach be used when teaching reading in English since the phonics are considerably different between French and English or Spanish and English.

Basic academics such as mathematics, science and social studies are introduced in the immersion program basically at the same rate as in the regular classroom. There is an initial delay in kindergarten while the children develop the listening skills, but they catch up very quickly. The primary objective of the immersion program is normal academic development.
Since most immersion programs are housed in schools with regular first language programs, it is important that the entire staff of the school value the program and support the program and the students for it to be a success. The school personnel need to regard the acquisition of a second language as a positive addition to the child's learning. At the same time it is important that teachers in immersion programs encourage the children to continue to value their first language and culture.

So far all the discussion has been about early total immersion. This is the most common type of immersion and the type of immersion program that is in place at Jones School where I am conducting my research. However there are alternative forms of immersion education. One basic difference is at what grade level second language immersion instruction begins. As already stated early immersion programs begin with kindergarten. Delayed immersion programs usually start second language instruction in the fourth or fifth grades. In this type of program the children receive instruction approximately one hour a day in a second language during the first two years of school. In third grade, a partial
immersion program begins that basically builds up to a total immersion program in the fourth and fifth grades.

A third alternative in immersion education is referred to as late immersion. In this type of program immersion second language instruction is postponed until the seventh grade. Second language classes are part of the elementary grades as in the delayed immersion program. As with all immersion programs the students are expected to cover and master the same academic material during the course of the year as students in a regular all English program.

Decisions about when English should be introduced in an immersion program and how much instruction should be conducted in English is another variation within immersion education. While some programs put off instruction in English until the third grade for only one hour per day other programs begin in kindergarten and use English fifty percent of the day.

Since in a total immersion program such as Jones School English language instruction is delayed until third grade, many question whether English skills, language arts skills of reading, writing and comprehending, will be affected. Many researcher have conducted tests to determine if this is indeed a problem. English language
testing during kindergarten, first, and second grades have been conducted and compared with on-grade level students in regular English language classrooms.

These tests show that the immersion students scored significantly lower on tests that require literacy in English than their counterparts in regular classrooms. However, by the end of third grade they had reached or were approaching parity with the regular students with the exception of spelling. This spelling problem usually disappears by grade four or five. My experience with the children in the fifth grade immersion classroom tells a different story. Spelling for most of the students is still a big problem in English, and the children are not reading or writing on grade level in English. This has been mentioned by most of the parents I interviewed. One parent decided that it was necessary to remove her second child from the immersion program in the third grade because of his falling behind with English skills. She states,

A. But we did eventually pull him out because his reading and stuff was a little, it wasn't where I thought it should be and I wanted to improve upon those skills. I mean like the child could read Spanish but he couldn't read English and I mean it was just like, you know, he was an opposite, he wasn't an American child; he was a Spanish child.
Q. What grade did you pull him out?

A. This year, the third grade.

Q. So in third grade you switched him. Does he still go to J. School?

A. Yes. And they were very nice about it. Certain things that I had, that I could pick up, I had noticed when I was working with him at home and I just felt like he needed additional help.

With regard to non-literacy skills, such as listening comprehension, oral production or vocabulary skills in English the younger primary grade immersion students performed better than the regular students (Genesee, Tucker, & Lambert, 1975).

In the area of general academics it has been stated that there are cognitive and linguistic advantages among bilingual children in comparison with monolingual children. With regard to mathematics, tests have shown that immersion students score as well as regular students on English math tests, including computations and concepts subtests. This is true even in the younger primary grades when all mathematics instruction is done in the second language. Standardized science tests show the same results. Immersion students score as well as regular students in geography, history,
physics and chemistry when they were tested in the ninth and tenth grades.

Parents and students decide to participate in immersion programs for usually one reason more than any. They want or they want their children to be able to function proficiently in a second language. It has been shown that immersion programs do not harm academic achievement, but what about second language acquisition?

The Canadian Example

In the Canadian example, French immersion students were compared with French native speaking students in several areas. It has been found that immersion students are most likely to perform as well as native French students on tests of comprehension, both in reading and listening. It is important to note that these findings pertain to comprehension of school type language. Immersion students reported that they did have trouble understanding and using French in some extracurricular settings because the Canadians spoke too fast and used words and expressions that they were not familiar with (Genesee, 1978). Exposure to a language in a school setting alone will not give a student native like proficiency. Also
immersion students are less likely to score as high as native French students with tests of speaking and writing or on tests of discrete grammatical rules of the second language. Immersion students when compared with French students used the same amount and variety of verbs but with less complex grammatical structures. However it should be noted that the immersion students were always understood by the interviewer.

Unfortunately all the tests and data collection regarding immersion education has examined middle to upper middle class children who all have average or above average intelligence. There is a danger that immersion programs in this country will become synonymous with elitism if students from diverse backgrounds (socioeconomic, academic, and racial) are not encouraged to attend immersion education programs. With this concern in mind researchers have begun to examine different groups of children and immersion programs.

Cummins (1981) has proposed that there is a threshold of bilingual proficiency which, if not attained, will lead to negative cognitive consequences. He states that there is a second higher threshold of proficiency which, if attained, is associated with positive
cognitive consequences. He believes that language proficiency below the first threshold leads to cognitive deficits because the student's interaction with the learning environment is impaired. Proficiency above the second threshold enriches cognitive ability because of the enhanced metalinguistic awareness that results from knowing two languages. So what is the influence of IQ or intelligence on performance in immersion education?

Genesee (1978) conducted a study with French immersion and non-immersion students in Canada. Using IQ scores he examined three groups of early immersion students. The below average students in both immersion and non-immersion programs scored significantly lower on English language tests and on mathematics tests. However there was no difference between the below average immersion student and the below average non-immersion student showing that the immersion program was not a factor.

Comparison of the French language test results revealed that below average immersion students scored significantly lower than other immersion students on tests that assessed literacy based French language skills. But the same students scored at the same level as the average or above average immersion students on tests
that assessed interpersonal communication skill in French speaking and listening comprehension. These tests were all done with students in grades four, five, and six. The French language tests indicate that intelligence or IQ do not influence second language learning, at least with young children in immersion programs.

Robert Gardner (1986) has conducted a series of tests on second language learning. The findings indicate that factors other than those related to intelligence or aptitude can have an important influence on second language learning and that these other factors are independent of intelligence. He argues and provides systematic evidence that positive attitudes and motivation can be related to second language achievement.

Trites (1981) took the question of second language learning a step farther. He believes that there are students who cannot make satisfactory progress in early immersion programs. These students experience difficulty in immersion because they have a unique learning disability that is due to a developmental lag in the maturation of temporal lobe regions of the brain. Their disability can be diagnosed in preschool and they should not take part in early immersion programs.
Bruck (1982) conducted similar testing. He found that there are children who, despite physical well being, normal intelligence and a healthy personality, acquire first language slowly. These children are late in using words and have problems in comprehending as well as producing speech. He studied children for four years in both immersion and non-immersion programs. At the end of the third grade he found that the children who had the developmental language deficiency had more trouble attaining basic literacy skills in English and academics regardless of which program they were in. Surprisingly, he found that the disabled students in the immersion program showed good progress in French language learning to the point that they could function in the classroom with instruction being given in French. Bruck concluded that children with language deficiencies can benefit from and learn in French immersion programs and that they should not be excluded from such programs.

The Cincinnati Example

In the Canadian example, the children were not in magnet schools. My study deals with a magnet school program. Magnet
schools are schools of choice set up with different philosophies and plans of study to attract White parents. The school I am studying is a cultural arts/foreign language school that also has a separate Spanish immersion program in grades K-5. My school is similar to the magnet schools in Cincinnati where Holobow et al studied the immersion programs.

Children were tested in a magnet school program in Cincinnati in kindergarten and again later a follow-up study by Holobow, Genesee, and Lambert (1991) continued the study through the end of first grade.

Comparisons were made between working class children in immersion programs and non-immersion programs using a battery of English language and mathematics tests. Working class family is defined as having an annual income of not more than $15,000, a high school or technical education as the highest educational level completed, and an occupation that was either the manual or unskilled labor level. The immersion students scored as well as the non-immersion students on the tests.

French achievement was also measured between the working class children in immersion programs with French speaking children
and found that the immersion students scored as well as the French students on some of the tests, such as listening comprehension.

It has been argued that the socioeconomic status of a family has no effect on the success of students in an immersion program. It should be noted that this study dealt with children in Cincinnati who were not from an inner city setting where low socioeconomic status is extreme or endogenous. Because the Cincinnati immersion program functions as a magnet school it has attracted both Black and White students as well as diverse socioeconomic status families.

The Cincinnati program offers immersion in both French and Spanish. It is, however, not a total immersion but partial immersion. That is to say that approximately fifty percent of the curriculum is taught in English and fifty percent is taught in the second language. Students begin the program in kindergarten. The day is divided in half, fifty percent English and fifty percent French or Spanish.

Holobow et al. (1991) pretested kindergartners and first graders using the Metropolitan Readiness Tests. The tests were submitted to three way analyses of variance, with program (immersion or non-immersion), socioeconomic status (middle or working class), and race (Black or White) as the independent
variables. No significant differences appeared on any of the pretests. He also tested English language skills in the spring of each year. Taken as a whole the immersion group and the non-immersion group did not differ significantly from each other. Black students from the immersion group scored just as well as Black students from the non-immersion group.

Regarding second language development, the immersion students were administered two tests to measure listening comprehension skills and oral production skills. The second language tests were analyzed the same way as the English language tests were using ANOVA. There were no significant differences between middle class and working class students or between Black and White students on either test.

In conclusion it has been argued that the students in the Cincinnati immersion program demonstrated the same levels of achievement in English and mathematics as their peers in non-immersion programs. This was equally true for working class students and Black students. There is no evidence from the evaluation that participation in a second language immersion
program hampered in any way the academic and native language
development of the socially disadvantaged children.

At the same time the working class and Black students were able to benefit from the second language experience as much as the middle class and White students. As Bruck (1978) and now Holobow (1991) have shown, development of oral and listening skills in a second language does not appear to be dependent on individual differences of a cognitive, linguistic, or social nature. What will happen as these children grow in the program and have to learn literacy and academic language skills still remains to be seen.

The five children from the immersion program that I had the privilege of interviewing represented three socio-economic groups. As Jean Anyon (1980) states the children were from either the working class, the middle class, or the affluent professional class. Working class families have an annual income of $12,000 or less. Middle class families have an annual income between $13,000 and $35,000. Affluent professional class families have an annual income between $40,000 and $80,000. Of the five children there were two White female students, two Black female students, and one Black male student. I discuss this further in the narrative analysis chapter.
Social Psychological Aspects of Second Language Acquisition

There is still another factor to immersion education that has not been addressed so far. That is the social psychological aspects of learning another language. It was a hope of the St. Lambert immersion program that learning through French would create a more positive attitude among the English Canadians toward the French Canadians. It was also hoped that young English Canadians would start to use French in everyday situations, thereby leading to some form of cross cultural contact and communication.

Acquisition of a second language may have social psychological effects on the individual through a process of cognitive restructuring. Zajonc (1968) has hypothesized that increased familiarization with unfamiliar groups through mere exposure will lead to more positive attitudes toward the group. Thus immersion programs could have a part in this cognitive restructuring. Learning another group's language may influence one's perception of oneself or of the other group insofar as one is acquiring a notable and distinctive characteristic of the other group.

Research on ethnic identity of English Canadians students in the immersion program (Cziko, Lambert, & Gutter, 1980) showed that
both the immersion students and the regular English students identified themselves more with English Canadians than with French Canadians. However, the immersion students tended to perceive the English and French Canadians as being more similar to each other than the non-immersion students. Thus participation in immersion has been found to be associated with perceptions of a reduction in social distance between English and French Canadians.

Simply learning a second language does not guarantee social psychological benefits as mentioned in the St. Lambert immersion program. For one thing the students in Canada had a need to be bilingual in order to function fully in society. Living among French speaking Canadians was a extra bonus to the program that other immersion programs such as the Cincinnati or Jones School here in Greensboro do not have. Robert Gardner (1972) points out that second language learners must have positive attitudes toward the target language and the target language group if they are to sustain the motivation necessary to undertake the extended and at times strenuous efforts to master a second language. Motivation is the key to all success, both linguistically and socially.
The Immersion Program at Jones School

Jones School was built in 1954. It is located in the Southwest section of town which is racially divided. The school is surrounded by three public housing projects and several streets of low income single family dwellings.

