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A Framework for Building Strong School Culture: A Case Study on the Transformative
Impacts of Ethics Education on High School Students

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1. Abstract

Recent education reforms to boost school accountability have overlooked the importance of school culture and have prioritized standardized academic achievement. The literature has highlighted the ways in which school culture can improve academic and behavioral outcomes for students, however, very little attention has been paid to the role of moral development in building strong school culture. The literature often neglects iterations of moral development other than character education, such as ethics education, as effective strategies for supporting students and their school environments. In an effort to fill these gaps, this thesis utilizes an auto ethnographic case study to analyze the core components and perceived impacts of the Franklin School's Ethics program. Through semi-structured teacher interviews, thematic analysis of student artifacts, and a code of the school's website, findings suggest that an ethics education differs from other forms of character education in its ability to facilitate connections between ethical theory, personal identity, and social action within its curriculum and pedagogy. Through this exploration, this thesis underscores ethics education as a unique strategy for moral development capable of empowering students and nurturing a resilient school culture. Drawing from the findings, the thesis presents recommendations for the integration of ethics education into a variety of school contexts. These recommendations offer a flexible framework for schools to tailor to their specific community needs, thus fostering a more inclusive and morally grounded educational environment.

2. Introduction

A string of education reforms in the 21st century have prioritized standardized testing of math and reading skills in K-12 education which has overshadowed the crucial role that fostering school culture plays in student success. Despite this shift, school culture continues to be paramount to student development and poor school culture continues to disproportionately affect students in marginalized schools. Key dimensions of school culture, such as student-teacher relationships, school connectedness, and a sense of student belonging, play vital roles in influencing both academic and socioemotional development (Hanson & Voight, 2014). In her book, "Democratic Education," Amy Gutmann draws attention to a connection between moral development and school culture, suggesting that character education programs designed to facilitate moral development could be a potent strategy for addressing poor school culture.

However, character education programs often diverge from this potential by predominantly focusing on individual student outcomes such as academic performance and behavior. Scholars such as John Dewey and Lawrence Kohlberg whose primary focuses included emotional intelligence and individual moral stages, respectively, and more contemporary examples of programs that focus on drug use, violence, and bullying, fail to highlight the important interconnections between character education and school culture. Even when the character education literature addresses school culture, as seen in Berkowitz (2021) PRIMED model, it highlights the impact of strong school culture on moral development, rather than recognizing the reciprocal relationship. Compounding this challenge is a lack of clarity in the literature on what character education entails and what impacts it can have, making it even more difficult for schools to utilize it as an effective remedy for improving school culture. This presents two gaps in the literature: 1) a lack of clear connection between moral development and

school culture and 2) the lack of clarity on the effective implementation of programs that facilitate moral development, particularly ethics education.

This thesis aims to fill these gaps in the literature by exploring ethics education as a unique iteration of character education through a qualitative case study analysis of an ethics education program at the Franklin School[1], a private high school in the northeastern region of the United States. This analysis highlights the ways in which moral development can not only positively impact individual student outcomes, but also broader school culture. By providing findings of a framework for an effective ethics education, this work can offer strategies to dismantle systematic marginalization related to student-teacher relationships, school connectedness, and student belonging.

Accordingly, this thesis has two main objectives. The first objective is to offer a comprehensive analysis of Franklin Ethics, answering the research question: What is ethics education and what are its potential impacts on individual students and school culture at Franklin? The second objective is to explore the differences of ethics and character education, both its historical inspiration and in its current implementation, answering the research question: How does a school that has implemented ethics education see themselves differing from character education? Highlighted in this analysis is an important differentiation between character education and ethics education that leads to the definition of ethics education as a unique form of moral development. Although moral development is achieved through a number of different school processes, such as social studies and religious education, this study utilizes character education as its primary point of analysis for two reasons: the breadth of literature concerning character education and the overlapping qualities of character education and ethics education. Furthermore, in answering these two research questions, this thesis also offers reform

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[1] pseudonym

recommendations on how to make an ethics education more adaptable and relevant to the needs of any school community. Consequently, this study offers clear implementation strategies for effective moral development in schools.

This thesis is arranged in four chapters: Literature Review, Methodology, Findings and Analysis, and Conclusions. The Literature Review chapter consists of five sections. The first section describes the problem space of this study, outlining poor school culture, the impact it can have on student outcomes, and the disproportionate ways in which marginalized students face associated harms. The second section offers a brief history of religious education as the earliest educational strategy devoted to moral development in the US, speaking to the potential connections between religious education and other more contemporary school processes. The third section reviews the literature that defines character education as a potential remedy for improving school culture. The fourth section contextualizes this definition by outlining the history of character education including its beginnings and main actors. The fifth section provides an overview of contemporary examples of character education, offering the Berkowitz (2021) PRIMED model as a representation of a standard character education implementation strategy. Finally, the sixth section offers an overview of the limited literature devoted specifically to ethics education in order to contextualize the particular space this thesis enters. Following the literature review, the Methodology chapter describes the nature of this autoethnographic qualitative case study. In addition to outlining the research design, this section also provides details about the Franklin School context and the ways in which Ethics is centered in the school's mission. Data collection and analysis approaches are addressed, and finally, several limitations of the study are discussed.

The Findings and Analysis chapter, divided into four sections, provides important insights answering the guiding research questions. The first three sections are framed by William Sewell(1992)'s work concerning the symbiotic relationship of guiding schemas and the mobilization of resources. The first section presents an analysis of data that identifies major defining components of Franklin Ethics, especially in relation to its curriculum and pedagogy. Utilizing teacher interviews, student artifacts, and website data, the findings highlight three domains, the conceptual, the personal, and the practice, that intermingle to formulate the framework of Franklin Ethics. The second section looks more closely at the perceived impact of Franklin Ethics as reflected upon by Ethics teachers. By discussing impacts, as related to both individual students and the broader school, the findings in this section provide insights of how moral development can impact school culture. The third section provides further evidence of these impacts by focusing on a particular incident that occurred at Franklin in 2019, known as the "Students of Color Matter" protest. An analysis of this vignette exposes particular strengths and weaknesses of Franklin Ethics. The final section reveals how Franklin understands their Ethics curriculum within the broader conversation of character education, highlighting findings of their overlapping features as well as distinct differences in the theory and implementation of these forms of moral development.

The Conclusions chapter revisits the research questions to offer a comprehensive understanding of Franklin Ethics, the impact it has, and the ways in which it must be adapted to better fit the needs of both Franklin and other school communities. In offering these recommendations, this thesis hopes to leave readers with a clearer understanding of ethics education and the potential power it can hold in supporting and empowering students.

3. Literature Review

This literature review aims to establish the problem space that is relevant to ethics education as well as the history and current state of character education, hence helping to contextualize Franklin Ethics and better understand how this study fits within the broader field. Although many character education studies tend to focus on studying the impact of character education on individual student outcomes, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature that fails to study the relationship between moral education and school culture. School culture is a broad term that can relate to a number of different school characteristics. The literature identifies three key contributors to school culture including student-teacher relationships, student belonging, and school connectedness (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009; Hanson & Voight, 2014). Research suggests that many schools in the US struggle to develop strong school culture along these three measurements and could benefit from an effective character education program (Oh & Wolf, 2023; Loomis, 2011; Voight et al., 2015; Healey & Stroman, 2021; Shirley & Cornell 2012; Fan, 2011). Therefore, this chapter begins by outlining a history of religious education to identify the earliest form of educational efforts to facilitate moral development. In connection to early forms of religious education, this chapter hones in on character education as being a more contemporary school process devoted to moral development, offering relevant literature regarding character education and its history to propose a strategy to address poor school culture. This chapter continues with a section offering a brief summary of what character education programs tend to look like today such as Berkowitz (2021) PRIMED model of character education. This chapter concludes by offering examples of ethics education programs presented in the literature which, although not the same as Franklin Ethics, allude to some key differences between character education and ethics education that will be expanded upon in the Findings and Analysis chapter. Ultimately, by outlining the problem space and providing a

definition, history, and current state of character education, this literature review provides an important backdrop for the Franklin Ethics case study.

3.1. Problem Space: School Culture

While the US education system has grown more complex and competitive, a sense of moral and ethical integrity has seemingly been lost and replaced by an emphasis on quantitative academic achievement. Policies such as No Child Left Behind in 2002 have forced schools to spend more time and energy on metrics that they are held accountable for, such as reading and math, while worrying less about classes such as arts, social studies, and character development. As noted in a 2020 EdWeek article, these courses can develop a strong school culture that can lead to improved academic success, attendance, engagement, and behavior (Prothero, 2020). The Glossary of Education Reform defines school culture as the "beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions," in addition to "more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity" (Sabbott, 2013).

Amtu et al. (2020) found that school culture exerts many impacts on students to the highest degree. In a 2014 survey sampling 730,160 seventh grade students and 16,255 middle school teachers, findings showed that students' relationships with their teachers, the connectedness of the school community, and student social belonging are some of the most salient aspects of school culture (Hanson & Voight, 2014). Research suggests that supporting students along these three measurements of school climate can boost academic achievement and reduce suspension and expulsion rates (Brand et al., 2003). In addition to academic scores and discipline, Way et al. (2007) found that declines in several dimensions of school culture, such as

student-teacher relationships and school connectedness, were correlated with lower self-esteem and higher rates of depression, showing the impact of school culture on the psychological and behavioral health among young people. Contributing to these findings is work done by Mccoy (2013) which suggests that school climate is a mechanism for which poor community health, such as increased poverty and crime, enters the school environment. Findings showed that increased rates of crime predicted decreases in the socioemotional health and academic achievement of students (Mccoy, 2013). This data highlights an important dimension of this study focused on addressing school culture in poor and marginalized communities. Despite the significant role of school culture in influencing the academic achievement, behavior, and emotional well-being of a child, school culture is often overlooked in order to achieve strict academic goals for which schools are held accountable.

Student-Teacher Relationships

The relationships students have with their teachers are a significant component of a students' experiences at schools. Oftentimes these relationships can be negative, especially in school environments where both teachers and students are overburdened with other educational issues. Oh & Wolf (2023) found that teacher emotional exhaustion and perceived lack of accomplishment can impact their quality of teaching which they relate to both social-emotional and executive functioning skills. Agyekum (2019) wrote that "negative teacher-student relationship promotes significant problems that can affect the student to the highest level." For example, as noted by Rucinski (2018), student-teacher relationships can greatly impact academic success in addition to overall well-being. Negative student-teacher relationships and increased conflicts within these relationships can increase emotional distress thereby reducing the

cognitive resources spent on learning in the classroom (Rucinski, 2018). Moreover, students'

negative perceptions of their teachers can impact their overall engagement and belonging in

schools (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Research suggests that these negative student-teacher

relationships may be more extreme for Black students. Leverett (2022) worked with 12 Black

middle school boys who highlighted that they felt racism played a role in their relationships with

their teachers. They "identified the need to be recognized as individuals [and] the need for warm,

authentic relationships to feel connected to the school environment" (Leverett, 2022, p. 254).

These dynamics heighten the importance of positive student-teacher relationships so that

vulnerable populations can feel supported and empowered in their school communities.

Student-teacher relationships greatly influence student belonging. A 2020 article titled

"Competing discourses of power in teachers' stories of challenging relationships with students"

studied the importance of student-teacher relationships and the power dynamics that exist within

this relationship. By analyzing moments of discipline through the teacher's perspective, the study

found several important factors in improving classroom culture. The article states, "For students,

a sense of power or autonomy in their relationships with teachers is critical for positive

engagement and academic outcomes" (Chamberlain et al., 2020, p. 143). In addition to autonomy

and according to the self-determination theory, it is also important for students to have a sense of

belonging and competence in the classroom. In their study, autonomy, belonging, and

competence were fostered through the collaboration of teachers and students during disciplinary

interactions. Although this is a particular moment in a larger more complex relationship,

student-teacher collaboration is highly relevant in building a strong classroom culture.

A 2019 study, "Teacher–student relationships and students' engagement in high school:

Does the number of negative and positive relationships with teachers matter?" broadens the

scope of conversation to identify the impact of positive student-teacher relationships on the culture of a school. Findings suggest that individual positive relationships with teachers correlate with a higher academic engagement for students both in the respective class as well as in other classes. In this way, the study found that "the enhancing properties of positive teacher-student relationships seem to outweigh the limiting (or narrowing) properties of negative teacher-student relationships" (Chamberlain et al., 2020, p. 4). These findings suggest that even one empowering teacher can change the experiences of students within the school context. Moreover, in relation to Chamberlain et al. (2020), positive relationships can lead to higher levels of autonomy and peer support which reaffirms the impact of teachers on student engagement and academic success.

School Connectedness and Sense of Belonging

Also critical to school culture is school connectedness. In 2009, The CDC released a report identifying strategies to improve school connectedness, defining it as a protective factor where students believe that "adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals." (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009, p. 3). Poor school connectedness can surface in a number of ways including negative student-teacher relationships, school bullying, and various forms of discrimination. Schiel (2021) found that Black high school students are more likely than White students to experience negative experiences like these and that these negative experiences will have a bigger impact on their overall academic achievement. Additionally, students with marginalized identities can feel a sense of discouragement, disconnection, and a lack of support as found in a study on student perceptions of comprehensive high schools (Loomis, 2011).