In 1987 Jones School became one of the then Greensboro City School Systems magnet schools. The focus of the school is cultural arts and foreign language. All the children in the school receive as part of the magnet program thirty minutes of daily Spanish instruction. Other extra classes in art and drama are also part of this cultural arts program. There is also an extended day program where the children can participate in dance, piano or violin.

In 1990 an additional program was added to the school. The Spanish Immersion program began with one kindergarten classroom. There were seventeen children enrolled in the class from various neighborhoods within the city. One student was a neighborhood child. All instruction was conducted completely in Spanish from the first day. The classroom teacher, an elementary teacher from Guatemala, never spoke to the children in English. The next year one class at the subsequent grade level was added. The following year
began with two kindergarten immersion classrooms. And this year, 1995, began with three kindergartens, three first grades, two second grades, one third grade, and a fourth/fifth grade combination. In the fourth/fifth grade combination there is a total of seventeen students. Nine children are in the fifth grade and eight are in the fourth grade. Since no new children are admitted to the class after kindergarten, the fifth graders have been together exclusively for six years. This is a truly unique situation.

In my opinion, this immersion program has been inadequate regarding English instruction. In this school English instruction begins in the third grade. The children in this study were taught by a teaching assistant whose only qualifications were that she was an English speaker. She had no training in teaching any subject. In fourth and in fifth grade the children received English instruction from the drama teacher. She also had never before taught English to children.

The classes I observed were short, usually less than forty minutes and mostly devoted to verbal and auditory skills. Since the children live in the United States all the speaking and listening outside of the classroom takes place in English. Therefore their
verbal and listening skills are fully developed. What is lacking in the children is an ability to write in English and in some cases an ability to read on grade level in English. This situation has been noted by the school and attempts to remedy the situation are underway.

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature regarding second language immersion programs. Two different studies, the Canadian example and the Cincinnati example were reviewed and compared with the immersion program in my study. The magnet school of my study was described.

In the next chapter I will share my methodology and introduce the reader to my participants.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I share the methodology that I chose to use for my study and the reasons behind my decision. I then introduce the participants from my study and how I got to know these children. I also acquaint the reader with the researcher and present my assumptions.

The research method that I used to collect data falls within the qualitative research paradigm of narrative methodology. Stories and narratives, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning and belonging in our lives. Narratives involve not only a sequence of events, but a storyteller and an intended audience.

Coles (1989) states, it is only through stories that we can fully enter another's life. Narratives seem to be "natural" to adults and children. Whenever we are asked to "tell what happened" we usually compose a narrative, we tell the story. Such stories tell more that just the facts. As White (1981) tells us,
Narrative might well be considered a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate knowing into telling, the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human.

In order to give meaning to our own actions we tell stories about those actions and place them in the context of ongoing narratives of our lives.

**Moral Stories**

Bruner (1986) argues that one of the functions of narrative in culture is to hold cognition, affect, and action together. So understood then we should also expect that narratives of moral decision making would provide a valuable window through which to view the interrelationship between the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of moral experience. By representing these dimensions of their own moral experience through narrative, children can be encouraged to reflect on their own experience from the standpoint of their own moral perspective. This will lead to not only an increased sense of authority and authorization on behalf of that perspective but also an increased sense of responsibly for action.
In my study the narratives of the mothers had a moral discourse. Discussion concerning the role and responsibility of motherhood was presented in one of the narratives. The ethic of caring was another area of discourse that took place with several of the mothers and children.

The Researcher

I chose to use narrative methodology because I am interested in hearing what children have to say about their experiences of schooling. Children's narratives have the potential to overturn our adult versions of events. We hear from every other possible source, teachers, administrators, pedagogues but rarely do we hear from the children. Since they are the prime focus of education, their stories, told in their voice, should be the first source of information and also interpretation.

I am concerned with preparing teachers to think and care about how children think and feel when they are in school. Therefore I purposefully chose to study children's story telling. This is a good method of instruction for preservice teachers to gather information regarding children's thinking.
I can only be sure of how I feel and felt as a student and what I remember my friends saying to me when I was a child. I came from a family where I never felt any stress to perform well in school except in regards to conduct. My parents never were concerned with my grades as long as my conduct grade was excellent. They let me know that as long as I behaved properly in school, they assumed I was doing my best and that was all that they expected. Therefore I never suffered from test anxiety or fear of getting my report card.

However I remember many of my friends who did suffer. In elementary school I remember friends crying in school before tests because they were afraid that they wouldn't remember all the answers. I remember friends who were so scared to take home their report cards because they faced punishments for grades below average. In high school I remember friends cheating on tests because they had to get an A or they would lose privileges at home such as using the car. And sadly I remember friends who committed suicide because they couldn't handle the stress. My only stress came if I received any comments about talking too much in class. I could not comprehend what it would feel like to have so much pressure put on me regarding school work.
I went to college and studied music at the University of Miami. My grades were always average in high school and my SAT scores were below average. Luckily I played the piano fairly well and schools were more interested in my audition than in my grades. In my freshman year I was on the Dean's List. It was the first time I had ever received any academic honors. My parents were proud but not overly so. However when I decided not to return to college in my sophomore year because I was interested in marriage and not school, my parents reacted as if I had received a bad grade in conduct and were very disappointed. Seven years later and still no marriage I returned to college to major in education and Spanish. I received a Master's in Education degree and began my teaching career. I taught Spanish for eight years before returning to school to work on a doctorate in education.

During my eight years of teaching in both secondary and elementary schools I saw the same situations regarding grades and stress that I remembered as a child. In high school I saw students pushed to maintain high grades. I remember students who just wanted to pass my tests as quickly as possible without any concern for the fact that their quick study methods and test taking strategies
left them with little to no communicative competence in Spanish. Most of the students I worked with in high school did not take Spanish to learn to speak or understand it but in order to enter college.

After four years of that stress I decided to try teaching in the elementary program. Children received Spanish instruction three times a week in an FLES classroom where only Spanish was spoken by the teacher and the goal was strictly communication. There were no textbooks, no note taking, and most important no grades. I thought this was the ideal situation and it was at first. It was a new program in the school system and the first year everyone was happy. The children liked coming to the classes and the school system left us alone.

But like so many things, that soon changed. The second year I was told that I needed to start giving some type of grade for Spanish on the report cards. Children in kindergarten through second grade received report cards that had grades of $M$, $S$, and $N$ that represented *Most of the time, Some of the time, and Not yet*. I had to follow that system. The children in grades three though five received regular grades of A, B, C, D, or F and I had to follow that
system as well. With the younger children I felt like the report card
was a fair representation and did not think that the children would
be so hurt by this type of grading system.

But I quickly learned that the children, with help of their
parents, quickly computed that a $M$ equaled an $A$ and that a $S$
equaled a $B$ and so forth. After the first grading quarter I received
calls from anxious parents wanting to know what they could do to
assure that next time their child would receive a $M$ in Spanish. This
reaction quickly showed up in the children's faces and attitudes
towards Spanish. The administration told me they were trying to
justify the course by assigning grades. Without grades the course
appeared to be unimportant and could be easily cut from the budget.

What I saw was children, as young as those in kindergarten,
could be stressed regarding grades. Soon Spanish was not fun
anymore and was just another course that they had to work at and
worry about. Not every child reacted this way. Some liked getting a
grade, usually the ones who received $M$'s. And some children who
received a $S$ or $N$ didn't necessarily change. But some did. And my
concern is for them.
Research Questions

Originally, I want to know what causes children stress in school. I want to know if grades are a problem for young children. Is there a difference between boys' and girls' reactions to school? Is there a difference between children in a Spanish immersion fifth grade and children in a cultural arts fifth grade? As the study progressed I wanted to know more than that. I became interested in the overall narratives of the children and mothers regarding their theories of education and racism.

Working with children is different from working with adults. Ten and eleven year olds need to know the person they are talking with before they can open up and really tell a story. It was important that I form a relationship with the children before I began the data collection. I volunteered as an assistant in the cultural art/foreign language magnet school two days per week. I worked on Tuesdays in the cultural arts classroom and on Thursdays in the Spanish immersion classroom.

I have observed and participated in the two fifth grade classroom for several months. I am familiar with the two classrooms, the teachers, the assistants, and most of all the students. And yes,
there is a difference in the two rooms. The teachers' styles are extremely different in their approach to teaching and working with children.

In the immersion classroom there was a great deal of freedom. The children had a lot of physical movement within the classroom. There was a lot of humor, music and dance, and a lot of noise, at times, more than I could take. The children always ran to meet me when I arrived in the classroom and most of them hugged me. The teacher always stopped whatever she was doing or whatever the children were doing and made a big deal about my coming into the room. I could have never slipped in unannounced. This teacher wanted my help. She had a combination of fourth and fifth graders so often she would ask me to lead a lesson with the fifth graders while she worked with the fourth graders. I also was accepted as an assistant by both grade levels. Every child in the room felt comfortable asking me for help. And I was rarely left to myself to strictly "observe."

The other fifth grade was more structured. The children did not move from their desks unless told to do so. There was also a lot of humor in the room, but no music or dance. The noise level was
much less. When the teacher read or spoke no child ever spoke. The only way to be acknowledged in this room was by raising your hand. When I arrived in this room no one greeted me except I always received a welcome nod from the teacher. As I walked back to the rear of the classroom to sit down children smiled and a few would whisper a hello. I always felt welcome in both classrooms by teachers and children. I had much more of an opportunity to observe in this room since I was never actually asked to do anything. When the children worked at their desks I voluntarily walked around and helped where needed but otherwise I was strictly an observer. I often asked if there was anything I could do and was politely told that "No, the classroom assistant would be in and she would do whatever needed doing."

After spending time in each classroom I had certain assumptions of what I was going to learn from the children. I expected that the children in the immersion classroom would have more happy or pleasant stories about school than the cultural arts classroom children. It seemed to me that the children in the immersion classroom enjoyed school more than the others.
But I was wrong. I can say now that both groups of children enjoy school equally. Whether they were high achievement students or borderline students did not matter when it came to talking about school. All loved their school. There were times in all their lives that they found school unpleasant but they were isolated incidents. With the exception of the one immersion teacher, there was no pattern regarding unpleasant or stressful experiences in school.

The mothers' stories echoed the children's stories regarding positive and negative experiences. If the child liked something, the parent usually liked it. If the child didn't like something, the parent didn't like it. And unfortunately, when the parent showed signs of racism, the child did as well. Yes, "children do learn from their parents." And in some cases parents learn from their children.

After getting to know the children and allowing them to get to know me, I sent to all parents in both classrooms a letter asking permission to interview their children and themselves (see Appendix). I sent self addressed, stamped envelopes and waited two weeks for any and all responses.

After the two weeks I received twelve letters signed indicating that they were willing to participate in my study. In November,
1995, I began calling the parents in the evenings to set up the interviews. Two of the original twelve did not wish to participate when it came time to actually do the interviews. I was extremely lucky in the end because I was left with ten participants, five from each classroom.

I spoke with the children and the parents in the late afternoons or early evenings at the children's homes. I always interviewed the child first, separately from the parent. In all cases except one the mother was the only parent who spoke with me. In the families where there was a father living in the home, only one wished to participate. This father spoke to me after the mother's interview. He is a parent that is physically disabled and is the one who stays home with the children while the mother is working or attending classes.

All the interviews took place in the children's homes because I felt it was important that the child be in a familiar setting and away from school. I didn't want the interview to seem like an inquisition. Vygotsky (1962) stated that social cognition in young children can be difficult to accurately determine because they may show a higher level of social cognition in a familiar setting, such as the home, than in a laboratory or school setting.
I scheduled the interview times whenever the parents requested. Since the parents/guardians were also being interviewed and since all of the parents worked outside of the home, all interviews took place after 5:00 in the evening.

I began each interview by explaining that the tape recorder was for my benefit so that I could use the tape as part of my school project. I then asked each child to tell me stories about Jones School. Depending on their responses I then asked for either a positive experience they remembered or a negative experience.

The interviews lasted between twenty minutes to forty five minutes. The interview ended when the child indicated that s/he had told me everything s/he wanted to. I then spoke with the parents or, in one case, the foster parent of the children. Only one father chose to speak with me after his wife was interviewed. Other fathers that were present in the home chose not to participate in the study. The adult interviews lasted between fifteen minutes to an hour and a half. I asked each adult to tell me about any experiences they had regarding Jones School. I then proceeded, as with the children, soliciting either positive or negative experiences.
Narrative Analysis

According to Riessman (1993) narratives are representations of people who construct their stories based on past events and actions. The language used in the narrative is very important. It is not just a means of communication but an essential ingredient of the narrative. How the story is told, the tone of the storyteller, the inflections and utterances all are part of the narrative and need to be considered when doing analysis.