In a synthesis of research on learning environments, Healey & Stroman (2021) identified sense of belonging as fundamental to student learning and to their overall well-being. Strong school connectedness has the potential to foster this sense of belonging. In order to achieve this, Healey & Stroman (2021) found that students must feel respected and valued, and that they have the capacity to positively contribute to their community. Critical drivers for students experiencing such feelings were found to be strong interpersonal relationships, the success of other community members to whom students can relate, and the perceived power to shape the environment in which they learn (Healey & Stroman, 2021). The more students are consciously thinking about or struggling to access these environmental characteristics, the less cognitive power students can spend on academic and social needs. Addressing these needs become more complicated due to the diversity of student identities making different students react differently to the same school environment. That is, a sense of belonging is often not fostered among students from marginalized groups who "are often expected to learn in exclusionary spaces where they are not valued or authentically included. In these spaces, it may be impossible for them to belong" (Healey & Stroman, 2021, p. 1). Policies and practices that guide schools and that are rooted in racism, classism, and sexism exaggerate these discrepancies in belonging.

As mentioned above, school culture affects individual experiences in school environments and is impacted by both outside community factors and student identity. A 2015 study titled "The Racial School Climate Gap: Within-School Disparities in Students' Experiences of Safety, Support, and Connectedness" identified racial and socioeconomic discrepancies that negatively impact poor Black and Hispanic students. The study found that the socioeconomic status of students, the student-teacher ratio, and the geographic location of the school impact students' experiences of school climate. Additionally, when racial discrepancies

also exist within schools, connectedness is less prominent for Black students. The study states, "In an average middle school, Black and Hispanic students have less favorable experiences of safety, connectedness, relationships with adults, and opportunities for participation compared to White students" (Voight et al., 2015, p. 252). More specifically, Shirley and Cornell (2012) surveyed 400 middle schoolers in Virginia and found that "African-American students were more likely than Caucasian students to report that their peers supported aggressive behavior and less likely to express willingness to seek help from their teachers for bullying and threats of violence" (Shirley & Cornell 2012, p. 115). These findings speak to the importance of interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging as key components of school culture. Furthermore, Fan (2011) conducted a multilevel study on student perceptions of school climate which aligned with other research in that Black and Hispanic students reported worsened perceptions of school safety and negative relationships with their teachers. These findings suggest that poor Black and Hispanic students tend to have worsened experiences with school culture that can perpetuate other systemic education inequities within under-resourced schools. This research also highlights a greater need for education reforms such as an ethics program that can better support racially minoritized students in their school environments.

As American schools continue to struggle with developing strong school culture, moral development in schools can be a possible remedy for these educational shortcomings. In her book titled *Democratic Education*, Amy Guttman argued that the moral development of young people should be the primary focus of education. As noted, school culture plays a critical role in this "democratic education." Guttman writes, "The political choice facing us therefore is not whether schools should engage in moral education, but what sort of moral education they should

engage in" (Gutmann, 1999, p. 54). Gutmann's argument alludes to a broader connection between moral development and school culture that this study aims to address.

An ethics education can directly address the poor moral development that poor school culture facilitates, providing students with important tools for them to overcome systemic barriers and become empowered, informed, and engaged members of their community. By teaching students to better understand their own role in their community as well as other important perspectives to societal issues, ethics can build the necessary community and positive school culture that is critical for dismantling systems of oppression that create discrepancies in education. An ethics education can build connectedness among peers who will collaborate to analyze and dissect society's most pressing issues. In addition, an ethics curriculum can foster a sense of belonging among students who will use an ethical framework to engage with relevant content that aligns with their community's attitudes and goals. Students will also build strong relationships with their teachers that have been shown to impact student experiences in other school spaces. Ultimately, an ethics education can forge connections among all school stakeholders that can mitigate the detrimental impacts of negative school culture and can support students in ways that they need.

3.2. Religious Education

Early European settlers in the US placed a high value on moral education, with the Puritans being a prominent example due to their extensive documentation of such efforts. Their educational focus revolved around Christianity, emphasizing the importance of maintaining faith and dedication to the religion among young learners. This emphasis on moral education was widely embraced as a strategy to promote social harmony, hard work, and the Christian faith

(McClellan, 1992). Moral development and Christianity served as guiding ideologies, fostering unity within the community by connecting schools and families. Other early American settlers such as the Quakers, Catholics, and other people belonging to various sects of Christianity established schools for similar reasons to instill religious values that promote strong character and moral integrity. As many of these schooling contexts developed throughout the 18th century and into the 19th century, religious education became more academic as classes centered reading and writing skills in addition to moral development (McClellan, 1992).

An important shift occurred in the early 1800s when Horrace Mann established a network of common schools that were designed to promote Christian values and morals without explicitly teaching Christianity to students. This allowed students to engage with Christianity in a more open-ended manner, a compromise in moral education enabling students to form their own beliefs and develop their personal relationship with faith. Horace Mann's common schools laid the groundwork for the future of public education and character education in which schools are responsible for developing good moral people who can contribute to society (McClellan, 1992). While streamlining US education, Mann's contributions divided Christian communities as education leaders promoted strategies that varied in their incorporation of religious education (Denig, 2009).

In the 1962 Engel vs. Vitale US supreme court ruling, prayer and explicit expressions of Christian faith in public schools were outlawed, and so religious education in public education was replaced with other less explicitly religious strategies for moral development. This official shift was a culmination of efforts across the country for more secular humanism in education in which Christian education was not only unpopular, it was actively discouraged (*The History of Christian Schools* 2023). Character education, along with several other school processes, has

popularized more recently as a secular approach to moral development that aims to facilitate the same student growth that religious education once did.

3.3. Defining Character Education

Character education spiked in popularity once religious education was officially banned in US public education. The literature lacks a standard definition and implementation strategy for character education. However, this study draws upon a 2016 literature review on character education which defined it as a "school based process to promote personal development in youth, through the development of virtue, moral values, and moral agency" (Pattaro, 2016, p. 6). Moreover, the study states that character education plays an important role in both developing students' sense of self-identity as well as their socialization with their society (Pattaro, 2016). In a comprehensive meta-analysis of character education written by leading scholars including Dr. Marvin Berkowitz, character was defined as "the whole set of psychological characteristics motivating and enabling one to operate as an effective member of society, to flourish intellectually, to strive for excellence, and to serve as a moral agent" (Brown et. al. 2023). This definition identifies several components of character that can be addressed by character education including community engagement, intellect, life success, and morality. Today, in response to school violence and negative school culture, many educational leaders have turned to character education to build more virtuous and moral school settings that foster student growth. Additionally, focuses on intersectionality, social and emotional learning, and social justice have broadened character education to focus on the sociocultural factors that impact school culture and the individual lives of students, impacting both the curriculum and pedagogy of character education. There continues to be a range of approaches to character education, spanning from a tool to develop individual personhood and self-empowerment among students to preserving

societal norms and socializing students to enter a pre-existing world. Character education is unique from other classes in school in that it is not focused on "materialistic, competitive and selfish trends" but rather focused on creating strong school culture, socioemotional learning, and positive character development as measurements for academic success (Pattaro, 2016, p. 14). Although there have been countless attempts to use character education and its several iterations in schools, both private and public, there continues to be very little scholarly research about what it is and how effective it can be.

3.4. Beginnings of Character Education

A history of character education in the US is important to the overall understanding of moral development in schools. Throughout the history of American education, theorists and leaders in the field have fought over the main purpose of education. One perspective has always been centered around developing the character of young people. As priorities for American schooling have shifted over the years, such as heightened interest in the separation of church and state and the valuing of vocational learning, so has the interest in character development. In the early years, building character was a primary purpose of schooling as parents trusted schools with the task of making their kids productive members of society. Education leaders such as Benjamin Franklin, Horace Mann, and William Mcguffy, all played a part in beginning American public education and they all were passionate about schools serving this role. Motivations behind character development were often tied to religious beliefs or, for more secular schools, an emphasis on civic engagement and the creation of good American citizens. Schools and families were interested in molding kids who either had a "love of God" or a "love of country" (Smith, 2013, p. 351). Rather than problem solving and perspective taking, these early character

education approaches were concerned with enlisting a set of universal values that all people must be socialized to embody in order to positively contribute to society (Narvaez, 2005). Early criticisms of these strategies for character education argued that they reinforced societal norms without accounting for the cultural variation of different groups of people. Character education was centered around teaching kids right from wrong and yet many people felt that these concepts were not as objective and needed to be questioned.

John Dewey's Influence on Character Education

Philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) is widely seen as one of the earliest thinkers in the field of character and moral education that most resembles its current state. Dewey's emphasis on emotional intelligence and ethical theory shifted the landscape of character education from a place that was solely concerned with building good Christians and/or good democrats to a field that highlighted the importance of merging the intellectual and emotional minds. Hansen (2007) notes that Dewey believed that knowledge gained from education should go beyond surface-level facts into the world of moral development and moral knowledge. Hansen (2007) states, "An understanding of justice, freedom, and virtue is bound up in one's knowledge of reading, writing, science, mathematics, art, history, and so forth." (Hansen 175). This sentiment emphasizes how moral education can complement and bolster more traditional forms of education in a way that teaches both academics and its consequences.

In a journal article on the four domains of moral education, Zigler (1998) details the contributions of John Dewey to more contemporary forms of character education, specifically on Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*. In Goleman's book, using some of Dewey's past work, he cites the importance of emotional literacy to the schooling experience. Zigler (1998)

puts in conversation these two education thinkers to highlight four domains of moral education
that are critical to effective implementation. The four domains that surface from Zigler (1998)'s
work are direct external, indirect external, direct internal, and indirect internal. Each domain
concerns the ways in which students are taught to be moral people in their community and how
the ultimate goal of character education is to develop young people who have internalized moral
values (Zigler, 1998, p.28).

Most relevant to ethics education in Dewey's work is his promotion of ethics theory as a
scientific grounding of moral development. Mccarthy (1999) analyzes this Dewian argument to
identify components that are more philosophically leaning and more scientifically leaning.
Dewey argued that ethical theory must be able to describe situations in need of moral judgment
in addition to being publicly accessible and open for constant reflection (Mccarthy 1999). He
writes, "moral theory cannot emerge when there is positive belief as to what is right and what is
wrong, for then there is no occasion for reflection" (Mccarthy 356). In this "unscientific view",
Dewey argues that if beliefs are not supported by knowledge, schools will either fail to provide
an education that speaks to individual beliefs or they will teach all beliefs as truth, a strategy that
may validate white supremacist and patriarchal belief systems (Mccarthy 1999). Ultimately,
Dewey's emphasis on ethical theory, one that must exist in all school spheres and curricula, is in
line with some of the more progressive and empowering character education in current school
contexts.

1960s and Lawrence Kohlberg's Push for Moral Education

In the post-WWII US education landscape, a more nationalist notion spread where
Americans felt they were a beacon of goodness and need not focus on moral development in

schools. However, alongside the various social movements of the 1950s and 1960s that identified huge societal shortcomings in US culture, a movement led by Lawrence Kohlberg reignited a focus on character education. Kohlberg, a scholar of education and psychology who would later become Dr. Berkowitz's mentor, decided to look closer at the role moral development plays in character education. He returned to many of Dewey's ideas regarding the important intersections of intellectual and moral development in schools. Kohlberg's most significant contribution was his emphasis on moral stages that must frame the approach to the education system. These stages are person specific and are greatly influenced by one's environment and outside perspectives (Sholl, 1971). Utilizing moral dilemma discussion, Kohlberg established Just Community Schools where students refined their skills of moral reasoning and perspective-taking. Just Community Schools' cognitive-development approach focused on the process of thinking rather than the content itself, seen by many as an indirect approach to moral development (Narvaez, 2005). Moreover, as children become more advanced in their cognitive thinking, their ability to determine right from wrong becomes more based on their own beliefs rather than the beliefs of others.

With regards to character education's role in moral development, Kohlberg recognized the significance of the history of US education in his work. In a 1980 Q and A with Kohlberg published in the Educational Leadership, Kohlberg noted, "We are more comfortable talking about civic education [than morality], because, since the foundation of the Republic, we have recognized that a basic aim of public education is to enable youth to become citizens of a free society" (Kohlberg, 1980). In response to this history, Kohlberg once again brings up the concept of hidden curriculum that inevitably shapes the moral development of all students who pass through schools. Kohlberg also believed that teachers must be moral beings themselves who

facilitate a positive classroom environment that encourages positive social interaction and "ownership" over one's thoughts, decisions, and beliefs (McDaniel, 1998). This push for student-centered character education was very different from the previous more objective forms of character education. As a result, Kohlberg was criticized for practicing moral relativism that assumed there were no rights and wrongs in society but rather differences of opinion. Consequently, Kohlberg's progressive takes on both the content and pedagogy of character education was pushed out by the end of the 1970s and replaced by a more traditional form of character education.

1980s to Present

In the 1980s, the Reagan administration and the vocal Christian right-winged organizations used a character education that was based around "universal ethics" (Smith, 2013). This push for universality in character education, which was continued by President's Bush and Clinton, gained a lot of support. Programs such as the Ethical Word of the Month campaign were implemented in public schools across the country. In the 1980s, the D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) also became hugely popular as scholars and government officials attempted to address problems of drug abuse and violence in lower income school communities (Smith, 2013). Both the Ethical Word of the Month program and D.A.R.E proved to be largely ineffective in impacting school culture, and in response to the lack of results, educational leaders called for more evidence-based practices (Smith, 2013). These goals became popular at around the same time as the No Child Left Behind Act forced public schools to emphasize academic performance over moral development.

3.5. Current Landscape of Character Education

The long history of character education leaves current schooling practices with a huge diversity of character education perspectives and approaches that cover the entire political spectrum. The moral education movement, which has also reformed into Berkowitz's character education movement, continues to be a mainstay in public school spaces. Additionally, other iterations such as expeditionary learning (EL) models that emphasize experiential and outdoors learning also have gained popularity in school reform spaces.

Other character education iterations focus more on evidence based practices that have more tangible impacts on students. Two responses for the need to be more evidence-based were a push for performance character education and more recently, social and emotional learning practices (Smith, 2013). Performance character was a direct response to criticisms which stated that character education did not impact academic achievement. While these complaints may have more merit regarding moral character and the teaching of values such as integrity, justice, care, and respect, performance character focuses on refining skills of diligence, discipline, perseverance, and a positive attitude which are more directly related to other academic disciplines. Proponents of performance character education feel that both sets of values are important for students to become moral people. Young people must have the conceptual understanding of how they can have a positive influence on society as well as the strategies and techniques to achieve this (Smith, 2013).

In the Brown et. al. (2023) character education meta-analysis, findings proposed six current character education programs that are both reputable and have significantly positive results. Out of these six projects, three are relevant to this thesis with regards to their goals and the manner in which they are implemented. These three programs are The Child Development

Project (CDP), Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), and Second-Step. Both CDP and PATHS were designed to utilize ethical, social, and intellectual development to address student misbehaviors such as drug use and violence. Second-Step utilized social and emotional learning practices for similar desired outcomes. All three programs were successful in their initial goals, however, it is unclear whether or not they addressed the factors of school culture mentioned earlier or the student and community empowerment that is addressed in Franklin Ethics.

PRIMED Model

Dr. Marvin Berkowitz has been a leading scholar and educator of character education over the past few decades. In his book *PRIMED for Character Education*, Berkowitz uses his 2007 article "What Works in Character Education (WWCE)" as a resource to outline his PRIMED model, a representative framework for a school's implementation of moral education. WWCE served as a meta analysis for educators to have an accessible report for effective character education implementation. The model describes six necessary components of character education: Prioritization, Relationships, Intrinsic Motivation, Modeling, Empowerment, Developmental Practice/Pedagogy. Together, these 6 facets of character education outline not just a specific curriculum, but rather the structures a school needs to effectively implement a character education program. Berkowitz argues that character education "is much more a way of *being* than it is a way of *doing."* In this way, his description of effective character education focuses more on school norms, climate, relationships, and role models than on curriculum, lessons, and pedagogy.

The prioritization (P) of character education requires a complete buy-in from everyone in the school, from the top administrators to the students, as well as clearly stated goals for what the school hopes to get out of the program. This first tenet is crucially important for holding the other tenets in place, ensuring that the school's mission, resource allocation, structures and programs, and leadership are serving the ultimate goal of moral development. The relationships (R) tenet must also be prioritized both within and outside of character education programs. Schools must be strategic and intentional in their relationship building to avoid social exclusion of minoritized students. Strong relationships should be embedded in the structural design of school content and pedagogy and must be universal to encompass all school stakeholders, including administrators, parents, non-professional support staff, and other adults who engage with students. Intrinsic motivation (I) highlights the primary goal of character education which is to move from "external to the child (in the school mission, in the curriculum, in the discipline policy, etc.) to internal to the child; i.e., it is internalized and hence becomes a motivation unto itself." Berkowitz argues that character education programs are designed to motivate students to develop their own moral compass and not rely on extrinsic motivations such as punishments and rewards. He offers several strategies to promote this internalization. The most critical strategy for internalization is modeling (M). Teachers and administration must model good behavior in all areas of their job description and even when students are not present such as during hiring decisions, professional development sessions, and moments of teacher evaluation. Modeling is also important for older students and members of the broader community to whom younger students look to for guidance and support. The empowerment (E) tenet ensures that student voices are heard and nurtured throughout the school environment. This includes democratizing decision-making, dismantling traditional school hierarchies, and a shift in school discipline from

punitive procedures to restorative justice practices. Finally, developmental practice and pedagogy (D) centers the long-term growth of students by asking questions related to how this education can support students to live successful lives once they leave school. Berkowitz offers this last tenet in contrast to other school reforms that tend to be more concerned with short term impacts of education and fail to recognize the "true purpose of US education." Berkowitz suggests that in order to achieve long-term impacts, schools must develop self-actualization and socioemotional health rather than fitting students into a specific desirable academic goal that may only be relevant to the school context.

3.6. Current Landscape of Ethics Education

Because character education continues to dominate the field of moral development, the literature rarely mentions ethics education as its own isolated form of education to support and empower students. One place it does briefly appear is within literature concerning community service learning (Boss, 1995; Kirby, 2009). Service learning is seen as a key tool for moral and ethical development as students are able to experience new people and environments that they would not be able to otherwise (Kirby, 2009). Moreover, ethics education has a heightened overlap with service learning as both approaches prioritize building people who are motivated to positively impact the world (Boss, 1995). To be most effective, service learning and in-class ethics education must complement each other so that students do not just do the work, but also reflect on how their personal identities and experiences align with broader community values (Boss, 1995).

More broadly, there are even fewer examples in the literature of comprehensive ethics education models. One notable case is Darcia Narvaez's 2005 article, "Integrated Ethical

Education" which is in direct response to literature concerning character education. In this work, Narvaez (2005) contextualizes her proposed framework by placing it in between two previous character education approaches that serve a dichotomous relationship: rational moral education popularized by Lawrence Kohlberg and traditional character education. Narvaez (2005) offers Berkowitz's moral anatomy, (which will one day become the PRIMED model) and the Character Development Project as two examples of integrated character education approaches that use pieces of both of these philosophies.

Ultimately, aligning with this thesis, Narvaez (2005) arrives on ethics education as an integrative approach to moral development that can most effectively support students. This ethics education is centered around three foundational ideas: ethical expertise, transformation and interaction, and self-actualization. Centered around theory and knowledge, this framework aims to equip students with various forms of ethical knowledge that they can then use to apply to their own lives and experiences. This model was implemented at several schools in Minnesota in 2004 as a part of the The Community Voices and Character Education Project. Results from the study not only suggested positive impacts on students' individual outcomes, but also on school culture measurements as highlighted in the article (Narvaez, 2005). Although different from Franklin Ethics, Narvaez's work with ethics education offers empirical insight into the possibilities of a uniquely defined ethics education that this thesis explores.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This thesis is an autoethnographic case study that utilizes qualitative research to analyze ethics education as a unique iteration of moral development. This study was primarily focused on Franklin High School, a private school in Northeastern United States with approximately 640 students enrolled. The study was concerned with the following research questions:

What is ethics education and what are its potential impacts on individual students and school culture at the Franklin School? How does a school that has implemented ethics education see themselves differing from character education?

Data Collection and Analysis

This study utilized three data sets including my own class notes (referred to in the study as student artifacts), two interviews with Franklin teachers (referenced by psedonyms Dr. Miller and Dr. Evans) who had taught me in high school, and the school's website. My student artifacts included 37 pages of class notes from Ethics 3, a mandatory ethics class taken by all Franklin 9th graders, and Community Service Learning, a 10th grade elective that students must opt into (students who do not opt-in take Ethics 4). Specifically, I conducted a thematic analysis of student artifacts, in-class and at-home assignments given by my teachers, and my responses to those assignments. These notes were compiled on one google doc before being coded. A convenience sampling strategy was used to interview 2 Franklin Ethics teachers, one of whom is the Chair of the Ethics department for the upper school. These teachers, referred to as Dr. Miller and Dr. Evans, have been working at Franklin for an average of 18 years. Each of the two semi-structured interviews had teachers engage with the three domains of Franklin Ethics

developed by this study, reflect on ethics education, how it is unique, how it impacts the school community, and how it can be adapted to other school environments. Interview questions can be found in Appendix A. Both interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes and occurred virtually over zoom. Interviews were recorded and the transcripts were used as data. Finally, the Ethics academic page and school mission page of the Franklin school website was also used as data, where relevant quotes were extrapolated, in a triangulation process with the data being analyzed.

This study used a thematic data analysis to triangulate the three data sets and offer a holistic understanding of Franklin Ethics. Utilizing free code for each data set that identified key themes and patterns in the data, this study includes 4 findings sections:

1. Defining Ethics Education at Franklin (3 Domains)

2. Perceived Impact of Ethics Education at Franklin

3. Ethics Education at Work: Students of Color Matter

4. Comparing Ethics Education to Character Education

4.2. Study Context

Franklin High School is an elite private school in northeastern United States. The school is part of a larger K-12 school that has 2 separate campuses. The middle and high school campus is a total of 18 acres in a particularly wealthy neighborhood. The campus has several buildings including a stand alone library, arts building, and recreational center as well as buildings devoted to many of the academic departments. Equipped with a highly educated faculty, a 100+ million dollar endowment, and immense sociocultural capital, Franklin has the power and resources to ensure success for each of their students. Despite offering over 17.5 million dollars of financial aid, this ensured success is limited to the few families who can afford the $63,000 tuition. These

astronomically high financial barriers maintain Franklin's status as a primarily white institution

that is made up of 39% students of color and 54% faculty of color.

Contrary to what makes Franklin elite and exclusive is a history of serving the working

man. The school was founded by a humanist activist in 1878 as a workingman school. The

founder hoped to start a school that "emphasized moral education, psychological development,

and integration of the creative and manual arts with academics" (School Website). The school

quickly developed into the home of ethical learning and in 1895 the Ethical Culture Society took

over and officially renamed the school. A secondary school (now Franklin High School) was

added in 1899 with its campus opening in 1928. The school was associated with the Ethical

Culture Society, a community founded in 1876 devoted to "ethical relationships, social justice,

and democracy." (The New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2024).

The founder's connections to John Dewey and other early advocates for character

development motivated him to start the Ethical Culture Society in 1876 that offered similar

community, guidance, and moral development to other religious institutions but that was not

officially connected to any religious text or supernatural power (Kurtz, 1991). Instead, the

Ethical Culture society, which established schools all over the world, promoted social justice,

action, and reason as key tenets that could unite the community. Many scholars, including the

author of "The Devil and Secular Humanism: The Children of the Enlightenment," Howard

Radest, are much more pessimistic about the ethical culture movement and see it as an offshoot

of Judaism and an attempt to create a new religion based in humanist values. Further literature

highlights both the Jewish and Protestant influences on Franklin's founder and the ways in which

the Ethical Culture society aimed to promote religious values that are disconnected from any

formal religion or religious practice (Stallones, 2015). In 1995, the school disconnected from the

Ethical Culture Society and became a private entity governed by a private board of trustees. This structural shift had significant impacts on the school's student population as well as its connections to its early ideological underpinnings of humanism and religious education.

Despite this shift, remaining central to the school is its grounding in ethics education. The school's website asserts, "The core of our educational program is the study and practice of ethics, which prepares and compels us to take care of our world, ourselves, and each other." Ethics at Franklin is a core academic subject. Each student must take at least 3 years (6 semesters) of Ethics courses including mandatory Ethics 1 in 9th grade and a choice of either Ethics 2 or community-service learning in 10th grade. In addition to standard Ethics classes that teach core ethics and social justice concepts and community-service classes, upper level Ethics includes a "range of electives in philosophy, social justice education, psychology, comparative religion, and social and political issues." Electives speak to real world issues such as ethical issues in sports, mass incarceration, and education inequity. Finally, the last level of Franklin Ethics is Student to Student (STS). STS offers a small number of grade 11 and 12 students to lead biweekly ethics classes to Franklin middle school students. STS is the hallmark of Franklin Ethics and exemplifies ethics education's impact on school connectedness as leaders of the high school transfer their ethics and social justice knowledge to the next generation of thinkers and change makers.