Riessman states that we do not give voice to people but that we hear voices that might otherwise not be heard. I agree with this statement. I am not giving voice to my children, they always had it. I am listening, maybe for the first time to the children and telling their story as best as I can.

Riessman talks about the five levels of representation in the research process. First there is attending. Within the context of my children's and mothers' narratives, each child and each mother remembers the same school or the same teacher differently because they focused more on one thing than on another at that particular moment.
The second level is telling about the experience. The narrator describes the place, characters, and plot. By interpreting the events we clarify the story. There is always a gap in time from the actual event and the telling of the event. In my study mothers and children were telling me stories of events that happened as far back as six years ago when their children were in kindergarten.

The third level is transcribing. I always thought this was the clearest part of the process but I now see that it too is interpretive. I must decide how I will transcribe the narratives. I can leave out my voice, I can transcribe all the seemingly unimportant utterances, or I can transcribe just what I think is essential. Whichever way I do it will affect the story. It is like a photographer's lens. I can take a wide angle shot, a telescopic shot or a close up. Each picture of the same object will show different images. With my study I had the narratives transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. She was instructed to transcribe exactly what she heard. The children's hesitations with certain questions, the mother's excited voice when telling certain stories, and the silences are all part of the transcription.
The fourth level of representation is the analyzing. It is much more than a summary. Decisions about form, order, and style must be considered. Riessman says that in the end the narrative analysis reshapes what the narrator told so much that you end up with a false story.

The final level is the reading level. The final product ends up being read by someone, hopefully by many. Readers bring with them a set of beliefs and values when they sit down to read. Different readers will see different things in a story. The same reader can read the same piece at different times and see new images.

Regarding truth Riessman tells us that we must accept the fact that a representation, a narrative, is intertwined, embedded and interwoven with many other things other than the truth, which is also a representation. When narrators lie or forget to tell the researcher something, they are revealing "truths." It is not the "factual truth" but instead the truths of their experiences. There is no way to prove what is true with personal narratives. Narratives need interpretation and the interpretations provide alternative truths.
The Personal Narratives Group (1989) cautions us, "Unlike the Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. Sometimes the truths we see in personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters "outside" the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive form them" (p. 261).

Framing the questions is always an area of concern with narrative research. The broader the frame the more possibilities there are for rich material. That is to say the more open ended broad question the better. No matter how wide a frame the researcher uses she is still in the frame. Narrative research is subjective. But what is truly important according to the Popular Memory Group (1982)

is not the "objective" nor the "subjective" but the relationship between them: Neither past nor present, but the relationship between them: neither dominant memory nor commonplace understandings, but the relationship between them; neither the
personal/individual nor large-scale changes, but the relationship between them. (p. 211)

In my study the "objective" things are the two programs, immersion and cultural arts, the school itself, and the students and teachers. The subjective is the narratives, the stories of the children and the mothers. This subjectivity is what makes narratives so valuable. As the Personal Narrative Group (1989) states, "it is precisely because of their subjectivity - their rootedness in time, place, and personal experience, in their perspective ridden character - that we value them" (pp. 263-264).

The analysis of my collected narratives is based on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of discourse. The children and the adults I interviewed spoke to me differently than they would have to each other or to another adult. Language is always changing. There is always a struggle over meaning. Bakhtin argues that the word is always "oriented toward an addressee, toward who that addressee might be...each person's inner world and thought has its stabilized social audience that comprises the environment in which reasons, motives, values, and so on are fashioned...the word is a two sided act" (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 214).
Bakhtin refers to passwords "known only to those who belong to the same social horizon" (Todorov, p. 42). Languages belong to certain professions, certain generations, and certain racial and ethnic groups. Therefore with the narratives of the children and adults of different races and socioeconomic status, there will be different languages. In the narratives the discourse of some of the Black women was that of "Black English." If I as researcher got caught up in that fact and placed any value judgment on these women, I would have missed the true value of what was being said.

According to Bakhtin, language is always social. "The actual reality of language, speech, is not the abstract system of linguistic norms . . . and not the psycho physiological act of its implementation, but the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance" (Voloshinov, 1986, p. 24). There is a relationship between the narrator and the audience.

In my study I was always the audience and the relationship between the children and me was different from the relationship between the mothers and me. The children saw me as someone they knew from school. I was seen as a helper in the classrooms. The mothers only knew of me from their children. The degree to which
they knew me varied from one child to the next. I was not a familiar person to any of the mothers and I believe that the mothers were more suspicious of what I was doing and why I was doing it than the children. Therefore what they told me was affected by this social relationship.

"Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived in its socially charged life" (1981, p. 293), says Bakhtin. This social discourse of Bakhtin relates to Gramsci's (1980) "collective subjective" and to Fish's (1980) "interpretive community."

In my study there were two distinct groups, the five children from the immersion program and the five children from the cultural arts program. There was an overlap of groups based on race, social class, and where the children resided. So it was not a clear separation of two groups of children or parents. And all the participants had a common discourse of school.

I believed that there would be a clear difference between the narratives of the two groups of children. I expected the group from the immersion classroom to tell me stories that were more exciting and full of fun and pleasant experiences than the children in the cultural arts program. I also expected that the mothers from the
affluent professional class would be the most supportive and involved mothers in the school. I was expecting that the mothers from the school's surrounding neighborhood would not be involved in their children's school. I did not expect race to be a factor but I did expect social class to effect the study.

I discovered that the socioeconomic level of the family had nothing to do with the stories. Mothers from the working class were as involved as mothers from the affluent professional class. Race also was not a factor. Black and White children and mothers had similar stories to tell me about school. The working class mothers had a strong ethic of caring for their children and they expected this ethic to be applied in school. The working class mothers also had a precise opinion of what a professional should be and expected that the professionals at the school behave in a certain manner.

In this chapter I have shared my methodology and explained the reason I chose narrative research. I explained how Bakhtin's theory of discourse analysis related to my narrative analysis. Finally, I presented my assumptions and my discoveries.

In the next chapter I will introduce the reader to the children and their mothers.
CHAPTER IV
NARRATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter I share the narratives of the ten children and their mothers. The narratives are divided into three sections. In the first section I explore the lives and stories of three Black mothers. These three women share much more than stories about the school. Their personal life histories and theories of education and racism are interwoven throughout the texts.

In the second section I look at the lives and stories of all the mothers, Black and White. The common theme of school as family is shared by all these women. In this section there is also a story of one family that does not follow the patterns of harmony heard in the other conversations.

In the third section I share the lives and stories of all the children. This is the section that tells the reader what the children feel about school. The children tell what they like and what they dislike and they support their preferences with explanations.
Three Extraordinary Mothers

In this section I share the stories and lives of three extraordinary Black women. These three women live in public housing and are the mothers of three fifth graders that were part of my study. All three families live within walking distance of the school and are considered to be "neighborhood" children and not "magnet" students. One child who is in the Spanish immersion magnet program is also a neighborhood child. However she was enrolled accidentally into this program. The mother's story explains how this happened.

The school became a cultural arts/foreign language magnet school in 1987. In 1990, the school added a Spanish immersion program to the already existing cultural arts/foreign language program. In the cultural arts/foreign language program all students receive thirty minutes each day of instruction in Spanish. In 1989 Ms. S. sent her first child, her son to the school. In kindergarten he received thirty minutes per day of instruction in Spanish. The next

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1Magnet schools are schools of choice used as an alternative to forced desegregation. However one neighborhood child is in the Spanish immersion magnet program.
year, 1990, the same mother returned to the school to enroll her second child, a daughter, in kindergarten.

This was the year that the Spanish immersion program began. Ms. S. went to the school and filled out what she thought were papers for regular kindergarten enrollment. What she actually did was enroll her daughter in the first kindergarten Spanish immersion class. She had no idea that her daughter was in this class until she very near the end of the year. It sounds hard to believe but after meeting and talking with the mother I can see how it took place.

Q. How did you decide to put S. in the immersion program?

A. Well really, I really didn't know she was in a total immersion class until she was like going to the first grade and I knew they taught Spanish, and I knew she always brought home homework that was always in Spanish but I thought they were just maybe stressing learning Spanish because they come from an English speaking home anyway.

And you know I was, like, and the teachers, I would go meet with the teachers and I knew they were Spanish but it never dawned on me and I didn't really, I was in school full-time myself and I didn't have time to go to PTA meetings and all this so I really didn't know that my child was in a Spanish immersion program until she was getting ready to go to the first grade.

Q. But didn't you have to sign something special?
A. To be honest, I really and truly don't know how, I mean when I went to sign her up for school they would talk to me about a lot of things. By me being in school, I got out of school early that day just to go fill out the paper work for her to go to kindergarten and they were talking to me and I was thinking about a paper I needed to write when I get home.

And they were telling me, I remember them saying something about Spanish, but I thought since my son was taking Spanish they meant that she was going to be taking a Spanish class. . . . So to be honest I remember filling out the papers for her to go but I don't remember it saying immersion or whatever but it might of had that on there, but really I didn't know what the immersion program, I didn't know what immersion meant. I just figured it was Spanish.

And the "mistake" that was made that day turned out to be a blessing for the daughter and for the mother. The daughter is now in the fifth grade and speaks, writes, reads, and understand Spanish very well. And her English skills are also benefiting from the program.

Q. If the immersion program was in a school far away, would you keep your children in the program?

A. I really would. I would keep them in the immersion program because I think it is beneficial, I really do. And I wish they had it set up when I was in school because I think children at that age are like sponges, they absorb everything. And I think all of them are from English speaking homes and that second language gives them better cognitive skills . . . cognitively she is far more advanced than my son is.
This woman has a theory of education that is up-to-date with the current literature of second language acquisition in children. She speaks of children being like sponges and of "cognitive skills." This is not the discourse I expected from a woman living in public housing. Neither is it the discourse I would have expected from a woman living in a wealthy suburb. This is a language of professional expertise that she has acquired through her own education as a preschool instructor.

I asked the mother if she thought of changing her daughter's program when she discovered that she was in the immersion program and she said no, "because she started reading in English, her reading in English was a lot stronger than my son's. So I thought that maybe this program is going to be good."

Ms. S. is a mother who cares about her children and is active in their education and in their lives. She spoke of a book fair that the school had earlier that year. Ms. S. took a very active part in the buying of the books for her children.

*I don't want to give my child any money and have them pick out my books because I teach young children, so if there is anything that will benefit me that I can use with my children, that I can get for my children, then that is what I get. I don't*
just let you decide that you want to get something and you get it. If you have your own money that you saved up then that fine. But if it's coming out of my pocket, I prefer to get something that you can use but that I can use too.

I asked Ms. S. about her education and plans. She knows what she wants and she has a plan. She teaches young children in a preschool program as part of her education. When we talked of her education it was clear to me that she has a plan for the future.

Q  Where are you going to School?
A.  GTCC in Jamestown. I'll be finished next quarter.

Q  What are you majoring in?
A.  Early childhood education.

Q  Do you want to teach in a preschool?
A.  I want to own my own daycare. I work at GTCC children's center and I want to own my own daycare. I don't really plan to work for anyone else for too long. I want my own. I'm the type of person, I can work with anybody. But I think with me I want to own my own daycare, I don't mind working in my own classroom but I want to have other people work for me. I want to be able to say this is mine. Somebody else is not going to profit from me working. I plan to own my own daycare.

It is clear to see from this narrative excerpt that Ms. S. has no intention of working for someone else. She told me four times in this
brief paragraph that she plans to "own her own daycare." She wants the power, profit, and control. She is unwavering in her desire to be the boss. In my opinion she is trying to cancel the "mammy" image of Black women in domestic labor. Casey (1993) encountered similar situations with Black women educators. In one case, the Black female child was never allowed to work for White people unless the father was present. As Casey wrote,

worker control over the conditions of labor is more important than economic gain; the independence of distance is preferable to intimacy of proximity; manual agricultural labor in the fields is superior to menial domestic labor in the house. The hierarchy of plantation privilege is overturned, and this little Black girl will not become another "Mammy," cooking White people's meals, scrubbing White people's floors, and minding White people's children. (pp. 116-117)

Ms. S. has a determination and a plan. She defies the stereotypes of a Black single mother living in a housing project. Ms. S. is working, going to school full-time and raising three children. She knows about children.

She also spoke to me about race and children and schooling. Ms. S. believes that racism or prejudice is learned in the home. She related a story about a preschool child she worked with in her school.
By the time a child is six they are sort of set in the things, in the way they feel and everything. . . . I've seen a lot of those children, like one little girl. I'd never done anything to her and she told me, I wondered why she never wanted me to help her do anything. All the other children were fine.

And one morning, you know, I went to help her zip her coat because she couldn't get it zipped and she was crying, she was frustrated. The other teacher was doing something. I was in my lab and she said "don't touch me, my mama said don't touch me because you are Black."

And you know, I was like, I didn't have any, I told the teacher, I said I really don't have anything against that child because that child has learned that from her parents. No child four years old knows that they don't want somebody to touch you because they are Black. I said her mother told her that.

This mother not only has a theory of education but also a theory of racism. It is a scary theory because in her opinion children after age six are so set in their ways that they cannot be changed. So if a child is a racist by age seven according to Ms. S.'s theory they are always going to be a racist.

She has taught her own children that. "People are people no matter what color, no matter what they look like, they can be deformed or whatever. People are people." She sees that there is a "link between the school and the home." And happily she told me
that most of the teachers at her children's school want to make that connection.

We talked about racism in her child's immersion classroom. When asked if she noticed any problems of racism in the classroom, she said that she hadn't noticed that "probably because the children all speak Spanish anyway." What I interpreted her to mean is that since all the children started from "ground zero" in that no one in the class had an advantage over anyone else. When they started kindergarten together none of the children spoke or understood Spanish. Therefore they were all starting at the same point.

This rarely happens in a kindergarten. We see many different levels of development and awareness in most kindergarten classrooms and it is clear that some of the children do have an advantage over others. In this case, because they were all learning in an immersion classroom, the advantage was taken away.

We then talked about the parents, the PTA, and meeting with just the immersion parents.

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2In this classroom there are fifth and fourth graders. Among the nine fifth graders there are six Black children and three White children. The other five Black children are not from the school's neighborhood and do not live in public housing. In the fourth grade there are seven White children and one Black child.
Q. During those meetings at the school, do you notice any friction?

A. That's one thing I can say, that I've been through Headstart and everything and I've been in that type of setting where a lot of those Black parents sit here and Whites sit here. But I've noticed that with the immersion parents it's like everyone is the same because their children speak English as a first language but they are in a total Spanish classroom so it's like you have to work together in order to understand the program and where the program is going to take our children.

Q. Do you think it (immersion) is a good method for desegregating schools?

A. I do, I really do.

The fact that Ms. S. finds that "everyone is the same" is a wonderful statement to hear. The fact that the parents are in a unique situation with their children learning everything in a second language, Spanish, pulled the parents together. It reminded me of crises that we see on television where people of different races and social classes all pull together, temporarily, to help find a lost child or solve a mystery.

Her story is similar to another mother's story. Another mother, Ms. C. has six children. Three are grown and on their own and three are at home. There is a sixth grader, a third grader, and the fifth
grader who participated in my study. This family lives in the same neighborhood as Ms. S. and her family. This family is in the cultural arts part of the school and not in the immersion program. However, in the cultural arts part of the school, children receive Spanish everyday for thirty minutes and also weekly classes in art, music and drama. And there is an after school program for all the children.

This after school program has been a great help for Ms. C. She works and doesn't get home until 5:30 or 6:00. She told me that she "can't wait every year for the after school program to start because until it starts, they (her children) are what society calls the latchkey kids." She is a very concerned and proactive parent who also is raising her children alone. She doesn't like leaving her girls alone in the apartment but she "can't afford a sitter and then to take care of them and keep this house going" is too much for her.

Ms. C. has a strong feeling of responsibility for her family. She spoke about her own social life, or lack there of, and her work as her responsibility as a mother.

*With me working now, I don't like working evenings, but right now with it being Christmas, and me being in a new job in retail, I have to be there. I could take the attitude and say I don't have to do it, but yes I do. I have to do it for us to*
survive. I have to get out of this house sometimes, but being a single parent with six kids, I don't have much of a social life.

With teen pregnancy on the rise, that's my main concern for being at home with my girls. You can't stop them from being and talking to boys, but to me you can prevent the inevitable from happening sometimes, if you are a parent that's aware of what's going on. . . . I pride myself on being one of those parents that knows where my kids are.

Ms. C. at one time worked for her congressman on an update of the Medicaid program. As part of her job, she went in to homes and saw young girls seventeen and eighteen years old with babies. One day she came back to her office and sat down and cried. She related the story as follows,

I just had to take this moment to let out what I felt because my heart went out to them. They were so young. And they were having babies and it was like, well, where in the world was their mothers? To me, the mother is there. Mom is there when they are being born, Mom is there when they got runny noses, colds, everything, Mom's there. If she's not there, she's supposed to be there. If she can't be there, she's at work. If she's not at home, she should be at work.

It's nothing like out with the girls or out because you want an evening out. But your children is at home, to me, a mother is supposed to make sure the home is okay, and she's the one that sets the role for her kids to follow.

If a mother is not setting a good example for her daughters, her role as a mother, as a responsible adult, is not right, and she is
painting a picture to these kids where she is saying, "It's okay to have kids and go away and leave them at home by themselves." No it is not, because these girls that's running around here, eleven, twelve and thirteen years old having babies, what's the mother doing? Where is she?

Ms. C. is an active parent and is very much aware of her responsibility as a mother. Caring for her children is her first responsibility. She is also aware of her children's needs. She told me that she can't divide herself in six pieces and give each child a piece of her so she just sort of squeezes in there and gives everybody as much attention as she possibly can give them, without having one child feel that s/he is getting left out or they are not getting enough love.

And like the first mother, Ms. C. has been in school and hopes to finish her degree. She is a junior majoring in social work at my university. It is my opinion that the courses Ms. C. has taken towards her degree in social work have affected her greatly. She has a language of responsibility and caring for her family. Part of the job of many social workers is to go into homes of families that are not operating responsibly and take children from the home. It is clear to me that this will not happen to Ms. C.
We talked a lot about her daughter's experiences in the school. It was evident that this mother was very active in her daughter's education and school experience. When I asked her about any particular experience she remembered with the school she told me about several years.

*Every year they are doing something different. Last year they started a new program with the kids in the drama class. And the year before that they did something different. It's been a different learning experience for me and for them, and I hope that they continue to fascinate the kids the way they are because I believe that if you reach a child on their level and work with them on their level, you are going to have the best kid, and it is going to be so productive.*

Ms. C. also has an theory of education. The notion of reaching children on their level in order to help them be productive is language that we at the university teach to our undergraduate education majors.

*But if you don't have something challenging for that child everyday in the classroom, something different for them to do, it going to become a problem. It's going to become a problem in the classroom. It's going to become a problem for society. It's going to become a problem for the home.*
In other words there is a "link between the home and the school" and the link extends into society.

Ms. C. told me that she learns something new each year from her experiences with her daughters' school. Before she started working she was a volunteer in the school. She told me that kids adjust to change, "it's the parents who don't take too good to changes." She had two bad experiences with teachers. And most of the problem was because the "teacher would not change her ways, no matter what." Once she was able as a parent to help the teachers understand what her child needed, the problem disappeared. As she so perfectly said, "Why was it so hard for somebody to understand that? And she is supposed to be a professional- why is it so hard for her to understand that?" "Professionals" are supposed to understand the children better than the parents. But when a parent is as close and involved with her children as this mother, it does not surprise me that she knew what the problem was before the teacher.

Along with working a full time job in retail and going to school to finish her degree in social work and raising three girls now at home, this "welfare mother" volunteers at the Y with five year olds in a dance group. She learned that by compromising with children
you get much better progress. "You can even get a kid in your classroom that doesn't want to do nothing - when you give them a compromise that they are comfortable with, you can get that kid to do anything you want. I like kids. I call them old people in little people's bodies."

"Old people in little people's bodies" is an interesting phrase. I have heard others refer to young children as having an old soul. When children speak with such profound ideas and thoughts, we adults often wonder how it is possible for someone to have lived such a short amount of time on earth and know so much. Ms. C. told me that when she is talking with her youngest daughter who is eight years old, she will stop and ask her, "how old are you?" because she cannot believe what she is hearing is coming from an eight year old. She has a wonderful attitude toward children. She is constantly amazed by their abilities and not put off by any of their disabilities. She is the kind of woman I would want teaching my children.

The third mother is a foster mother. Ms. D. has a street ministry in the public housing surrounding the school that has been active for fifteen years. It is "on the street" that she heard about a young boy and his sister who needed a home. She went to court and
asked if she could have the children and the judge gave her temporary custody of both the older sister and the fifth grade boy. The boy has been labeled a "Willie M. child". He has a court social worker and case worker. This child's natural mother is a drug addict and the father is dying from the AIDS virus. According to Ms. D. when the natural mother had custody of the children she often took the young boy with her on "dates," dates that were "paid for" and also had the boy steal for her.

Ms. D. has a strong opinion about the school. She loves it. Her own sons went to this school seven or eight years ago. She told me that at this school "they try to take a tragedy and make something positive come out of it." The tragedy is the children's lives. Ms. D. told me that she doesn't believe that her foster son would have made it in any other school. She told me that the school is very involved in the community,

*They just reach out, and they go out into the community and they pull the community in, and they work together just like a network. I don't think any other school would have let K. stay.*

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3Willie M is a state certification for children under age 18 who have emotional, neurological, or mental handicaps and who display a significant pattern of violent and assultive behavior and for whom the state of North Carolina has attempted to intercede.
I don't think they would have worked and tried to internet in areas where he has a problem. I don't think he could get what he gets at any other school in the city, or even in the whole county, as far as education, as far as the expertise and the professionals they have working but most of all just caring and going that extra mile for those kids, and I consider it a privilege and an asset to have worked with professional people at that level.

They just care, care enough to give a damn about kids. They push to include the ladies in the public housing and other low income areas. They try very hard to get them involved, and Ms. W. (home-school coordinator) especially, she goes out and promotes and pushes the neighborhood and backs different parents. The community feels more a part of the school, and they have an active part in contributing to the school.

An ethic of caring is what Ms. D. is so proud of when she talks about the school. The relationship that the teachers have with the students; the relationship the principals have had with the students; the relationship the entire staff at the school has had with the students and with the community; all this is what Ms. D. calls "caring" and it is what makes this magnet program work in this community.

Ms. D. is also a very active parent with her birth children. When her younger son, now eighteen years old, was diagnosed with a learning disability she kept asking about extra help. At that time the school didn't have "Learning Difference" classes as they all do now,
but the staff at the school researched with the mother and found a program at a college in town that worked with kids with special disabilities. Again, this is not the stereotyped "welfare mother" that we read about in newspapers. We hear congressmen and senators talking about "welfare mothers" who are having babies just to get more income. That is not the picture I have seen in any of the families I visited.

I asked Ms. D. about the school population and any special groups or special interests that she saw as receiving more than the others. She told me that the school is for the whole student body.

*That's what makes it unique. Whether you take a Black child, a White child, a Hispanic child or whatever, the school will help complement that child's heritage, as well as give them a very good education, and what more could a parent ask for. You know you child is safe."

Ms. D. refers to complementing children's heritage. That is the dream of multicultural education; making each child proud of who s/he is and aware of her heritage. According to this Black woman, this is being done at the magnet school. Children are accepted as who they are and encouraged to be proud of their backgrounds.
Ms. D. has taken a very active role in K.'s life. She has enrolled him in an after school program with the Salvation Army and is trying to get him a scholarship for the Y. She believes that her son needs structure and she provides it. He is on a very tight schedule. He leaves the house by 7:00 for school and goes directly from school to the Salvation Army where he does his homework and plays games until 6:00. Then he comes home and has dinner, they talk for at least a half an hour, he watches some television and is in bed by 8:30 each evening. Ms. D. takes him to church each Sunday and each Wednesday evening. She told me that he will stand up and read sometimes in church or he stands up and asks questions. Ms. D. has, like the other two mothers, a vision for her children. Ms. D. refers to it as "pushing him to reach his mountains."

Vision for the Future

Ms. S. saw the advantages of her daughter accidentally being part of the Spanish immersion program and consequently enrolled the younger daughter in the program. Both are doing well. And Ms. C. has a wonderful vision of the future for her daughters. Her words
express her vision and the vision that I found in all three of the homes.