This prioritization of ethics education takes several forms. School programs such as Franklin's clubs and assemblies exemplify a social justice oriented school. Franklin offers 80+ clubs that appeal to students' interests and identities. Many of the clubs speak to the social identities of the students such as the Women's Empowerment Club, Queer Fashion Club, African Students Association, and MERGE, an affinity space for men to discuss and engage with

discussions around toxic masculinity and male allyship. These student spaces use ideals, concepts, and goals that overlap with topics covered in Ethics classes. Although these clubs are student led, they're meant to be collaborative with faculty so that both stakeholders can work together to discuss and address issues that are relevant in their community. Assemblies occur weekly, and similarly overlap with ethics class content. If for nothing else, assemblies are meant to be a pause from typical academic life, making students ask themselves, *why does all of this matter?*

4.3. Limitations and Positionality

The most significant limitation of this study was the small sample size at both the student and teacher level. Although my notes from grade 9 and 10 Ethics were extensive, they did not include the entire curriculum and array of topics with which we engaged. I was unable to get access to the complete Franklin Ethics curriculum as it is currently under review by the state's independent school association. As a result, it is difficult for these notes to fully depict the Franklin Ethics curriculum. Notes also represent one student's experience engaging with Franklin Ethics and do not account for the countless confounding variables that may have made my experience at Franklin unique. My positionality as someone who was already excited to reflect on my own experiences and learn more about social justice issues made my relationship with the material different from many other students. My status as a White cisgender male also deeply impacted my experience engaging with Franklin Ethics and acknowledge the ways in which Franklin may fall short with its goals to effectively support marginalized students in the community. With regards to the small teacher sample size, interviews empowered the voices of two teachers who had been at Franklin for many years and who believed deeply in the impact it

had on the schools. However, this may not be representative of other teachers, many of them

newer and holding different perspectives on the relationship between Franklin Ethics and the

school community. In order to address these limitations, this thesis aims to put Franklin Ethics in

conversation with character education programs in the literature and highlight ways in which

strategies employed by Franklin Ethics have empirical significance.

5. Findings and Analysis

The Findings and Analysis chapter is framed by philosopher William Sewell and his work "Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." In this article, Sewell (1992) contends that social systems consist of generalizable schemas and tangible resources. Schemas, which Sewell (1992) defines as the guiding principles and norms of a society, and resources, encompassing both human and nonhuman elements, interdependently contribute to the maintenance of a specific community. Sewell (1992) posits that schemas lacking empowerment from resources are prone to fade away, while resources devoid of guidance from schemas become ineffectual. Consequently, the influential ideologies provided by schemas and the practical implementation of these ideologies mutually support one another to form overarching societal frameworks. The third integral component within these structures is the presence of agents, or individuals, who inhabit them. Sewell (1992) asserts that these agents possess the capacity to facilitate the functioning of both schemas and resources. Hence, agents play a pivotal role in ensuring the sustained symbiotic relationship between schemas and resources.

This thesis employs Sewell's theory of schemas, resources, and agents to frame the execution of Franklin Ethics and address research questions 1 and 2 shown below:

1. What is ethics education and what are its potential impacts on individual students and school culture at Franklin?
2. How does a school that has implemented ethics education see themselves differing from character education?

Sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 of this chapter address the first research question while section 4.4 focuses on the second research question. In the first section, I triangulated data from teacher interviews, my student artifacts, and the school website to highlight three domains of Franklin Ethics: the conceptual, the personal, and the practice. These domains are theoretically conceptualized as schemas that guide the mobilization of resources, ethics curriculum and

pedagogy, for agents at the school. The second section outlines the manner in which Ethics

teachers perceive the influence of Franklin Ethics on both individual students and the school as a

whole. These teacher perceptions offer examples of when schemas and resources mutually

reinforce each other to effectively uphold the Franklin community. The third section details the

Students of Color Matter (SOCM) movement motivated by a racist incident in which Franklin

students displayed behavior antithetical to the goals of ethics education. In response, students of

color in the community protested the school's policies that permitted this behavior and impeded

the school from providing an ethical, supportive, and welcoming environment. In this scenario,

Franklin Ethics was falling short of its goals, motivating students at Franklin to expose aspects of

Franklin Ethics's implementation that failed to uphold its guiding schemas. Finally, this chapter

places ethics education in conversation with character education in order to highlight overlapping

qualities as well as distinct differences of these forms of moral development.

5.1. Defining Franklin Ethics Education

An analysis of student, teacher, and institutional data sources led to the identification of

three interdependent domains (the conceptual, the personal, and the practice) that frame the

execution of ethics education at Franklin. Each domain includes both curricular and pedagogical

components that work in tandem with each other to deliver an ethics education to students.

Importantly, a close study of these domains point to their highly intersectional and congruent

nature; one is never being taught alone but rather all are used simultaneously to complement one

another and boost students' understanding of ethics material. In many ways these shared qualities

are necessary to make ethics education successful.

5.1.1. Conceptual

The first domain of Franklin Ethics is the conceptual. Ethics is a core academic subject that is required by all students at Franklin. In this way, students are expected to seriously engage with the content, building and refining a particular set of academic skills. The curricular component of the conceptual domain is designed to provide students with the tools to frame, decipher, and effectively address real world problems. By providing theoretical frameworks, scholarly work, and important social justice concepts, Franklin students are prepared to better understand their own identities and the opportunities they have to engage with social justice work. This objective was most evident in reviewing course assignments. A representative essay assignment on free will from my 9th grade Ethics class, for example, asked me to consider the philosophical notion of free will and how it connected to social justice concepts and to my identity. What follows is an excerpt taken from my essay.

> Free will is reality. In terms of identity, free will is a gem that everyone must hold with care. Expressing your true identity, whatever it might be, with pride and passion, is what brings success and prosperity to the world. By expressing identity, it also means fighting for your own identity, and the identity of the people around you. That is what people look past. In order to bring strength to every target group such as African Americans, transgender people, queer people, and so many more minorities, everyone has to come together and be united. (March, 2017)

This quote highlights how Franklin students were being taught an important intersection between free will, a concept embedded in traditional ethical thought, and social identity and activism. I discussed the ways in which fighting for what you believe in is an element of free will but also that the purpose of activism is to fight for the free will of those individuals who have marginalized identities. In this way, my work used a philosophical concept to frame the role of social justice and individual identity within the context of modern society.

In addition to carefully crafted assignments, Franklin Ethics also prepared students to effectively address real world issues by exposing them to philosophers and thinkers from multiple eras in order to offer a breadth of perspective. In order to assign value to each philosopher in the curriculum, teachers believed they needed to be flexible in how they employ philosophy. For example, Dr. Evans noted, "We have stretched [Ethics] to include issues of social identity and social justice. Most of the early philosophers weren't concerned with social identity and social justice." In this way, Franklin Ethics adapts traditional thinking to meet the ultimate goals of the curriculum.

Additional assignments provide reinforcing evidence of the tools utilized to train students in the conceptual dimension of Franklin Ethics. In a second example, my student artifacts display my engagement with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital and how it then relates to a student's identity and privilege. This points to how the Ethics curriculum facilitated my development of understanding about how capital impacts an individual's access to opportunities and resources. In another incident, my student artifacts show the use of early 20th century poet and theologian Martin Niemoller, author of "First they Came" in 1946, to highlight the importance of standing in solidarity with oppressed people. I used this poem in my essay on free will to emphasize the importance of unity and activism in modern society. Once again, the Ethics curriculum allowed me to engage with traditional scholars to frame contemporary issues and urge social change. Finally, in the same class, my classmates and I read Audre Lorde's 1983 "There is No Hierarchy of Oppression" essay in which the author brought up important concepts related to intersectionality, community, and solidarity. As a follow up to reading Lorde's piece, we were asked to deeply reflect on personal questions: "Who are you, what do you have to say, who do you have to say it to, and why do you have to say it?" Hence, we were given the opportunity to

read a conceptual essay, analyze it, and then relate it back to our own identities to better

understand how we see ourselves and how we are seen. This engagement is also a prime example

of the ways domains overlap as the personal and conceptual domains were employed

simultaneously.

In addition to analyzing older philosophy through a more modern social justice lens,

Franklin Ethics students were also expected to analyze more contemporary social justice thinkers

as moral philosophers. Dr. Evans stated:

> There are modern day philosophers that might not call themselves
> philosophers, but who we can unpack in the same way, the moral
> theories and questions and positions that they're holding, and
> figure out how we might adopt some of those to help shape our
> particular compass.

Highlighted in this commentary is an emphasis on not only learning from leading social justice

scholars, but unpacking and analyzing their thinking in an effort to formulate our own beliefs and

values. For example, in 9th grade Ethics I was exposed to bell hooks and Ta Nehisi Coates. After

reading articles written by each thinker, I was asked:

> How does Coates connect Financial, Human, Social, and Cultural
> capital to make his claim? Do you agree with Coates' claim, and
> how does Coates relate to, build upon, and/or contradict hooks'
> argument? How do their arguments relate to the previously
> discussed concepts/terms discussed this semester?

Evident in these questions are three pedagogical tools: 1) placing these thinkers in conversation

with each other, 2) placing these thinkers in conversation with Bourdieu, and 3) asking us as

students to formulate our own perspective in relation to all three thinkers. In this way, the

students were given a blueprint for effective ethical inquiry and social justice work. The class

activity concluded with a chance for us to play a game on spent.com which allowed us to reflect

on our own socioeconomic status and the ways in which it impacted our spending habits and life

experiences. The game had two rounds, one where we inhabited our own SES status and one

where we inhabited another individual's SES status; the purpose was to notice how these differing identities impacted budgets and lifestyles. Finding intersections of these real world ethical dilemmas and the thinking and writing of Coates and hooks allowed the students to frame our own life experiences with concepts from social justice scholars.

Intellectual Grit

In studying the conceptual domain of the curriculum, data reveals an approach to the curriculum that facilitates intellectual grit within students. Intellectual grit, according to teacher interviews, makes Ethics more than a "feeling-based" course meant to prescribe values onto students. As mentioned before, Ethics is a required academic class at Franklin where academic performance mattered. That is, students are assessed not only on character, but also on mastering the material. Dr. Miller noted:

> I think character education is much more based on values, which is different. There's some overlap, but it's different for me from morality. Values for me are more feeling based. They lack some of the intellectual, they're a little bit more instinctual.

In this quote, Dr. Miller highlighted the intellectual grit of Franklin Ethics. They also later clarified what they meant by the phrases "values-based, feelings based, and instinctual" saying that they were referring to "empathy and individual self-responsibility." They suggested that although Franklin Ethics does try and encourage these traits, the academic discipline is much more than that. In fact, on Franklin's website they state that Ethics is a "core academic subject" that allows students to "interrogate their learning process, thereby developing intellectual agility."

In data collected from my student artifacts, this intellectual agility appeared often, especially evident by the Ethics focus on vocabulary development. Key vocabulary terms and

ideas were regularly introduced throughout the semester. Some concepts related more directly to traditional ethics. For example, I engaged with concepts such as free will, problem solving, perspective-taking, and logical thinking. I also engaged with many terms and concepts that related more to social justice theory. I engaged with the matrix of oppression that identified privileged groups, border social groups, targeted social groups, and 'Isms for several identifiers. Building off of this foundational idea, later in the semester, I learned the oppression grid that looks at both intentional and unintentional forms of individual, institutional, and societal/cultural oppression. Students also were asked to discuss the ways in which privilege is created or destroyed through these forms of oppression. In this same discussion, we also looked at the three directions of oppression: vertical, horizontal, and internalized oppression. We later learned about power, both the definition as well as its different forms such as power over, power with, and power within. We learned about these three forms through both personal and social examples. We learned about social constructs, social construction, and the important qualities of these terms that make them relevant in society. Within this dialogue, we were asked to engage with the work of scholar Susan Wendell and think deeper about the differences between cultural and social construction with regards to ability. Moreover, in my 10th grade Ethics course, concepts such as diversity, community, social justice, and civic engagement were also taught when relevant to the community service in which my class was engaging. In community service classes related to teaching, effective teaching strategies were also introduced.

Later in the semester we learned about the Cycle of Liberation and Cycle of Socialization (Appendix B) that serve as diagrams to frame connections between self-identity and systemic oppression. Important in these diagrams is the intellectual framing of important emotions, identities, and social justice issues. Providing these conceptual diagrams highlights a key

component of Franklin Ethics which aims to not only teach students about themselves and their world, but also to give students the intellectual tools to be able to critically analyze it. Although certain character education programs have overlapping conceptual frameworks, requiring students to interact with and interrogate these equity-oriented concepts is what distinguishes Franklin Ethics.

Critical Inquiry

A strategy to both drive and complement the intellectual grit approach within the conceptual domain of Franklin Ethics is the development of critical inquiry. Dr. Evans first highlighted this saying, "Critical inquiry is an extension of how we do ethics. I see ethics playing out in an activation of critical inquiry that I feel like is really the best of Franklin students." They expanded on this notion of critical inquiry by explaining what is analyzed in Franklin Ethics classes and the impact it has on students' learning and growth. Dr. Evans stated:

> In those early foundational classes, Ethics three and four (in grades 9 and 10), they introduce concepts of morality, values, ethics with a small E, and then the study of ethics, which is big E, with an attention to the intersection between moral philosophy, social justice, and identity… So how do we explore and understand concepts and moral philosophy and how does that move us towards developing a compass, which helps us decide what to do when we encounter competing ethical values. What do I do when I have a conflict in place and I don't understand which ethical value to prioritize?