I have had a great life. The only thing that I wish I had done differently with them is that I wish I had finished school when I was younger so that financially I could have taken care of them a little better that I have done. I've done pretty good. I think.

Again Ms. C.'s sense of responsibility as a mother comes through. Also her strong belief in the value of education is revisited. This coincides with the scholarly interpretations of Feagin (1980) who spoke of the value of education and that the belief in education has almost been like a religious faith among Black Americans.

To all Americans, Black and White, education has long been sold by the ruling class as the way to improve life conditions. "Education will set you free" is an idea that has been bought by rank and file Americans everywhere. Schools are important because they are seen as major avenues of mobility by Black parents with less education than they want for their children. So strong has this sales effort - in the media and schools shaped by the ruling class - been that there is an almost religious faith among Black Americans in the value of education as the appropriate way of rising out of oppressive economic conditions. (pp. 31-32)
Ms. C. told me that she believes that she has done a good job of raising her family. She started by telling me that no one in her family has ever been in jail or in a detention home and that is something she is proud of. Considering the high percentage of Black males who are incarcerated each year, it is understandable why this is something a Black mother would think of when she describes her interpretation of success.

Nobody has been to jail. Nobody has been in the detention home. But I have a large family. They need the financial support, but most of all I think I have provided them with enough love and understanding that all of them seem to be happy.

It's just that I feel if I had gotten my education taken care of, financially I could have been able to support them better, but I look back on it now that if I had, would they be any different than what they are now? Would there be more problems, or would there be less problems.

It's something I will never know, but I just thank God that I have lived long enough to see part of them get grown, and the other part is still growing. I am just hoping and praying that time will continue to allow me to see all of them get grown and graduate school and go on and do something with their life. That's my dream, my hope, and I wish them the best.

Her thoughts are that she hopes that all her children graduate school. That's her dream and hope for the future. Ms. C. believes that
"education will set them free" and that with enough education the doors of opportunity will open.

School as Family

In this section I analyze the narratives of all the parents, Black and White. One common theme that was threaded throughout all the narratives was the metaphor of school as family. This family metaphor was universal regardless of the parents; different races, social classes and school program. With the exception of an occasional problem with one teacher or another, problems that always got resolved to the parents; satisfaction, there was very little discourse regarding stress or anxiety related to the school. What was overwhelming to me as researcher was the love that both parents and children had for the school and its personnel.

I know what to expect and what a child will receive when I take the child there. I know the school and it's like it is a part of my family and I know what I can expect out of the school and what the school expects out of me. I know if I take my child there and leave him, he's safe. I know they are not going to condone his wrong, but I know that they are going to let him know that above all things that he is loved. That makes me feel good when I drop him off everyday.
One parent from the immersion program, Ms. S., recounted how a teaching assistant from different years organized weekly picnics in a park during the summer so that the children could stay in touch and have one another to converse with in Spanish. The family concept continued with this mother as she told me another story.

And even Mrs. R., she's a real sweet lady. She's taken my children to the movies, she sends a permission slip home and comes by and picks them up and takes them to the movies. Her daughter was in the Wizard of Oz down at the Greensboro theater downtown and she took a lot of children from the school. There were like two or three car loads that she took. I think that, when they take that type of interest in children, it is special.

"Special" was another adjective that was used frequently to describe relationships in the school.

And even my daughter's teacher, last Sunday we had our Christmas program and she wanted to go. She went to the church with us to see the program. And she came and we went to the program together. And she really had a nice time. And I like that. It was a special time.

Another mother from the immersion program, Ms. J. referred to several of her daughter's teachers.
Señor -- took additional time with my child. Like I said each of
the teachers has been special. Señora -- she is just as sweet as
she can be, she just makes you feel so good and loved and
everything, Señor -- is so patient and he takes extra time.
Señora -- is a very good teacher. . . . With this school I think a
lot of the teachers, they want to make that connection.
Another theme that came out was the pride these parents have
in their children's school. Both immersion and cultural arts parents
mention being proud that their children were a part of this school.

I don't know, I just like old Jones School. I guess any school
you become involved with you will have a love for. But I think
we have the prettiest art work, it's supposed to be cultural arts
and foreign language. Oh, they have the prettiest art work.
Every time I see it, some of it you wouldn't mind putting it on
your walls and everything. They are special over there.

And another parent, Ms. A., echoes with the following concerning the
school chorus performing at another school in the county that enrolls
predominately White children.

Another school has had us for the last two years. The chorus
has gone over there and performed. The first year they went,
that was another very special moment because that's a 99%
White school, and I'm not sure what perception they had of an
inner city school coming to their neighborhood and performing.
Most of the children in the choir were Black. There were a few
White kids. You could kind of see that they didn't know what
to expect behavior wise and that kind of thing. The kids, they
just wowed them. It was kind of neat.
We were just sitting there watching them, and you could see the kids’ eyes in the audience, they just kept getting bigger and bigger, and listening to these kids sing these songs, and they weren’t easy little songs. I was extremely proud that day of what the kids had done.

In this quote Ms. A. states that she believed that White children had poor expectations of Black children’s behavior. It is my opinion that this is Ms. A.’s belief. Ms. A. will be discussed at the end of this section.

And still another parent told me that she always recommends the school to her friends who have children. And when some of them have actually placed their child in the magnet school, she told me "I am always very proud."

A parent of an immersion child has faith that the teachers will not forget about her children next year when the fifth graders are in different middle schools.

*I feel that the teachers at Jones School are dedicated enough that maybe they’ll get together once a month and one of them will host a morning, like an immersion morning, and have the kids over just to keep them involved.*

Of all the parents I interviewed one woman stands out in my mind the most when I think of the school as family metaphor. She is
one of the neighborhood mothers, Ms. D.. She told me up front in our interview that "I think maybe you ought to ask somebody else because I am very partial when it comes to Jones School." I wasn't sure at that moment if she was pleased with the school or totally dissatisfied. I soon learned that it was not dissatisfaction but perhaps the strongest love one person could have for a school and staff.

Johns School is basically his family. They're the only people who have been there for him. He cuts up, he acts bad in class, but they try to work with him. They try to take a tragedy and make something positive come out of it. I don't thing there is a better school with the county school system than Jones School.

The academic literature argues that when there are a mixed status group such as there are in this school, those who have higher social status will be more influential and powerful than those who have lower status (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972; Webster & Driskell, 1978). Ms. D. is a Black woman who spent many years living in pubic housing. She is a part of the school. Her child is not in the immersion program. She is not considered a magnet parent because she lives in the attendance zone of the school.
I can say with certainty that this is not the case in this school.

I have spoken with Black mothers who live in neighborhood and the stories are the same. They are involved in the school. They believe they have a position in the school.

*It's a school that just makes you want to get in there and do and participate. They just reach out, and they go out into the community and they pull the community in, and they work together just like a network. They push to include the ladies in the public housing and other low income areas. They try very hard to get them involved. I think this makes the community feel more a part of the school. Jones School just has a very good rapport with the people that they serve in the community.*

The mothers I spoke with had a great deal of respect and admiration for the teachers and staff of the school. When there was the occasional problem or confrontation between student and teacher parents felt that it was always resolved to the satisfaction of the child and mother.

*I don't care what it was, if it was a bad parent or a bad teacher, you could to go Ms. W.. She wouldn't put the teacher down, and she wouldn't put the parent down, but she would find ways and solutions to work with them.*
Ms. C., another Black mother from the neighborhood, told me similar things regarding problems in the school.

So I had a talk with the assistant principal, and I had a talk with the principal and the instructor. All three of us were brought into the room. We expressed to each other our thoughts on the matter, and I told them that I had to listen to my child. We were able to work it out fine. Now my daughter is just enjoying fifth grade tremendously. When she's sick she says, "Mama, can I go back to school?"

I have never heard such positive praise for teachers. This is across both programs. In fact one mother from the immersion classroom actually made a reference to the cultural arts classroom teachers when she said, "Most of the teachers I see there are very caring and supportive, even the non-immersion teachers."

Another mother from the immersion classroom (Ms. S.) was pleased with the teachers because they call her at home when there is a problem. She liked the fact that "they feel comfortable with me enough to call me and let me know this is what your child is doing and this is what your child is not doing."

"Going that extra mile," "making the connection," and "giving a damn" are three ways that the teachers of this school have been
described. Some of the narratives have been like testimonials to the school and to the teachers. One mother told me,

They got a lot of teachers over there who go that extra mile for those kids, and I consider it a privilege and an asset to have worked with professional people at that level. They just care, care enough to give a damn about kids.

The principal is a key member of any school. This particular school has had four principals in the past six years. Most of the children have been at the school for six years so they have experienced all four. The present principal had only just begun her principalship when the interviews took place so not much was said about her. However, one mother told me that she thought that maybe "women would be more compassionate than the men." Even so, the last two principals of the school have been men and were referred to with warm affectionate memories. "They were not untouchable" was a statement made by one mother. She explained,

Oh he was, he was a really people person. I really enjoyed him. I mean the children, most of the time when I go over to a school the children have this, like, distance from the principal or they may just say "hello" or whatever, but they just gathered around him everywhere he went, they just swarmed him. I mean you can just tell he's a kid person.
Referring to another one of the former principals I was told that the children could trust him. "They knew he was the principal, but at the same time they knew that he was someone that they could trust if they had a hurt."

Sometimes children can see things better than adults. As an adult I think having some many different principals in a school over such a short amount of time would be a possible source of stress. I definitely wouldn't think of it as a positive experience. But one young girl expressed it to me so eloquently that she needs to be a part of this chapter as well.

*It's really fun to be in this thing, (immersion) and the thing that comes to my mind is all the different principals we had. First we had Señor -- then we went to Señor -- and now they've got another principal, Ms. -- and they just change from many people. First we had someone that like acting and stuff. Then we had one that know all the Spanish, and now we have one that just enjoys the whole school. It's like we're adding on each time.*

School should be a family. There should be trust. There should be caring and concern for one another. Children spend one hundred and eighty days out of the year in school. They are there for at least six hours per day, more if they attend extended day programs.
Elementary school is the first phase of children's education. If it is not a pleasant experience how can we expect children to excel in middle or high school? Luckily for the ten children I interviewed school is like a family. There is love, there is caring and concern for their well being. The teachers don't quit caring for the children at 2:30. As one mother so eloquently said,

_The school has been good to me. It's been good to my children. It has tried to bridge gaps and bring about positive changes for the betterment of the students._

The One Exception

Children learn things from parents was a statement made by one of the Black mothers (Ms. S.) when talking about her own work in a preschool. She told me that there is a link between the school and home. I have seen that link in one family that I interviewed. It is the one exception to the positive pattern I have described.

Explicit mention of race came up only three times in all the families I interviewed. A Black mother told me that she thought the immersion program was a good method of desegregation because the parents all had to work together and because the children had the common thread of all speaking Spanish. She told me that she was
pleased during PTA meetings and meetings of just immersion parents that there was no segregation among parents attending the meetings.

Another Black mother told me that at this school race made no difference. That the school "will help complement that child's heritage, as well as give them a very good education." The third time race was brought up it was by a White mother, Ms. A. It was also mentioned by her daughter, the only child to mention race. So, do children learn things from their parents?

During the first moments of my interview with this mother she told me that the idea of sending her child to a school in the "projects" scared her. It was a decision that she had to think about carefully. She was worried that it would not be a safe place for her daughter.

The questions that come to mind are (1) why did Ms. A. send her daughter to the school and (2) why did she keep her daughter there for six years? Again, I can only speculate. If her daughter did not attend a magnet school, then she would have gone to her own district school in her attendance zone. This school has a high percentage of Black children as well. Ms. A's close neighborhood is primarily housed with other White families but close by there are
neighborhoods where there are predominately Black families that all feed into the same school. Therefore, neighborhood school or magnet school, either way Ms. A. was going to be faced with her daughter attending a predominately Black school. She told me that she was not sure about public schooling at all for her children. But the obvious cost of private schooling was more than this family could probably realize.

Ms. A. told me that she had heard of the immersion program at the school and was trying to decide if it was right for her daughter. Keeping her daughter occupied was the basic concern. Referring to the immersion program she told me,

Well, how much trouble can she get in because she will have to spend all her time learning a second language, so this probably is the ticket we should go with.

When I asked Ms. A.'s daughter to tell me a favorite story or memory that she had about school this is what she had to say.