Evident in this quote is first, the connection between moral philosophy, social justice, and identity. This intersection offers the crux of Franklin Ethics and alludes to all three domains offered in this thesis. Moreover, as this teacher pointed out, the utilization of critical inquiry of scholars and concepts is necessary for these connections to be made and allows students to fully engage with the material in a personalized manner.

In my student artifacts, during the aforementioned Audre Lorde lesson on "No Hierarchy of Oppression," we were asked to respond to the following questions: "Do you agree with Audre Lorde's thesis? Is there no hierarchy of oppression? Why or why not?" The question highlighted an emphasis on allowing us to critically engage with scholarly work rather than passively receiving it, an important vessel for developing one's own ethical inquiry. Moreover, the comparisons between Ta Nehisi Coates and bell hooks also exemplified critical inquiry as we were asked to judge and analyze these scholarly ideas. Critical inquiry also appears throughout the personal and practice domains as students continue to dissect themselves and their surroundings. This is also a piece that is highlighted in the SOCM protest which will be expanded on later. As a result of this critical inquiry, students were active in our learning process allowing the curriculum to not prescribe beliefs and values but rather allow us to define and refine our own perspectives.

5.1.2. Personal

Critically emerging from this entire ethical exploration is a second domain of the Franklin Ethics curriculum - the personal. Moreover, findings indicate that this personal domain exists as both content (that centers individual identity and individual experiences) and pedagogy (teaching practices that are flexible, require reflection and personalize the learning for students).

Identity

Thematic review of my student artifacts provides examples of how the personal domain of Franklin Ethics manifested. Students were asked to reflect on our own identities, how these identities impact our role in our community, and how these identities impact our role in

addressing social issues. Additionally, according to the school website, Franklin Ethics emphasizes this self reflective process by building "critical inquiry and self-examination at each stage of development so that a student's social, emotional, and academic growth occurs hand in hand with moral growth." During one of my first classes, we were asked the following questions: "Who are you, what do you have to say, who do you have to say it to, and why do you have to say it?" We also learned about our identifiers (ability, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender, sexuality, and religion) through lenses of power, privilege, and intersectionality. For example, I was asked to reflect on questions such as "What is the first memory you have of someone you thought was richer than you and what is the first memory you have of someone being poorer than you?" Building off of such foundational reflections, I was asked later in the semester the following questions:

1. What positive things (knowledge, skills, community support, networks) did you gain from your class of origin? What was good about your class experience growing up?
2. What was challenging about your class experience? What was limiting about it?
3. What do you want others to say, do, or think about your group?
4. How did race, ethnicity and/or immigration status impact your experience for class?

Through this inquiry, we came to answers about how identity impacts our voice and what we have to say, appearance and how others perceive us, as well as how we speak and interact with others who may share and/or differ on certain identities. In this way, we were coming to better understand how identity impacts experience.

To complement identity and a constant reflection of who we are as people, as students we also had the opportunity to reflect on our own lives and the education we received. In Franklin's community service learning courses, this reflection asked students to think through key moments in order to answer questions such as how have we changed, what have we learned, how has the

target community been impacted? As I wrote in my final grade 10 Ethics reflection, "Throughout this semester, I have both learned a lot about myself, and how my actions can affect other people" (Spring 2018). Moreover, this expectation for students to reflect on our learning is also evident on the Franklin website, indicating that students can develop "intellectual agility and agency as reflective and engaged members of our communities."

Flexibility and Reflection

Flexibility within the content is a significant component of Franklin Ethics, emerging as a critical pedagogical approach within the personal domain. Data suggests that Franklin Ethics is centered around open-ended questions and intellectual inquiry that allows students to come to their own conclusions about their values and perspectives. Dr. Miller stated:

> I feel like our [education] is more you figuring it out for yourself. We're not going to tell you that there's a right way and we can have robust discussions with multiple perspectives as long as we understand that everybody's identity is protected and respected.

With a baseline of respect for one's identity and experiences, Franklin Ethics leans into difficult conversations that may have multiple perspectives and right answers. In many ways, this emphasizes empowering student voices. In my 9th grade course, we were asked questions such as "What do you have to say, who do you have to say it to, why do you have to say it?" These questions, in addition to being broad and open-ended, encouraged us to articulate our own voice and the message we wanted to send those with whom we interact.

Moreover, while being encouraged to answer these important questions, Dr. Evans highlighted student independence, stating, "Students are really, really good at unpacking and asking questions and reflecting." This argument places question-asking and self-reflection in close proximity, suggesting an interdependence between a flexible pedagogy and a curriculum

centered around personal identity. Identity and flexibility coexist in this way to not only motivate

students to reflect on their lives, but to actively adapt the curriculum in ways that empower this

reflection. Hence, alongside flexibility, reflection is a key pedagogical approach in Franklin

Ethics as it takes the intellectual interrogation of scholarly work and places it on one's own

identity, allowing students to make connections between their lives and broader society. In a

class exercise from the same 9th grade Franklin Ethics class, we were asked:

> What positive things (knowledge, skills, community support,
> networks) did you gain from your class of origin, what was good
> about your class experience growing up, what was challenging
> about your class experience? What was limiting about it, What do
> you want others to say, do, or think about your group, and how did
> race, ethnicity and/or immigration status impact your experience
> for class?

All of these questions allowed us to unpack beliefs and values we may have held to

expose how and where we got them. These questions were deeply personal and asked us to

reflect on our own lives and experiences. Understanding the impact identity, experiences, and

personal background have on a person's beliefs is hugely important for being able to reflect upon

and act on important social justice issues. Dr. Evans stated:

> And the whole time we're shaping our particular compass, it's
> again, not teaching students what to think, but how to think. What
> are the tools that you need? I might have an instinct. Where did
> that instinct come from? Is it part of our very being as humans? Is
> it learned from my family? Is it a particular experience I went
> through? Is it something that somebody I care about taught me?

The moral compass referenced at the beginning of this quote is an important component of any

character education program. What Dr. Evans clarified is that developing a moral compass is not

learning an objective right and wrong but rather unpacking preexisting beliefs to refine them into

more articulate and well-reasoned ones. In this way, the personal domain of an ethics education

can empower the experiences and identities of students in ways that validate their lives.

5.1.1. Practice

This study identifies the practice component as a critical third leg of Franklin Ethics that

asks students to take all that they have learned from the conceptual and the personal and apply it

to the real world. Dr. Evans explained:

> I might actually call it practice because I think it is where we see
> ethics in action, right? Or applied ethics would be the more
> academic term. How you understand the conceptual through your
> personal lenses and what you do about it. So that's why for me, the
> service learning component, which we've always called the action
> arm of the ethics department, would reside firmly [in practice].

Identified in this quote is a clear acknowledgement of the three domains and the ways in which

they coexist. "How you understand the conceptual through your personal lenses and what you do

about it" identifies the three legs of ethics education in a way that poses the personal and the

practice as vehicles to effectively learn the conceptual. This may further justify ethics

education's intellectual grit as Dr. Evans firmly centered the conceptual in this curriculum.

Within the practice domain exists two versions of implementation, one that occurs in the

classroom (intellectual practice), and the other that relies on connections with the community

(action-oriented practice). Both are central to Franklin Ethics by offering students different ways

of applying ethics curriculum to real world community and societal dilemmas.

Intellectual Practice

Within the practice domain of the Franklin Ethics curriculum, students are asked to apply

terms and concepts to frame current social justice issues. This form of practice requires an

intellectualized application of the material that intersects the personal and the conceptual

domains. With a foundation of ethical and social justice theory, students can rigorously

investigate the world around them so that they can ultimately decide whether they want to live in

it and what they would have to change to be content living in it. This practice component of the curriculum leaves the world of theory and begins to ground Ethics in real world applications.

As one of the final projects for 9th grade ethics, I engaged with two social justice issues: The Flint water crisis and the Dakota access pipeline debate. In both scenarios, we were asked to complete two tasks. First, we compared each issue to the issue of mass incarceration and police brutality, two forms of oppression that we had discussed earlier in the year. Then, we used a "social justice toolkit" to frame each problem using the conceptual terms that we had learned throughout the year. These terms included the cycle of socialization and cycle of liberation, privilege, systemic racism, social identity, and forms of oppression. Discussing problems such as the Flint Water Crisis and the Dakota Pipeline as well as larger systems such as police brutality, mass incarceration, and immigration rights allowed us to learn about oppression along the lines of multiple intersecting identities. Employing the conceptual in these applications added depth to the interrogation that allowed us to place these social justice issues into broader networks of oppression and marginalization. Exposing a system of oppression that connected each of these seemingly disparate social justice issues provided a more accurate depiction of the world in which students can begin to place themselves.

Action-Oriented Practice

The second version of practice implementation occurs through a pedagogical approach that utilizes community service learning. This practice is more action-orientated as students not only learn about the social problems in neighboring communities, but they are given the opportunity to do something about it. Dr. Evans highlighted the importance of community service learning stating:

> The service learning component is a key factor that I think probably crosses all three areas that you've talked about, but resides probably most firmly in [practice]. Probably a third of the courses that we offer in the Ethics department are in service learning.

In community service learning classes, students learn about specific problems facing the communities in which they will be working. In my student artifacts from a 10th grade community service learning class, we engaged with a local community center nearby Franklin that offers pre-school education to 3- and 4-year-olds. An analysis of the process pointed to the importance of being taught the 8 Steps of Civic Engagement. These steps provided tools to help conceptually frame the community service learning project; we learned to outline our goals and understand the community before conducting the work itself. Moreover, the steps also emphasized reflection and a distinct evaluation period after work had been completed.

Specifically, in preparation for this work, we researched the relevant developmental and psychological stages of 3- and 4-year-olds in an effort to frame future activities that we would plan and execute. We also conducted research on issues such as poverty, homelessness, health care, immigration, the school to prison pipeline, as well as more acute issues of bullying, disabilities, foster care, and child abuse. While learning about these systems of oppression, we investigated how the work we planned to do with the community center intersected with larger structural issues, and we considered what the presence of Franklin students may mean for addressing community problems. This work depended on a deep sense of self-understanding and self-reflection in order to recognize the space we would occupy in our community, reinforcing not only the practice domain of Franklin Ethics, but also the overlapping nature of the conceptual, personal and practice curriculum domains.

5.2. Perceived Impact of Franklin Ethics Education

In addition to conducting an analysis of the structural framework of Franklin Ethics, I also analyzed its impact on the school environment. In this section, data highlights reasons for why schemas and resources are effectively aligning to support Franklin's mission. Measuring the influence of moral education in an affluent and prestigious private school, characterized by low discipline rates and high academic achievements, presents a challenge. However, insights gleaned from teacher interviews point to various factors that can shed light on its effects. Teacher interviews highlight measurements related to student outcomes as well as the broader impacts Franklin Ethics may have on the school's culture. This section is oriented to highlight the close relationship individual student outcomes can have on a school community and therefore fill a gap in the literature that struggles to formulate these connections.

Impact of Conceptual Domain

Critical inquiry was identified earlier as a core component of the conceptual domain that allows students to analyze themselves and the society in which they live. This critical inquiry equips students with the skills needed to navigate complex conversations pertaining to social justice issues which teacher interviews noted as having an impact on student-teacher relationships at Franklin. Teacher interviews first indicate that the emphasis on critical inquiry within the conceptual domain is paying dividends as students are exemplifying a deep questioning of themselves and their community. Dr. Evans said:

> I think looking to how students interact with each other in other classes where there are heated discussions, a variety of issues. So I feel like I see ethics education coming in because students unpack literature in different ways or turnover history in different ways. The critical inquiry piece I feel like informs how we understand ourselves in other academic fields.

Highlighted here is an example of how ethics education can impact how students interact with each other, a key factor in building strong school culture. This impact can pervade different disciplines throughout school as Dr. Evans suggested that the success of Franklin Ethics appears in History and English classes where students analyze written and oral work.

Adding value to this individual student skill that Franklin Ethics develops, Dr. Miller noted that students are better equipped to engage and lead complex discussions. They stated:

> We would expect people not to be racist, transphobic, homophobic, sexist, but we also live in the real world where those things are rampant and increasing in some ways. And as things are, you know, stressful, it makes people retreat in some way. I'd like to think that our students are not the ones who are going to just retreat.

Present here is the exposure of possible long-term impacts of Franklin Ethics. Dr. Miller suggested that discussion around systemic oppression is an unavoidable part of life that Franklin students are aware of from an early age. The stress that may come from these discussions may be mitigated by Franklin Ethics' ability to equip students with the necessary skills to tackle the world's most complex problems. Dr. Evans expanded on this argument saying, "Students leave Franklin and get to college and they're like, aha, I get it. I'm having conversations differently than my peers. So they see themselves as leaders in that way." By obtaining these skills early on, Franklin students can then become leaders in their communities, both during and following their time at Franklin.

The critical inquiry of Franklin students and their ability to lean into difficult conversations seems to impact student-teacher relationships at Franklin, a key factor in strong culture as noted in the literature review. Interestingly, teacher interviews point out the ways in which students not only push themselves, but also their teachers, to more effectively implement Franklin Ethics. Dr. Evans noted, "I think one of the hallmarks of Franklin is strong student

teacher relationships. I think that's what makes Franklin, Franklin." They continued by discussing what makes these relationships strong:

> The former middle school faculty and current upper school faculty have been preparing our students so well that the students continue to educate the rest of the adults. So I think many faculty learn from our students. And so that's definitely a place that I think it's a community educational space…I think that [students] do a really good job and that they continue to push the faculty.

The type of impact Dr. Evans identified that students have on teachers is telling of what makes Franklin Ethics unique. Students are taught and empowered to not only learn for themselves, but to transfer this knowledge to other people in their community, including teachers. Employing Sewell's framework, we can see Franklin students acting as agents who are critical to ensuring that the mobilization of resources adequately supports the schemas or ideological underpinnings of Franklin Ethics, as defined through conceptual, personal and practice domains. This feedback loop that relies on critical inquiry and that fuels students' ability to lean into difficult conversations culminates in strong student-teacher relationships that empower students, as well as teachers, to be key collaborators in the ongoing pursuit of social justice and ethics education.

Impact of Personal Domain

Self-empowerment, is a key component related to many of the domains but that is most clearly facilitated by the personal. Students are given the opportunity to reflect on their lives in a way that centers the curriculum around their personal identity. This empowerment is not only relevant in the classroom, but in the school as students at Franklin take on an array of leadership positions. Dr. Evans stated:

> Student leadership is really abundant. I feel like we can point back to ethics around that, what it means to be able to basically testify for who you are, stand for who you are, stand with others, and to build movements and to initiate change. I feel like that's really

> powerful. The whole SOCM [Students of Color Matter] movement for me is applied ethics. We have identified a problem. We're unpacking it.

Dr. Evans highlighted that Franklin students are able to understand their own identity and values so that they can better act upon the problems they see in their communities. This is an important skill that sprouts from Franklin Ethics and facilitates connections between identity and social justice. Dr. Evans also noted an important case study and moment of student leadership that exemplifies the success of the Ethics model. The Students of Color Matter (SOCM) protest was evidence that the critical inquiry fostered in class is not confined by the walls of the classroom but rather permeates all aspects of students' minds. This exemplary form of leadership required students to organize and orchestrate true social change in their community.

The assembly program at Franklin is another way in which students take on leadership positions and is a big reason for why Ethics can so seamlessly be intertwined with other school activities. Every week, students are required to attend hour-long assemblies that offer a chance to learn from outside speakers and student clubs about current social justice issues. These student-led events can cover a range of topics but are often related to issues relevant to the community, the country, and the world. In many ways, assemblies are encompassed by the practice domain of Ethics as they embody applied Ethics practices. Dr. Miller referenced Franklin assemblies, stating:

> Definitely the assembly program. There's some good overlap between progressive education and ethics education. So, some would say the fact that our assemblies are student-led and the clubs are student-led means that Franklin is a place where young people find their voice. Some people would put that in the progressive bucket and not the ethics bucket but because there is an ethics bucket, the kids do get up at assemblies and they know that they need to speak to the audience.

Dr. Miller acknowledged that it is difficult to definitively know whether or not aspects of Franklin are directly tied to Ethics, but argues that it undoubtedly plays a role. Moreover, Dr. Miller noted that even assemblies, a part of Franklin that is not necessarily dependent on Ethics, are bolstered by what students gain from Ethics classes. This interview referenced student voice and student-empowerment as a bridging mechanism between Franklin Ethics and school-wide events such as assemblies. Thus, empowering student voices, through the personal domain of ethics education, motivates students to organize and lead assemblies that serve as educational spaces for the school community. From my time at Franklin, these assemblies served as a staple in our weekly schedule, one which I always enjoyed. Despite many students not taking this assembly time seriously, it continued to be a moment in which the entire school community came together to learn and to appreciate the hard work of a handful of students and teachers.

Impact of Practice Domain

In addition to aspects of the conceptual and personal domains that deeply impact the culture of the school, teachers also allude to potential impacts of the practice domain through the program Student-to-Student (STS). STS, a program I participated in during my senior year of high school, selects a handful of 11th and 12th graders to be trained as teachers for Franklin middle school Ethics classes. STS leaders are tasked with designing and executing Ethics curriculum to either 6th, 7th, or 8th graders in a way that passes down ethics education knowledge to the next generation of learners. The 7th grade curriculum I taught was centered around social identity, equipping students with the skills and knowledge to interrogate their own personal identities and the ways in which they impact their role in the community. STS embodies

Ethics both through its curriculum and overall design. Dr. Miller referenced STS as an example

of how Ethics can help develop a trusting community, saying:

> That's something I think about ethics education, it creates a trusting community space. There's not a lot of places where they let teenagers teach younger teenagers. Obviously, we have safeguards in place and we pick the right people and train them well and there's monitoring. But I think it's also one of the signature programs of our ethics and it's been going for years.

STS is clearly situated in the practice domain of Franklin Ethics; STS is applied Ethics in the

way it allows high school students to implement what they learned in their classes to the

education of the next generation of learners. Yet, as these domains often overlap and become

integrated, STS also embodies the personal domain. The program is deeply personal in the way it

requires high school students to reflect on their own identities and experiences in order to be

effective teachers. Furthermore, facilitating ethics education in this way develops a strong

network of mentorship between the middle school and high school that allows younger students

to build new identities, seeing themselves as ethics educators and leaders. In this way, STS

serves not only as a product of Franklin's culture, but also as a facilitator of a strong school

culture that makes younger people feel like they belong in complex discussions.

5.3. Ethics Education at Work: Students of Color Matter

The Students of Color Matter (SOCM) protest represents a moment of tension and

contradiction within the Franklin school as it highlights negative consequences of a primarily

white private institution that is inherently supported by a white supremacist society. It is also a

vignette that serves as an opportunity to demonstrate how the previously identified data,

including the three domains of Franklin Ethics as well as the perceived impact of the Ethics

program, was actualized in the school community. The SOCM protest occurred in 2019 and I

was an active participant; it was fueled by an incident in which several White males, all of whom had engaged with the Ethics curriculum, were recorded using racial slurs pointed towards Black students in the school. This clear display of racism, and an inadequate response by the school to fully and transparently address the issue, motivated students of color and their White allies to take action. Moreover, many of the school policies that students questioned, or even the fact that students felt this questioning to be necessary at all, exposed critical shortcomings in Franklin's ability to create an equitable space for all students, despite their comprehensive Ethics approach..

In addition to my personal account, teacher interviews and artifacts taken from the protest that outline the movement's sixteen demands help frame SOCM as a moment that represents certain successes of Franklin Ethics as well as some failures. Utilizing Sewell's theoretical framework that poses schemas and the mobilization of resources in relation to each other offers an explanation to the role of the school protest in the Franklin community. As a small group of students of color as well as a group of White allies protested school policies that actively contradicted the school's mission and ethos, we served as agents rectifying the connection between schemas and resources. SOCM also exposes a flaw within Franklin Ethics and highlights the ways in which the ethics program could be doing more to ensure the necessary support and development of all students. This section concludes by building off of SOCM, including teacher reflections that address the reality of Franklin's limitations. Ultimately, this section offers a glimpse into a contradictory moment Franklin Ethics experienced, even as the school pursued effective student development and empowerment.

Dr. Evans referenced SOCM as "applied ethics" where students "have identified a problem" and are now "unpacking it." More specifically, the organization, purpose, and execution of the protest drew from each domain identified in the previous section including the

conceptual critical inquiry, the personal flexibility and self-reflection, and most notably the action-oriented practice. SOCM clearly showed the students' grasp of the Franklin Ethics content in a way that suggested it was working. For instance, the SOCM demands highlight a highly refined critical inquiry that students utilized as they critiqued their own school community. Within the sixteen demands of the protest, students called for reforms to the discipline committee and school board (Demands 1 and 2), the creation of systems that collect attrition data (Demand 5), the tracking of disciplinary incidents and reports of such incidents (Demands 7, 14, 16), and the implementation of racial bias training for all teachers and parents in the school community (Demands 11 and 3). These proposed reforms required an acute awareness of not only blatant racism, but also the underlying structures that were upholding this culture. Below is an example of one of the sixteen demand made by SOCM:

> Demand 7: The school will provide legally acceptable aggregate data on previous disciplinary decisions regarding the use of racial and derogatory slurs including but not limited to, homophobic, sexist, and racist language. It is crucial that there is a public understanding and record of how our school has dealt with such incidents in the past in order to acknowledge how we can better handle them in the future.

The demand for "legally acceptable aggregate data" is not only a product of critical inquiry, as it requires a well-reasoned analysis of particular flaws in the school structures, but it also attempts to institutionalize critical inquiry by establishing a strategy for maintaining accountability through the constant evaluation of school responses to harmful incidents. Moreover, including a demand for the public access and dissemination of this data highlights the students' understanding that progress sprouts from accountability and transparency.

In addition to addressing flaws within Franklin school structures, SOCM leaders also proposed requirements that addressed problems directly related to student experiences. These demands required self-reflection and an intellectual flexibility that allowed students to reimagine

their schooling experiences in the ways that would benefit them most. These demands included changes to what classes students must take, offering a mandatory Black studies class (Demand 10), Indigenous studies class (Demand 9), and classes on other marginalized populations (Demand 8). In addition, demands called for the school to further diversify their faculty and student-body (Demands 4 and 6) as well as the protection of students and teachers for speaking out against school policies (Demand 15). Finally, SOCM called for an immediate stop to all racial profiling on campus (Demand 13). Many of these demands, especially those related to adapting curriculum and diversifying faculty and student-body populations, highlight students' ability to reflect on both the content and the people they had engaged with throughout school.

Finally, the SOCM movement itself represented students actualizing the action-oriented practice component of the Ethics curriculum in their ability to organize, orchestrate, and execute this social movement. Led by eight women of color, the movement hosted workshops, discussion sessions, and lecture series aimed to facilitate reflection and action within the school community. Furthermore, collaboration was required to construct each demand, recruit participants, and facilitate discussions with administration to ensure demands would be met. This also required huge amounts of leadership and awareness for effective action-oriented practice.

Teacher interviews alluded to the limitations of Franklin Ethics that were blatantly exposed during SOCM. Dr. Miller highlighted, "There definitely are some limits to our work. I will say as an Ethics educator, and I've talked to other people in the Ethics department, we feel like we haven't done our jobs." Dr. Evans added:

> I think we could do much more, much more. I feel like the schedule and graduation requirements are moral documents, and they don't necessarily reflect a real centering of ethics education. I think that conceptually it happens but it doesn't have enough traction in our curriculum.

Dr. Evans referenced the crux of Sewell's argument, suggesting that although Franklin centers Ethics as a conceptually driving mission, an inadequate execution of Ethics leads to shortcomings in its impact. Therefore, despite the vision of a comprehensive Ethics curriculum, the mobilization of Franklin's resources does not always support the existing school schemas. Furthermore, one gap Dr. Evans referenced between these two integral components of social change is that which is highlighted by school schedules and graduation requirements. Ethics classes at Franklin are two times per week and only one-semester long (excluding STS) while standard academic disciplines of Math, Science, English, and History meet four times a week for the full-year. This coupled with the fact that students must only take three years of Ethics (unlike standard academic disciplines that require four) may convey a diminished importance and prioritization of Ethics. Dr. Evans even suggested that this differentiation may impact the overall effectiveness of Franklin Ethics, a possible factor in the SOCM incident.

Present in the demands and in interview data is an acknowledgement of Franklin Ethics falling short of its mission to facilitate empathy and cultural understanding, and to push back against the systems that uplift oppression and marginalization. Not only did the students who participated in the incident provide an example of the ethics program's shortcomings, but many students and teachers chose not to participate in the protests, exposing a misalignment among the school's population. From my own experience, many students, families, and teachers perceived the protest as unproductive and a moment when learning was not being prioritized. Others complained that the protest was an attempt to extend Spring Break, a plot to boost students' resumes, or simply an overreaction to minor school problems. Excusing the protest as being performative and unnecessary exposes important limitations of Franklin Ethics, ones that

highlight the devaluing of protest as a productive pedagogical tool and a lack of acknowledgement of meaningful systemic racism present in the school.

Despite facing individual incidents of pushback from the school community, SOCM protesters faced little legitimate resistance from the school administration. The school was quick to meet with leaders of SOCM to discuss demands and to cancel classes to allow workshops and lectures to be held. In fact, at times the protest was even praised for its actualization of ethics. These responses highlight the homogeneity of ideology and liberal perspectives present in the Franklin School that aids the success of the ethics program. This was most apparent during the conclusion of the protest, when the entire school was asked by the administration to line up and applaud the protesters for their drive and courage. The overly homogenous Franklin school community is in large part due to it being a private school where students and their families must buy-in to the school's mission, both economically and psychologically. In schools that lack this ideological unity, particularly in public school contexts, the ethics program must take into account the diversity of perspectives and potential responses to a school protest like SOCM.