A. Well, something really scary happened this year at the playground. We were swinging on the swings and there were four guys standing there, like people from that neighborhood all the time walk around. People walk up and down the sidewalks all day long. It is a pretty scary thing. We are close to downtown.
Q  Why were you scared?
A.  Well, a few of them said they had a gun.

Q  Did you see a gun?
A.  No, I would have been scared half to death.

Why was she scared? More important, who taught her to be scared?
Since that was her answer to my question regarding her best
memory I was curious as to what her least favorite part of school was. She told me,

Being a bad kind of neighborhood. It's not exactly all that safe, and our school's been robbed and different things, so it's not all that safe.

This is, of course quite a contrast to the Black mother's testimonial about dropping her son off every morning and knowing that he is safe. Yet this is not a simply Black and White issue.
Another White mother, Ms. K, contradicted the stereotypical indictment of the neighborhood.

whenever we have been down there, we didn't ever see anything. You know you have to drive through that housing complex to get there, but I never saw anything that I didn't think was safe or anything. Even at night, I don't think we ever felt uncomfortable down there.
Ms. K.'s daughter never mentioned being afraid or scared about the school's location.

Ms. A. told me that being at this school has been "a whole new eye opening experience for me". She said that she learned that she could not trust people. Some parents that she referred to as "troublemakers" would sign their names agreeing to pay for fundraisers and then never pay. Regarding PTA meetings she first told me that there was a good mix of magnet parents and neighborhood parents. Then she contradicted herself and proceeded to tell me that the magnet parents are much more involved than the cultural arts neighborhood parents.

I can only speak for the neighborhood parents I had the privilege of interviewing. From interviewing these parents I learned that they were involved in the school and supportive of its teachers and its programs. It is important to remember that the neighborhood parents I interviewed did self select to be a part of my study.
Children's Stories

In this section I share the stories of the children. Five of the children are in the Spanish immersion program and five of the children are in the cultural arts program. Their stories are special to me because I am interested in how children feel about school. It is their school, their teachers, and their lives that I want to hear them interpret.

My belief is that unless they have a positive feeling about school, the schooling experience is not going to be successful no matter how many different methods of instruction we as teachers learn and apply. It is not how we are teaching, it is not what we are teaching, it is who we are teaching that makes or breaks the school experience. Children must feel good about themselves and their school in order to learn. Therefore I am trying to see how children feel about school, what causes them stress and what gives them pleasure.

Children are not often asked to tell their feelings and stories about school. Their voices are not often heard in educational research yet they are the main purpose of education. Even though
some of their stories were much shorter than I expected, I was able
to hear many interpretations.

Vivian Paley studied her own classroom of children and
learned from them how to be a better teacher. Paley (1986) states,

> When we are curious about a child's words and our responses
to those words, the child feels respected. The child is
respected. Children who know others are listening may begin
to listen to themselves, and if the teacher acts as the tape
recorder, they may one day become their own critics. (p. 127)

I learned from a previous study with children in Costa Rica that I
needed to form a relationship with the children before I could begin
the interviewing process. They must feel as though I am not a
stranger trying to investigate them. As Paley says, "Like a slow
motion Polaroid developing its images, piece by piece, over many
months, the children's patterns of thought and speech need much
time to be revealed" (p. 127).

Working as a volunteer in the classrooms, and eating and
playing with the children during recess was a valuable asset to my
study. The children knew I was there to help them in the school and
they looked forward to my coming each week. When I mailed the
letters to their homes the children were anxious to participate.
Children whose parents did not sign the letter of consent told me that they really wanted to participate and were trying to get their parents to agree. In fact, one of the mothers who decided not to participate told me that she did not sign the letter of consent and that her daughter probably signed it, hoping she would not notice.

I believe that children have a very real sense of what is going on in school. And I believe they are stressed by many of the facets of school life. I believe that elementary school children are pressured to succeed in testing and that this pressure causes stress and anxiety in many young children. When children don't succeed in this testing cycle week after week, year after year, many children give up as early as third grade, possibly even sooner.

I wanted to see if this was indeed the situation in these two magnet programs. I wanted to see if the two programs within the one school had a bearing on how the children felt about school. I also wanted to see if race and social class of the families had a bearing on how they felt about school.

Five of the children are in the Spanish immersion program and have been in that program since kindergarten. In this group of five there are four girls and one boy. Four of the children come from four
different sections of the county. Only one young girl comes from the neighborhood and lives in one of the public housing projects that surround the school. When asked how she feels about school she told me that "it's fun because our teacher lets us go out two times and we get candy and we have a play store on Friday". Our teacher "lets us" was a common line used by the children. The power structure of teacher/student was clearly established in both classrooms.

It was almost impossible for any of the children to separate school and the teacher. If the teacher was good, then school was good. When the teacher wasn't good, then school wasn't good. This same young girl told me what made a teacher good referring to her present teacher. "I like to have car rides. She takes me places."

This teacher and other teachers and assistants from the immersion program have taken this child to and from many extra curricular activities because the mother does not drive. Another girl in the immersion program spoke of her favorite part or year in school with similar thoughts.

Q  In all the years that you've been at the school did you have a favorite teacher?
A. Uh, oh, I liked my kindergarten teacher and the teacher I have now.

Q. What was special about your kindergarten teacher?

A. She came to visit my house. I had got in a car accident and she had come to see me. She brought cards and coloring books and stuff.

It is that personal touch, reaching out and doing things outside of the classroom that the children remember fondly. When the child feels that the teacher is willing to spend time with him/her then they have created a sense of caring.

When asked what they don't like about school, four of the five immersion children all had the same story to tell. The young girl whose kindergarten teacher visited her home had this to say,

Q. Is there anything about school that you haven't liked?

A. Yes, my -- grade teacher.

Q. Why?

A. She yelled a lot and gave us lots of hard work to do. And then when report cards come she gave us bad grades.

Q. How did that make you feel?

A. Bad and angry.
The young boy in the group told me that school is sometimes boring, but not this year. "This year I have a nice teacher, and we get to go outside earlier, and the work's not harder". When I asked him about previous years he referred to his -- grade year.

Q. Why was it boring?
A. Because the teacher was mean and yelling at us.

A teacher's yelling continued to be the topic of a bad experience for another girl in the immersion program.

Q. Can you tell me anything unpleasant that you remember about school?
A. My -- grade teacher. She got on my nerves. I got like A's and B's and N's, I's, U's and S's.

Q. What are the N's and U's and I's and S's?
A. The N is for Needs Improvement, S. is for Satisfactory. I's are for Improved and U is for Unsatisfactory. and I got a U once. This year I go all S's and all A's.

Q. Other than the report card grading anything else about.....
A. I got in trouble all the time, like stuff I didn't even do and sometimes she would yell a lot and would lie to my parents. Luckily, they believed me.
And according to the mother's story, they did believe her.

I always thought that children who are the "teacher's pet" would like that teacher. One parent shared with me that this same teacher made her daughter the "pet" and her daughter was very unhappy that year. The girl didn't want to go to school. She tried to play sick and cried when it was time to leave in the morning. The girl herself told me the following,

*It may have been that she was hyper or something, but she was just kind of rude. We didn't do a lot of fun things . . . and it was on and on with her. Her class was just the regular kind of class.*

This young girl uses the word "hyper" to negatively describe her teacher. Where did she hear that word? "Hyper" is an abbreviated term for hyperactive. Children are often diagnosed as having hyperactivity or ADHD which stands for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. These children are seen by this young girl as being bad. She has carried that thought over to her description of her teacher.

One concern that I had regarding the Spanish immersion program was the English instruction. On the days that I was in the
classroom I observed the English instruction that was conducted by a special teacher. In my opinion there was not enough structure to the lessons and much time was spent speaking and listening in English. This is not the area in which the children need help. They speak English everyday outside of the classroom and have plenty of opportunity to hear the language with television, radio, and conversations. What some of the children are lacking is reading and writing skills in English.

I asked each child if s/he liked to read in English. In some cases the subject came up when the children told me about parts of the day. When it did not come up naturally I asked specifically if they liked to read in English. The young boy brought the subject up naturally when he told me that his least favorite subject was science.

Q: What is it that you don't like about Science?
A. We have to read the science book.

Q: Do you like to read?
A. No.
One of the girls in the class told me that there are usually two days out of the week that she doesn't like school. I don't think she was even aware of the reason.

Q  Those times that you don't enjoy it(school) what's usually going on?

A.  It's probably, I'll give you a specific. There's not many of those days but it will either be a Monday or a Thursday, I don't know why. It's those specific days.

Q  What do you think happens on Mondays and Thursdays that you don't like?

A.  Probably because the other days of the week I like better than those two.

Q  Nothing special happens on Mondays and Thursdays that you don't like?

A.  Not really. I have to go to English in the afternoon instead of in the morning and I prefer Drama in the afternoon instead of in the morning.

Q  Does that happen on Mondays and Thursdays?

A.  Yeah. We have a full hour of English.

She went on to tell me about her English class and that they are writing personal narratives and that she doesn't really like it. She told me that sometimes she writes in English and part of her writing comes out in Spanish and then she has to start all over again.
Along with the five students from the immersion classroom I also spoke with five students in the cultural arts fifth grade. These students in the cultural arts/foreign language program receive special classes in the arts and in Spanish.

Of the five children I spoke with three are neighborhood children and two children live outside the school zone and their parents chose to send them to the school for the magnet program. One of these children is repeating the fifth grade. She is a young White girl who lives in a middle income family residence where the father stays home and the mother works and goes to school. I was not aware that she was repeating the fifth grade until the interview when she told me a story about her present and past experiences in school.

A. Well, this is my first year at the school.

Q. How has it been?

A. It's okay, It's better than (another school)

Q. How is it better?

A. They have like special classes, like drama. We didn't have drama at ____. And they have Spanish. At the school, you have it all year round. And they have extended day at the school.
Q. Other than the special classes is there anything else that makes it better?

A. The way the teachers teach. They make it more exciting. The teacher, she explains things better. My old teacher used to just say open a book and do the work.

Again, the teacher is what makes or breaks the school experience for the children. This young girl is a very good student from what I have observed in the classroom. She is very capable of doing fifth grade work and does it very well. Her parents told me that basically their daughter gave up last year at the other school because she didn't like the teacher. Her father, the only father who talked with me told me the following,

I'm glad she's at the school this year. I mean everything's been positive since we've been there. Everything last year was negative. It is like a complete turn around this year. Even my daughter is enjoying doing her homework and she can't wait to catch the bus every morning and be on her way to school. That never happened last year. She thought up excuses not to go. I don't like to say anything too negative about anybody but her teacher before was always hollering about this or hollering at her about that. This year, the teacher has a different approach, I guess. The teacher certainly makes a difference. They need a good attitude.
One of the children who lives in the neighborhood, a young Black girl told me that second grade was her favorite year in school. When I asked what made that her favorite year she replied, "the teacher".

One of the young Black boys in this class is classified as Willie M. I did not know about this classification until I met with his guardian for the interview. My observations of this boy indicated that he was somewhat of a discipline problem but nothing extreme and that he was an above average student who wanted to do his work and liked participating in class. He told me, as all the children have, that he liked school. He spoke as many of the parents did when referring to the school. School was special for him, it was like a family. He referred to one of the former principals with a softness and gentleness that I never saw or heard in him before. This is a Black boy talking about a White male principal.

He was like, if you get in trouble and have to go to the office he'll like give you a second chance. And I like him when he was here. He was my favorite principal. He used to be wonderful to me. He used to give me, like if I had been being good he'd give me a dollar or something.
This young boy also told me that school was good for him because all his friends are there. He told me, "I can depend on my old friends. I can trust them and everything". School for this boy is more than just teachers and homework. It is part of his life, a big part. He rarely spoke of the teachers. His stories all surrounded either the one former principal or his friends in the school. When I asked him about his teachers instead of answering me he asked me what his classmates had to say about my questions. Of course I had to tell him that I couldn't remember.

The role of relationships is very important. This young boy is concerned about his classmates and his friends. He wants to be a good friend. This young boy is being raised by a foster mother who took him in literally off the streets. He has had a scary life. His mother took him on "dates" with her and there is concern that he was sexually abused during this time. She had him steal for her. When he first came to live with his foster mother he would not take off his clothes at night. He would occasionally physically hurt himself for attention.