SOCM demands highlighted Franklin's limitation as an elite, primarily white institution whose mission is to drive social change. Sewell's theoretical framework can uncover another layer to SOCM that highlights the interdependence between schemas and the mobilization of resources. Although the schemas of Franklin Ethics remain entrenched in the school structures, by organizing a protest, the SOCM student leaders exposed the ways in which school resources were not being mobilized in ways that uplifted these Ethics schemas. In this way, the protest served as a reaffirmation of Franklin values through the call for reform of existing school practices so as to rectify the necessary connection between schemas and resources.

5.4. Comparing Ethics Education with Character Education

As observed, a significant portion of moral development within educational settings and the existing literature revolves around the term character education. Consequently, to integrate ethics education into the established body of literature, the findings of this thesis are juxtaposed with character education to underscore distinct variations in the theoretical frameworks and practical implementations of these two modes of moral development. The historical trajectory of character education, encompassing figures such as Kohlberg and Dewey, along with modern iterations like the PRIMED model and associated programs, is relevant for comparative analysis with Franklin Ethics.

Teachers emphasized three distinctions they observed between Franklin Ethics and character education. They specifically point out several attributes within the conceptual and personal domains as well as discuss the ways in which ethics education may better serve minoritized students in schools. Notably, the teachers did not explicitly mention the community service learning component of Franklin Ethics as being unique to ethics education. Interestingly, this aligns with literature which indicates that character education frequently incorporates this type of community engagement. Ultimately, juxtaposing character education and Franklin Ethics will allow this thesis to contribute a more comprehensive articulation of ethics education that will most effectively support students, as will be discussed in the Conclusions chapter.

Conceptualizing

Within the conceptual domain of Franklin Ethics is intellectual grit. Dr. Evans differentiated between character education and ethics education through their articulation of ethics's intellectual grit. They stated:

> I think character education is much more based on values, which is different. There's some overlap, but it's different for me from morality. Values for me are more feeling based. They lack some of the intellectual, they're a little bit more instinctual. If it ends up looking a little bit like character education because we're talking about issues of empathy and individual self-responsibility and all of that. Great. That's not the intention though.

Dr. Evans characterized character education as rooted in values, emotions, and even instincts, contrasting it with Ethics, which they perceived as more intellectually oriented. They highlighted a certain degree of shared impact between the two educational approaches, suggesting that ethics can indirectly contribute to the development of empathy and self-responsibility, even though these aspects are not central to its focus. Their argument is supported by John Dewey's emphasis on emotions and instincts as being central to character education. Dewey argues that to complement more intellectual courses in other disciplines, character education must develop emotional intelligence among students so that they fully internalize moral and ethical behavior (Zigler, 1998). In more contemporary examples, social-emotional learning similarly centers emotional intelligence. Second-Step, a character education program shown to be effective in Brown et. al. (2023)'s meta analysis, states in its description, "Children need social-emotional skills to thrive both in the classroom and in life" (Second Step). Clear here is a centering of these skills that are separate from the intellectual grit that Franklin Ethics offers.

Important to note is that these differences do not apply to all character education programs, as one character education program, Child Development Project (CDP) does emphasize intellectual grit and curricular reform in its description. They note, "The *curriculum*

gives children opportunities to work collaboratively and to explore—through literature, history, science—what it means to be a principled, caring human being" (Schaps et al., 1993). Evident here is a clear valuing of intellectual thought not only as a complement to moral development, but entrenched in moral development.

Franklin teachers also suggested critical inquiry as a factor that differentiates Franklin Ethics from character education. Dr. Evans stated, "I don't know that character education gets you to critical inquiry. It might, but I'm not convinced." Highlighted in the SOCM protest was students' ability to critically analyze their own schooling experience, and to act on aspects of the school they deemed inadequate. To the contrary, The PRIMED model emphasizes a top-down approach to character education which ensures school structures, administrators, and teachers are aligned with the mission, in that order, so that the school can effectively implement a character education program. As a result, in its ideal form, PRIMED schools are essentially *fixed* before students even begin to engage with character development. In that type of scenario, students are disempowered to passively accept their environment, and are therefore stripped of the opportunity to critically analyze, reflect, and engage in "actualized ethics" within the school community.

Personalizing

Teachers referenced the flexibility and reflection pieces of Franklin Ethics as further evidence differentiating it from character education. They noted that Franklin Ethics develops self-discovery, curiosity, and prioritizes learning how to think rather than what to think. To the contrary, teachers suggested that character education is more prescriptive, teaching students what to think and how to act. Dr. Miller stated:

> I do think ethics is a little bit different than character education. I feel like we might be more open ended than that. Some of the character education [programs], like "Character Counts," provides things that you need to learn. Whereas I feel like ours is more you figuring it out for yourself. We're not going to tell you that there's a right way and we can have robust discussions with multiple perspectives as long as we understand that everybody's identity is protected and respected.

"Figuring it out for yourself" takes on several meanings in Franklin Ethics. It can surface through a movement like SOCM where students analyze their own environment in order to determine how they want to learn and exist in their school community. It can also surface in smaller ways through self reflection of students' identity and experiences to better understand their role in the community. Finally, it can surface through critical analysis of curriculum so that students have the opportunity to place themselves in conversation with social justice scholars, deciding for themselves what is right and just in the world. Dr. Miller referenced Character Counts in this quote, a character education program that continues to center social emotional learning as a tool to address poor behavior and academic outcomes. Character Counts aligns with previously mentioned character education programs that do not center intellectual grit.

The literature both aligns and refutes Dr. Miller's criticism of character education as being a rigid model of moral development. The beginnings of character education have either religious or civic underpinnings and are both designed to mold students into specific types of people. Using guidelines based in Christianity or Democracy, traditional character education programs were often aimed to teach students how to act appropriately in their communities (Narvaez, 2005). These beginnings align with Dr. Miller's remarks. Moreover, character education programs such as DARE and The Word of the Week are both examples of teaching students what to think and how to act without leaving room for their own self-discovery. Finally, many other character education programs that focus on improving behavior, addressing drug use,

and reducing violence often fit this same prescriptive mold. Examples from Brown et. al. (2023)'s meta analysis such as PATHS and the Good Behavior Game are both aimed to address specific behavioral issues in schools and are centered around a prescriptive approach to character education (PATHS; Good Behavior Game).

To the contrary, and notably, Lawrence Kohlberg's emphasis on individual stages of moral development contradict Dr. Miller's comments. Kohlberg's argument for moral development considers this individualization and the notion that one's morality is greatly influenced by their environment and personalized experiences (Sholl 1971). Moreover, Kohlberg believed that students must have ownership over their own learning and thinking which conflicts with Dr. Miller's argument that character education is rigid and prescriptive.

Practicing

As emphasized earlier, the Franklin Ethics program places significant importance on community service learning and what this study terms as action-oriented practice. According to Dr. Evans, the service learning aspect serves as a "key factor" within Franklin Ethics, enabling students to consider "how [they] understand the concept[ual] through personal lenses." Both teachers underscored that service learning is integral to Franklin Ethics, aligning with the website which outlines the program's aim "to create a comprehensive experience for students to engage in activism." Without grounding the work in real-world ethical dilemmas, students might struggle to personally connect with the conceptual domain and understand the broader implications of the personal domain.

Service learning, however, is not unique to Franklin Ethics, as programs all over the country facilitate this work. Moreover, the literature has drawn out many of the positive impacts

associated with service learning that are relevant to character and moral development. Research

suggests that implementing effective service learning programs in poor and marginalized schools

can improve academic outcomes as well as address mental health concerns (Scales &

Roehlkepartain, 2003). Moreover, Dr. Berkowitz's PRIMED model includes service learning as

one facet of the student-centered component of character education. When the PRIMED model

was implemented at a school in Ridgewood, Missouri by vice principal Dr. Kristen Pelster,

community service learning was used to break down barriers between the school and its

surrounding community to facilitate a social justice centered mindset among students (Haynes &

Berkowitz). Judith A. Boss's "Teaching Ethics through Community Service" (1995) is another

example that centered ethics education around community service in a way that aligns with

Franklin Ethics. Boss's study suggested that service learning positively impacted students'

empowerment, self-esteem, communication skills, and awareness of the world. This centering of

service learning not only reaffirms the effectiveness of Franklin Ethics, but it also suggests the

strongest similarity with character education to be this action-oriented work.

Impact on Minoritized Students

A final comparison between ethics education and character education relates to their

impacts on minoritized students. Franklin teachers suggested that the self-empowerment and

personalization that ethics education facilitates, but which character education may fall short on,

is critical to the support of marginalized students. Dr. Evans argued:

> My problem with [character education] politically is it's used to
> evangelize middle class values for Black and Brown kids so that
> they can succeed. Now, having Black and Brown kids succeed is a
> wonderful thing. We want that to happen. But teaching [these
> values] as though they are the gospel without unpacking that is
> really problematic.

Highlighted in this quote is the importance of critical inquiry and flexibility in Franklin Ethics.

Providing students with the tools to analyze their own experiences and education environment

prepares them to come to their own individualized conclusions regarding how to think and act.

To the contrary, Dr. Evans's criticism highlighted the potential negative impacts of a prescriptive

and standardized character education curriculum that risks projecting values and expectations to

which students cannot relate. Notable in these comments is the use of the word evangelize, a

word commonly utilized to describe the prescription of Christian values. Dr. Evans's language

further connects back to connections between religious education and character education that

were highlighted in the literature review. While highlighting intersections between these forms of

moral development, Dr. Evans also distances ethics education as a unique form of moral

development that is disconnected from religious values, pushing back on arguments in the

literature that deem ethics education as an iteration of religious education. Furthermore,

providing an accurate depiction of the systems and institutions that frame students' experiences

and interact with students' identities is a critical complement to the flexibility that Franklin

Ethics offers. Dr. Evans continued:

> I think when character education is taught in a context that's devoid
> of an understanding of social structures, then it's telling poor Black
> and Brown kids that they don't have the thing that is necessary to
> succeed because of them. As opposed to, you might not have the
> thing that's necessary to succeed because the conditions of this
> school weren't actually built and created with you in mind.

This quote elaborated on the importance of allowing all students, but specifically minoritized

ones, to confront the societal structures in which they are placed. This notion is relevant to both

the conceptual and practice domains of Franklin Ethics. The conceptual curriculum is centered

on social justice terms, concepts, and people that directly address broad societal dilemmas. By

confronting this domain, students are able to place themselves and their experiences within the

boundaries of these broader systems. Moreover, the intellectual practice within the practice

domain allows students to use these concepts and apply them to societal issues. In this way,

students are able to identify the interconnectedness of their individual experiences, the issues

social justice philosophy concerns, and the ways in which these issues manifest in the real-world.

Developing these through-lines speaks to the ways Dr. Evans feels minoritized students must be

supported.

This notion of offering an honest depiction of the world to minoritized students may

contradict several character education programs that have popularized the concept of

performance character. Performance character aims to develop student skills such as diligence,

discipline, and perseverance to complement values such as integrity, justice, and respect. The

concept is in response to concerns among school reformers that character education has little

impact on academic achievement. Dr. Evans criticized this approach to moral development:

> I don't think you need to teach poor kids about grit. They have grit.
> They survived. They got themselves to school. There's not a gap
> because kids inherently or individually don't have those skills.
> There's a gap because the hierarchy has been created, and Black
> and Brown and poor kids have been disenfranchised or harmed by
> aspects of school reform.

Merging the previous point regarding structure with an additional criticism of performance

character, Dr. Evans argued that academic and behavioral "gaps" are not due to deficient skills

but rather flaws in the system itself that was not created for particular populations. Therefore,

addressing these gaps may not require the development of performance character skills, an

approach that Dr. Evans deemed as deficit-oriented and based on the assumption that minoritized

students lack grit. Instead, developing self-reflection and critical inquiry can empower

minoritized students to analyze their own environment and navigate oppressive school structures.

6. Conclusions

This thesis was designed to answer two research questions: 1) What is ethics education and what are its potential impacts on individual students and school culture at Franklin? 2) How does a school that has implemented ethics education see themselves differing from character education? This chapter is structured to address both of these questions, ending with a discussion of insights and recommendations about how Franklin Ethics might be adapted to produce a model for ethics education that can meet the needs of any school community.