Yet despite all this, he has a vision of his future. He spoke of playing sports in high school and college. He wants to make the All
Star team. He knows he has a court counselor and that he goes to the Mental Health Department once a week, he knows his father is dying of AIDS and that his mother is a drug addict, but he still has plans for a future. It is my belief that the school has had a tremendous positive impact on his life.

Most of the children in both classes were more than willing and anxious to talk with me, but one girl in particular stands out in my mind. Whereas most of the children answered my questions with up to three or four sentences and would elaborate when urged to do so, this one young Black girl from the neighborhood was like a fountain that has been uncorked

I began the interview with this young girl as I did all the interviews. I asked her to tell me anything she wanted about her school. Her response was quite different from any of the other ten children.

Oh, my education. When I grow up, I want to be a lawyer and I want to go to A&T and have two kids and a husband and live in a mansion and be rich. I want to be intelligent and stuff like that. My goal is to get a job, have a good career, and have a nice husband, intelligent kids, and also I like to help others when I grow up to help them to get a good education and stuff like that.
My teachers is Ms. -- and I be in the fifth grade. I be going to middle school next year. I come from a big family. I am eleven years old and in the fifth grade, as I told you. I was born in Greensboro, North Carolina. My year was 1984. I live with my brothers and my sisters and my Grandma and my Mother. School is really special to me because I be there all my life.

This young girl had plenty she wanted me to know. She continued to tell me about each teacher she had since kindergarten and about all the principals she remembers. The school has had three principals in the six years she has been in the school. When I asked her why the school was special she told me as have all the children, "because the teachers are real nice." She added the fact that there are special classes, such as art, drama, and Spanish. She told me she has good grades and used what I call "teacher talk."

I want to keep up the grades to go to college. I know it costs a lot of money but because I'm a bright girl I can earn a scholarship to go to college to be what I want to be. I'm smart enough to go to college. I'm bright and everything. I do good in Social Studies. That's why it's my favorite subject. I made a B and a C in Math. That's a subject I do not like.

Being a "bright girl" is not the usual language a fifth grader uses. She has heard that language either in school, church, or at home.
Why did this young Black girl have so much to tell me? What is different about her life from any of the other participants? I can only speculate but one thing is that she lives with many other people. There are six children in the home and her mother and grandmother are there. That is a lot of people in one home and perhaps she doesn't get a chance to talk as often as she would like.

Her classroom is also a quiet place and the children do not have much opportunity to talk to each other or to tell their story to the teacher. It is a structured classroom where the goal is "reading, writing, and arithmetic" and very little if any time is given for the children to just talk. I believe she was thrilled that someone, especially an adult, was interested enough in her to listen to her story.

Helping people was another major issue for this young girl. She wants to be a lawyer because she wants to help people, and be rich. She spoke of helping her classmates and of the help her kindergarten teacher gave her.

*I'm friendly because I help people with their things. When I have free time, I help people like if they need help with their work or something like that, I help them. That's why I want to be a lawyer because I could have a chance to get to help people*
and help people get their education and stuff like that. I do want to be a lawyer, but I want to help others, like people in jail, or people on the street hungry and stuff, help them get them a job.

Regarding her kindergarten teacher she told me,

She was my favorite teacher cause she helped me with my name. She helped me with how to spell my name. She helped me with how to write it. That is the most important teacher I ever had. My kindergarten teacher is special to me because she helped me spell my name. I would like to be like her when I grow up.

Growing up is important for this young girl. Along with the young Willie M. boy she expresses her dreams for the future. "I hope my dream comes true if I be a lawyer." She used the word dream three different times. Her dream came true that she was in the fifth grade classroom that she was assigned, she hopes her dream of being a lawyer will come true, and she keeps her dream alive when her team loses knowing that next time she will try harder and win.

She referred to a "future memory" a term I had never heard before. It is her vision of the future.
and my future memory is when I get out of school, I want to have a good solid education and I want to be nice to others, intelligent to others, playful to others, and have lots and lots of friends.

Again, this young girl uses "teacher talk" when she refers to having a "good solid education."

She has a never give up spirit. She is a cheerleader and told me that when her team loses, "I keep my dream, and when we lose I do never get mad because I know we can try hard and win." This same spirit is used regarding school work and especially tests.

When I miss school, sometimes I get stuck, like if I have a test, for example, and I miss school, I get stuck on a question that's too hard, I skip that and then go to another questions, and I figure out that question, and when I get through thinking about that question, I will go back and put down the right answer I got. If I have an F, like on my math test, and I know, I ain't that kind of person that say I ain't trying no more. I don't never give up.

She told me a story about climbing a mountain during summer camp.

Her persistence endured.

One day we went to Rocky Mountain. We climbed it. I got to the top, and I was so scared. I didn't look down. I got to the top of the mountain and I said, "yes, I mad it". I looked down
and I was kind of nervous, but I was brave and I knew I could do this.

And she did make it. She also told me that in summer camp they spend a lot of time getting ready for the fifth grade. She was excited about getting this "head start" because as she told me earlier she likes to help people.

I wanted to do work so when I get to fifth grade I would know so I could help the other kids, cause I already know it, and I could help the teachers do it and I could help other kids do their work.

What doesn't she like about school? Not much. All the children felt that way. The only thing she told was that she didn't like it when she got a D on a writing test. "I wasn't satisfied with it because I know I could have did better." But I think she summed up how she feels about school in one sentence.

The first day of school, I got up at four o'clock because I was so excited about going back to school.

In this section we see that all the children, Black and White, like their school. They remember their teachers fondly with a few
exceptions. The ethic of caring is present in the children's stories as much as it was in the mother's narratives. Children know when a teacher or principal cares about them. When they feel this sense of caring the children respond positively to school. When they feel that they are not being cared about, a situation that luckily did not occur often, they respond negatively. It is really quite simple.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

In this concluding chapter I share recent discussions that are going on in this county regarding the magnet schools program. I then review my analytical findings. I conclude the chapter with a section for future research and limitations of my study.

The Future of Magnet Schools

The issue of magnet schools has been a topic of heated discussion for the last two years in the county in which my school is situated. Most of Guilford County's magnet programs are designed to integrate predominantly Black schools by enticing white students with special themes. The programs are also expected to raise test scores at their schools. In 1994 the school board suggested that two elementary magnet schools, not including my school, be closed because neither school was succeeding at these two goals. Parents protested this decision. Many parents said that any radical changes
in the existing programs could drive large numbers of parents to private schools.

A cultural diversity trainer whose daughter is enrolled in the school I studied was concerned with this line of thinking. She told the city newspaper that "Again and again parents made the comment that if we can't have magnet schools, there's going to be a mass exodus to private schools. That is why magnet schools have gotten a bad name, the assumption that only magnet schools offer a high quality education" (Greensboro News & Record, December 3, 1995).

But many poorer parents were also likely to resist losing a program at their child's school. The decision to end the magnet programs at two elementary schools drew opposition from more than 100 vocal parents, including public housing parents whose children attended one of the schools. The local NAACP, the local Poor People's Organization, The Pulpit Forum\(^1\) and several public housing residents' councils supported the parents' efforts to keep the programs. The school board compromised by giving the two schools a one year reprieve (News & Record, December, 30, 1995).

\(^1\)A coalition of Black ministers dedicated to taking practical ethical actions in the city.
This year, 1995, the school board hired an outside consultant, Max Thompson, an Appalachian State University professor to investigate the county's magnet school programs and to make recommendations for the future of the magnet schools. Thompson interviewed more than 100 magnet school principals and teachers, 21 central office administrators, and more than 200 parents and community members. He presented his findings to a school board meeting.

Thompson found that some magnet schools are meeting their goals of helping to integrate the schools and producing above average test scores. But he found that six of the fourteen magnet schools remain racially unbalanced. My school was one of the six. He also found four schools that have not shown improvement in achievement scores over the past three years in several subject areas and at several grade levels. Again, my school was one of the four (News & Record, December 20, 1995).

One of the problems that Thompson saw was that several schools draw "too many" (Black) students from neighborhood attendance zones, making it difficult "to attract enough" (White) students to desegregate the school. His report says those schools, one
of which again is my school, "have not had even the opportunity to succeed" for that reason (News & Record, December 20, 1995).

Several recommendations were made by Thompson regarding the magnet schools. One suggestion was to shrink the attendance zones\(^2\) for magnet schools that draw too many students from their surrounding neighborhoods. Thompson said this would include the school of my study. Thompson went on to name nine specific examples of excellent innovative practices in magnet schools. The foreign language immersion program was listed.

The Guilford County school system spends about three million dollars in local funds to run the programs, which serve about 5,650 students, or almost ten percent of all students in the school system. Roughly forty four percent of students in magnet programs are there because their parents chose them. The rest live in the schools' attendance zones.

When discussing future possibilities for magnet schools, a few school board members were in favor of "opportunity schools" or

\(^2\)Shrinking the attendance zone would mean that only homes located extremely close to the school would be eligible to attend the school.
"controlled schools of choice"\(^3\) which might be similar to magnet schools. The difference would be that those "opportunity schools" would not include integration as a primary goal (News & Record, December 30, 1995).

Thompson said that given the choice between busing and magnets, "most parent prefer magnets. It's an educational focus and a choice focus." But he added that it is easier to achieve racial balance through forced busing than with magnet programs.

Last summer, The Greensboro NAACP President and other Black community leaders met with the Guilford County school system's administrators and wanted answers to several questions concerning the Black population in the schools. The group demanded to know why SAT scores were drastically lower at schools that serve predominately Black students. They wanted to know why there were twice as many Black students suspended as White students, even though Black students were less than half the population. And they wanted to know why morale was so low among teachers, and why parents continue to feel shut out of planning and decision

\(^{3}\)This type of magnet school is not used as a method of desegregation. The schools have different themes and are set up so that parents can have a choice other than their neighborhood school if they so choose.
making. At the same time analysts across the state of North Carolina have found that academic results have been lower for students from poor or disadvantaged backgrounds whether they are Black or White.

The local newspaper interviewed one of the mothers in my study. Ms. D. defended the school system by pointing out its success story. Referring to my school, Ms. D. is quoted as saying, "They make sure every concern is heard, no matter how small. They go beyond the call of duty. When students know you love and care about them, even if they're not 'A' students, they'll try to do their best."

Several editorials on magnet schools appeared in the local newspaper in the past year. One editor stated, "Achievement of the magnet schools' second purpose, enhancing the quality of education, has been impeded by the failure to strike a racial balance in enrollment. School officials should consider removing the responsibility for integration from the magnet schools and let them focus more clearly on content."(December 11, 1995)

It is true that the school in my study is not "racially balanced." The immersion program in the fifth grade has only three White students and six Black students. However five of the Black students are not from the neighborhood, and are not in low income families.
To limit entry into magnet programs based on race would have meant that those five Black students would have been denied the opportunity of enrolling in their school of choice. In that case I agree with the editorial comment that integration should not be the only goal of magnet programs.

What I have seen in this city is competing magnet schools located very close to each other. Another problem that I have witnessed is that the system has two schools with the same theme, one placed in a predominately Black neighborhood and one placed in a predominately White neighborhood. That kind of competition is bound to hurt one of the schools, most likely the school located in the black neighborhood, because of many White parents' attitudes. Tactics such as those mentioned make me wonder if the school board is trying to sabotage the magnet program or at least part of the program.

Who benefits from the magnet schools? In the school that I studied I can say that both neighborhood Black children and "magnet" White and Black children are benefiting from the program.

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4 In magnet programs, there are usually more Black students sent away from their school of choice.
Integration is beginning in the school. Children from different races and social classes are spending the nights at each other's homes, going to parties together, and eating meals at each other's homes. Surely these children will grow up with better social attitudes than those who attend "segregated" schools.

Schools are becoming more and more segregated due to the fact that cities in the United States are becoming more segregated. Many large cities in the North are residentially predominately people of color since most middle class White families are moving to the suburbs. Therefore, we are seeing a rise in school segregation.

The New York Times (1979) reported that the Brown decision had all but been abandoned in the largest cities of the North and West. Demography, economics and racial discrimination have left the schools of New York and other major cities with few White students. For example, in New York City, school enrollment has shifted from two thirds White students to one third. In Chicago, even though a school is designated as desegregated if it only has ten percent White student enrollment, only 196 out of the 586 schools in the system are desegregated. More than 240 schools in Chicago have no White students enrolled.
In 1957 the Los Angeles unified school system had an enrollment of seventy percent White students. By 1979, the system had less than thirty five percent White students enrolled. The same pattern persists in cities such as Houston, Texas. In 1979 it was reported that only thirty percent of the enrolled students in the school district were White. It was estimated at that time that by 1985 White enrollment was expect to drop to fifteen percent (New York Times, May 17, 1979).

No, there is not a balanced mix of the races in the school I studied. But as long as everyone is benefiting from the program, I believe that the magnet school should be allowed to continue.

What I Learned From the Study: An Ethic of Caring

For children and for parents, "school" is equated with teachers. Everyone mentioned the teachers. Good experiences varied from teacher to principal to program, but absolutely every negative experience that was mentioned by either child or adult was related to a teacher. One mother asserted that all the teachers were great. Then she added,
We had one bad experience during the whole six years that I have been having my kids at that school. We had only one bad experience and it was with a teacher.

Another mother told me that overall the school has been good for her and her kids with one exception,

When my son was in the second grade. There was a teacher over there that I'll be honest, I really don't think should have been teaching because she taught in segregated schools, that's how long she has been teaching. And I can probably say that all the boys in her class, were on Ritalin. Maybe two or three weren't. And she preceded to tell me that he needed to be put on it. . . .

And still another mother told me,

We had one bad experience with a lady, a kindergartenteacher. That lady was determined she was going to change my daughter around to her way of doing things.

Teachers make the difference. When the teacher did not show an ethic of caring for the individual, there was a problem. The mothers told me such specific events that demonstrated the caring nature of the teachers. But the bottom line in all the negative teacher events was that the teacher was not showing that she cared for the child.
Teaching styles vary from teacher to teacher. In my study I observed two very different teaching styles in the two classrooms. I had the belief that the children in the immersion classroom would have enjoyed school more than those in the cultural arts classroom based on the two teaching styles. I was wrong. Both groups of children loved school and their teachers. What I have now realized is that I preferred one teaching style over the other and assumed that the children would feel the same way. What I was not taking into account was the caring nature of both teachers. Both teachers, regardless of teaching style, showed a true ethic of caring with the children and the parents. This caring nature was the foundation of the classrooms. Children can adjust to most any teaching style and enjoy school as long as the caring foundation is in place. Teachers do make a difference. What I have concluded is that it is not so much the teaching style as it is the caring nature of the teacher.

Comer (1980) states, "that children from all backgrounds could achieve adequately in school if the setting supported their overall development" (p. 297). His school program is based on the relationship between parents, schools, and community working together. I also have found that relationships are the key to success
in schools. At my school there is a sense of community. The school emphasizes the positive aspects of African American culture.

Nel Noddings (1992) defines a caring relationship as "a connection or encounter between two human beings - a carer and a recipient of care, or cared - for" (p. 15). Children who are cared for will become care-givers themselves. Children learn much more than facts and figures in school. Their moral development is an on-going event. The relationship between teacher and child, the relationship between teacher and mother, and the relationship between mother and school all need to be based on a true ethic of caring. This is what creates Comer's sense of community. This is what I found at my school.

Teachers have gone into the children's homes and are actually talking with the children and the parents. They are literally an interpretive community.

Very Visible Children

Ray Rist (1978) conducted an ethnographic study of school desegregation in the Portland, Oregon, in 1973 and 1974. He entitled his book *The Invisible Children*. Racial assimilation was the goal in
the Portland schools, and "integration" was interpreted as socializing Black students to act, speak, and behave like White students. One or two Black children were assigned to each classroom, to "blend in" with the White children. Rist reports,

For those black children who were "making it" within the norms operant at Brush School, it became increasingly receptive to them; for those who were not making it, the school increasingly came to resemble a warehouse where they were to be stored and ignored. (p. 151)

If the Black children could become "invisible" in the school then the school personnel believed that integration was successful. It was an attempt to be "color-blind" when dealing with integration.

In my school there are no invisible children. The school is the opposite of the one in Portland in that my school is predominately Black and it is the White children who are "bused" voluntarily into the school. Often times in magnet schools the White parents take over the school and the neighborhood parents are left out. This was not the case at my school. White and Black parents seemed to be working well together. Ms. S., a Black parent, told me that unlike other meetings where Black and White parents have separated, at
this school's PTA meetings the Black and White parents sit together and work together.

To all appearances these children are also living a life of integration, which is, of course, more than just going to school together. Especially in the immersion classroom children have told me stories of going to each other's homes for different events. Black children told me of visiting some of the White children and the White children told me of visiting some of the Black children outside of school.

In the classrooms where I worked I observed the children and the teachers, and I never felt as though anyone was trying to "assimilate" another. The children were different from each other and it was clear to me that the teachers appreciated the differences. Within one race of children there were many differences. I never heard any school personnel say that "all Black children" or "all White children" behave in any particular way. Race was never used as an excuse for behavior or an explanation of behavior, positive or negative. As Ms. D. told me, "Whether you take a Black child, a White child, a Hispanic child or whatever, Jones will help complement that
child's heritage", and as she continues, "what more could a parent ask for?" What more could anyone ask for?

Implications for Teacher Education

As a teacher educator I am concerned with the development of future teachers. What does my study say to future educators? What can we as university teacher educators share with preservice teachers so that all schools can have the feeling of community that I encountered at my school?

Both children and their mothers stressed the importance of feeling as though the school personnel cared about them. Teachers that telephoned the parents regularly were seen by the parents as caring about their child. One mother told me that it made her feel good that the teacher felt comfortable enough to call her at home and talk to her about her daughter's education and behavior.

As teacher educators we must emphasize to our preservice teachers that the teaching profession is not a 8:00 to 3:00 job. Going that extra mile and being a part of the children's lives outside of the school day develops a relationship between teacher and child and between teacher and parent. It was the teachers who visited in the
homes of sick children, who went to church programs that involved their students, and who organized summer gatherings that were remembered with warmth and love by children and parents.

On the flip side, teachers who yelled in the classroom were remembered as the problem years. Teacher inflexibility was another area of concern for parents. Teachers who are so set in their ways that they forget that they are working with twenty or more individuals and their parents are not going to create a sense of school family. Being willing to compromise was an important positive aspect of being labeled a good teacher by parents and students.

What I personally see as the most important aspect of creating a school family or community is what I call a sense of hope. A sense of hope that does not exist in many low income communities or in their schools. It is mandatory that teachers believe in the students and not predict what they will or will not achieve based on their social class or race but instead hope for the best possible outcomes. I expected the lower social class families to be less involved in school and to be less aware of the goals of education. I expected the children from the lower social class to be less motivated to learn. And I was wrong. I learned by talking with the children and their
mothers that neither social class nor race has anything to do with
education if we as teachers do not make it an issue by
predetermining who will do what in school. All new teachers should
go out into the school communities and meet the mothers and fathers
of their students instead of listening to some of the veteran teachers
in the school who have lost that sense of hope. They should talk with
the parents as I did and learn who they are and begin to form a
relationship. Once this relationship is established the possibilities for
colaboration between the home and school can be endless.

Areas for Future Research

What will happen next year when these children are separated
into nine or ten different middle schools? In this county middle
schools are mostly neighborhood schools and consequently populated
with a predominance of one racial group or another. Will the
children from the magnet school who now socialize with each other
(regardless of race) continue to have a relationship? What long term
effects on race relations will the six years of desegregation have on
the children as they grow into society? One of the children from the
immersion program, (K), told me that she hopes to continue to see her classmates next year. Referring to next year she told me,

*It will kind of make me sad, but I just hope that we just don't want to separate and that we will keep on talking to each other and still communicating. I've got everybody's number and, yeah. Some of the boys I might not always keep in touch with them. I will try and call them once in a while, but it's mostly my friends and stuff. maybe Andrew I could call and just say, "how are you doing?"

I hope she does call Andrew, one of the Black students in the class, and just say, "How are you doing?" The nice part of this is that for (K) this is such a simple thing. But yet communication is really such a profound thing. It opens doors and builds bridges.

Another area of concern for me as a teacher is the nine immersion fifth graders. They have experienced six years of being labeled "very special" children. They have been together as a group since kindergarten. They are, in my opinion, very dependent on each other in the classroom. They have become an "interpretive community" (Fish, 1980). My concern is that they are not only going to be put into middle schools that do not have any Spanish program, but that they are also going to be separated into nine different middle schools. Suddenly the "group of nine" are going to be nine
individuals among a very large class of six graders. How will they adjust socially and academically? This is a question I would like to continue to study.

The continuation of a second language with the immersion children is also an area that warrants further investigation. Will the nine children in the immersion program continue to study Spanish or will they choose to select another language such as French or Latin? If they continue to study Spanish will the courses now available in the middle and high schools benefit them? If they choose another language, will they succeed at a more rapid pace than other students or will they be at a disadvantage because they are not accustomed to learning second languages in isolation? The other fifth graders from this magnet school have also been studying Spanish daily for six years. What will middle school second language programs provide for these students?

Limitations of the Study

One big question remains unanswered in my mind and I am afraid it will not be answered in this dissertation. Why did the ten parents I interviewed agree to be part of my study? Why did the
other eighteen parents who received the invitations choose not to participate? I did not see any patterns of race or social class as to those who participated or those who did not. My study had a balance of Black and White children equivalent to the balance of the classroom population. The same can be said for social class. In the classrooms there is a mix of working class, middle class, and affluent professional class families. The participants in my study represented all three groups. Within the immersion program there are three White affluent professional class girls. Two of the girls' mothers agreed to participate and one did not. I can only guess or speculate as to why. Why did all the parents and children tell positive stories? It could be that they self-selected themselves because they wanted to tell their happy experiences, but it is just as likely that others would self-select who had negative stories to tell. It is a question that will go unanswered.

**Final Thoughts**

This has been a "eye-opening" experience, to quote one of my parents. I started off this study with questions about stress and anxiety in school. I learned so much more. I overturned my beliefs
concerning low income Black mothers. I now know that neither 
social class nor race predetermine the role of the mother in a family 
or in a school. I learned that schools can be a community, like a 
family, when they are filled with caring teachers and staff. Black 
and White parents can work together for the betterment of their 
children's education and the results can be wonderful. I am 
extremely grateful to the parents who participated in my study.

Through the stories of three extraordinary mothers I learned a 
social and educational theory. The belief that all children can learn 
and be positive parts of schooling as long as teachers act 
professionally and with care was stated by one of the mothers. The 
belief that a teacher can reach any child if s/he is willing to make 
compromises was stated by another mother. The foreign language 
immersion program helped a child gain better cognitive skills at a 
young age was another belief or educational theory of yet another 
mother. Through the stories of the other mothers I learned some 
theories of racism. One mother knows that racism is learned at 
home. She believes that if a child is not taught to disregard racism 
by age seven the child will remain racist forever. Another mother 
told me that because all the children in the immersion program start
out at the same level racism among the parents does not enter the school. The commonality of concern for their children learning everything in a foreign language overtook the problem of racism. I heard repeatedly that caring is the answer to success in schools and in families. I witnessed caring relationships between mothers and children, teachers and children, and principals and children. My personal belief that the social effect of schooling is more important than cognition has been confirmed in this study. Over and over I heard numerous mothers from both programs and from both races basically tell that if the child feels cared about in school s/he will succeed. And success is what I have witnessed at my school.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Appendix

October 24, 1995

Dear Mr. and Mrs. ______________,

As you may know I have been volunteering as a tutor in (Katie's) classroom since September. Let me take this opportunity to tell you about myself. I have taught Spanish for eight years in Guilford County and now I am a doctoral student at UNCG. I am writing this letter because I need your family's help with my research project. As part of my graduate program I wish to study the past accomplishments of Jones School's special programs and consider future directions for the school.

In order to not disrupt the school routine I would like to interview you and your child at home. I will be asking you and your child to tell me about experiences you have had at Jones School. I will audio tape the conversations and later transcribe the information and analyze the narratives. All participant's identities will be anonymous. The final report will be my doctoral dissertation that I will happily share with the school and any interested parents.

As a token of my appreciation I will give each child whose family completes the project a story book. I will also continue to volunteer my services in the school and be willing to help all the children in any way you or (Teacher's name) suggests.
If you are willing to help me with my study please sign the enclosed form and return it to me in the stamped envelope. I will contact you to schedule a time for the first interview. I believe this study will be beneficial to all of us. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Mary Kay Deasy
Yes, I would like to participate in your study and I give my permission for my child to participate as well.

___________________________
Signature

Name ___________________________

Child's name _______________________

Address ___________________________

Phone number _______________________

Please return by the end of this week. Thank you!