6.1. Research Question 1

In order to answer the first question, the analysis identified three domains that together depict a broad understanding of Franklin Ethics. The first domain, the conceptual, encompasses both a part of the ethics curriculum as well as broader qualities of its implementation that impact pedagogical strategies. The conceptual domain of the curriculum teaches students about important social justice terminology and concepts that assist them in framing personal experiences and current social justice issues. Moreover, students also engage with philosophers, educators, and activists, both new and old, that speak to the various identities and experiences students carry. This curriculum employs pedagogies that enforce intellectual rigor as inherently critical to the success of the ethics program. Intellectual grit stems from the school's prioritization of Ethics as an academic subject and is actualized through teachers' emphasis on problem solving, perspective-taking, and logical thinking. Upholding this intellectual grit is also an emphasis on critical inquiry which data also highlighted. While developing critical inquiry skills, Franklin Ethics allows students to conduct a deep questioning of themselves and their communities as well as the concepts and thinkers with whom they engage.

Much of the pedagogy behind the conceptual domain overlaps with Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive-development approach to character education. Kohlberg's employment of moral-dilemma discussion–in which students take multiple perspectives and develop their moral reasoning skills–targets the same intellectual skills that Franklin Ethics nurtures. What differs between these two approaches is the nuanced curriculum that Franklin Ethics offered that complemented its teaching practices. Kohlberg's focus on the process of thinking rather than the content itself differs from Franklin in the way that they employ a deeply progressive and social-justice oriented curriculum.

The second domain, the personal, also acts as both a curricular and pedagogical strategy. Personalizing the curriculum entails a strong emphasis on personal identity and experiences that help ground the material of the conceptual domain. Students learn about their key social identifiers as well as the ways identity informs their experiences and perspectives. Pedagogically, Franklin Ethics is flexible in its ability to adapt to the students who are present in the room. By asking students broad questions about themselves and society, and asking them to methodically unpack them to uncover their own beliefs, students can facilitate their own growth.

The personal domain overlaps with both the empowerment component of the PRIMED model as well as Kohlberg's emphasis on individual moral stages. According to the PRIMED model, empowering student voices is critical to implementing an effective character education program, allowing them to have influence over decision-making and school structures (Berkowitz, 2021). Although parts of Berkowitz's top-down approach may conflict with this prioritization of empowerment, it remains central to the motivations behind the PRIMED model. Closely related to this argument is Kohlberg's belief that character education programs should be adaptive to the needs of each individual student. Both Kohlberg and Berkowitz suggest that

moral development must push back on prescriptive models that teach universal values but rather facilitate the actualizing of students' personal moral identities.

The third domain, the practice, is noted by teachers as the linchpin to Franklin Ethics. Students engage with the practice domain of the curriculum by applying a conceptual framework to real-world social justice issues. Asking students to engage with the most pressing issues of our time outlines the relevance of the entire ethics curriculum. Additionally, many of the Ethics courses Franklin offers pertain to service learning, a pedagogical approach to learning that draws through lines between content learned in the classroom and real-world issues faced in neighboring communities. The practice domain is centered around self-reflection as Franklin Ethics enables students to more clearly understand the answer to the question *why does this matter?*

Boss (1995) and Kirby (2009) both emphasize the important interdependence of service learning and personal reflection. In many ways this literature resembles Franklin Ethics's personal and practice domains by allowing students to apply their conceptual ethics education to both their own experiences as well as broader societal issues. The literature notes that community service learning is hugely important in exposing students to people and experiences that are different from their own and that they would be unable to engage with otherwise (Kirby, 2009). This reinforces the practice domain as an integral component of ethics education both at Franklin and beyond.

The three domains offer a comprehensive definition of Franklin Ethics at both the curricular and pedagogical levels. In order to address the second part of question 1, data also identifies the perceived impact of Franklin Ethics. Teachers suggested that Franklin impacts both individual students as well as the broader school culture. According to teachers, Franklin Ethics

ignites students' critical inquiry, empowerment, and leadership that strengthens the school culture. Strong student-teacher relationships, programs such as STS and assemblies, and the SOCM movement are all indicators of ethics education's ability to affect real change at the school level. Despite distancing Franklin Ethics from character education, the PRIMED model's emphasis on long-term impacts of education align with many of the skills that Franklin Ethics refines. PRIMED aims to nurture self-actualization among students that can guide them through life's challenges similar to how Franklin Ethics equips students with leadership skills that propel them into roles that can influence social change. However, the direction of impact at Franklin, where the courses are impacting culture, pushes back on the notion that school culture should be the primary concern of any character education program.

Ultimately, the three domains and their perceived impacts at Franklin Ethics can be integrated to produce a working definition of ethics education at Franklin:

> **Ethics Education:** *A curriculum and pedagogy designed to enforce connections between the self and society that allow students to learn from, engage with, and practice work meant to promote moral and intellectual development. Its primary focus is to facilitate student reflection, curiosity, and empowerment to be the future leaders of social change.*

6.2. Research Question 2

To answer the second research question, I offer additional comparisons of character education and ethics education to expand on differences suggested by teachers in the data of these two approaches to moral development. As alluded to, many of the components of ethics education overlap and align with several character education programs. It addresses both curricular and pedagogical strategies to moral development that the literature shows can be effective. More specifically, Lawrence Kohlberg's emphasis on moral reasoning and the individualized stages of moral development, the PRIMED model's concern for student

empowerment and long term student outcomes, and Judith A. Boss's centering of service learning all resemble the three domains of ethics education outlined in this study. In this way, what makes ethics education unique is not any single one of these characteristics but rather the amalgamation of these processes into one comprehensive approach to moral development. Employing the Narvaez (2004) line of reasoning for an integrative approach to moral development, this thesis emphasizes the intersectional, interdisciplinary, and interdependent nature of Franklin Ethics.

To further emphasize the unique nature of Franklin Ethics, I return back to the 2019 SOCM protest and its connection to the theoretical framework posed by Sewell (1992). To reiterate an earlier point, students in SOCM rectified the connection between schemas and resources at Franklin that Sewell argues is necessary to the success of any societal structure. Also relevant to SOCM is Sewell's engagement with the theory posed by Anthony Giddens that remarks on the duality of structure in which human actions are both the cause and effect of societal structure. Giddens argues that yes, structures inform the way agents behave and interact. However, when enough agents are discontent with these structures, they hold the power to push back and influence significant change. In this way, SOCM can be framed as a moment where students were gaining skills from an ethics education designed to develop critical inquiry, reflection, and empowerment, while simultaneously employing these skills, in real time, to actively reform the same structures that upheld ethics education.

To the contrary of the student empowerment that stems from placing students as the change agents of their own learning environments, the PRIMED model's top-down approach to character education aims to manufacture a desirable school environment prior to empowering students. Essentially, this approach to character education suggests that students lack awareness

of their own needs whereas it is presumed that school reformers and administrators possess this understanding, employing a deficit-oriented model that disempowers students.

6.3. Recommendations

Up until this point, I have deciphered Franklin Ethics and presented it as an effective approach to moral development. Although data suggests that Franklin Ethics is actively striving to achieve its goals outlined through the three domains, it is also falling short in many ways. Identifying four key areas for improvement of Franklin Ethics is not meant to contradict previous data that highlights its potential successes, but rather guide ethics education towards a more effective version of itself both at Franklin and in other school communities. In collaboration with the working definition of ethics education that offers a broad conceptual framework, the following recommendations are meant to guide the effective implementation of ethics education in any school.

Recommendation 1: Prioritize connections between the personal and practice domains in order to ensure that each student has a stake in the game.

The personal and practice domains are both meant to complement the conceptual domain by highlighting the ways students can apply ethical thinking in their own personal lives as well as when engaging with societal issues. Because of the demographic makeup of Franklin's student body, oftentimes the students did not perceive the social justice issues they were learning about and engaging with as relevant in their lives outside of school. When students are from backgrounds of affluence and privilege, it may be difficult for them to feel as though they have a

stake in the game when learning about issues that may not directly affect them. This can make it more difficult for them to fully benefit from ethics education.

In reality, many students at Franklin were not participating in SOCM or STS. Some were skipping assemblies, and they were not taking their ethics classes as seriously as other classes seen as more relevant to college acceptance and life success. Moreover, lessons learned in ethics classes are not the only voices in students' heads as other people in the school, at home, and in the community may be sending very different, possibly conflicting, messages about moral development and social justice.

Ultimately, it is because of these external forces that ethics education must clarify to the students how their personal lives are impacted by social justice issues, whether or not they have experienced it themselves. Moreover, in schools different from Franklin, it may be more common for the social justice issues, being studied through the practice domain, to intersect with students' personal lives. In this scenario, ethics education should lean into this reality, acknowledging the identities and experiences present in the classroom and adapt curriculum accordingly.

Recommendation 2: Make Ethics more interdisciplinary to ensure its relevance to all disciplines and its value to all types of students and learners.

Ethics education at Franklin was centered around writing, reading, and discussion, in ways that resemble an English or History class more than a Math or Science class. To make ethics education a more engaging subject for students who may be more interested in the latter disciplines, it is important for teachers and curriculum to adapt to the academic interests of each student. Bringing in content related to math, science, and technology must be prioritized.

Moreover, pedagogical styles can be diversified to include different modes of learning. Group work that resembles math classes and science labs can be integrated to ensure the class is adapted to STEM focused students. Ethics can also be taught through visual, musical, and performing arts as students can use creative expression to both reflect on themselves while also learning about the ways artists use their craft as a vehicle for social change. Not only can these adaptations engage more learners, but they can also highlight the ways in which ethics education is relevant to all disciplines and types of work. This emphasis may be less important at Franklin where the mission of ethics education is core to the school and inherently impacts every person and space in the school. However, in cases where ethics education is being added into an existing school, emphasizing the ethics curriculum's connections and relevance to other courses can be hugely impactful for its overall effectiveness.

<u>Recommendation 3:</u> Ensure the continued pursuit of making respect and empathy innate student desires rather than qualities students exhibit only when surveilled or when it is convenient.

Franklin Ethics as well as many character education programs highlight the importance of developing students' internal moral compasses and intrinsic motivation. Although this is recognized as important, incidents such as the one that spurred SOCM show how Franklin continues to fall short. As a student at Franklin, I witnessed the ways in which students could "talk the talk" in classes because they were being surveilled and evaluated, however their behavior outside of school exposed a much different side. To me, this means Franklin should find new ways to make the lessons learned in ethics education intrinsic rather than buoyed by school

rules and restrictions. While it may be challenging to fully achieve this mission, the continued pursuit must be a priority.

Recommendation 4: Know the context, both the students and the school, that ethics education exists within and center this understanding when developing appropriate curriculum and teaching practices to ensure that it is addressing the unique needs of the community.

Finally, the linchpin to any effective moral education program is a deep understanding of the students present in the classroom as well as the school context that inevitably permeates each classroom door. In some ways, Franklin does this very well: the personal domain especially emphasized personal identity and experience as a core tenet of the curriculum. Moreover, because of the common beliefs among students, parents, and teachers regarding progressive education and liberal values, it makes understanding how to adapt the education to the student body quite simple. However, in other ways Franklin is falling short. First, there must be more work and discussion around socioeconomic status at Franklin. In many of my experiences at the school it felt like teachers and the curriculum were avoiding discussions around class and the ways in which it deeply impacted each of our lives. Socioeconomic status became a taboo subject that few individuals wanted to address in fear of offending some and embarrassing others. An ethics education cannot hold back, it must be bold and unapologetic in the way it demands students reflect on their own identities and experiences, even when it is uncomfortable to do so. Moreover, Franklin can do more to call out its status as an elite, primarily-white private school.

Considering Franklin's context, it will always have to navigate the tension that arises between their status and their pursuit of social justice and equity. However, understanding and

acknowledging these truths can allow Franklin to grow and evolve. Although certain SOCM demands that concern tracking systems and school board reforms were directed to address these shortcomings, what SOCM exposed was a need for deep-rooted changes to the teacher and student-body populations. To add to this, because Franklin remains highly exclusive with massive economic barriers to entry, the school's impact will be defined by its ability to reach students outside the school's walls. Franklin's access to immense financial and intellectual resources must be shared with other school communities. As a result, I propose that Franklin assign a team tasked with adapting and disseminating Franklin Ethics to other schools in the community and around the city. In this way, Franklin can employ its resources to support schools who may benefit from Franklin Ethics but may not have the resources to properly implement it.

This fourth recommendation is critical for an ethics education's ability to scale up and fit the needs of other school contexts. As mentioned previously, The Franklin School context is a unique one not only because of its status as an elite PWI but also because of its homogeneity with regards to its progressive education and liberal ideologies. Other school environments that are not united in similar ways may have more trouble successfully implementing an ethics education. The prioritization of the three domains can be adjusted in ways that fit the needs of this school context. The attention placed on the personal domain may be increased in communities that don't see the content's relevance to their own lives or the attention placed on the practice domain may increase in communities with less exposure to societal problems. The three domains allow each school to adapt the ethics education to the unique circumstances of each environment.

Ultimately, these four recommendations in tandem with the three domains of Franklin Ethics provide a comprehensive framework for dismantling systemic marginalization and

building school cultures that foster strong student-teacher relationships, school connectedness, and student belonging. This framework has the capacity to be adapted to a diverse array of school contexts in ways that address unique community needs. By empowering students to formulate connections between themselves and their communities, this model for moral development can address systemic shortcomings in how schools support their students.

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Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

In reflecting on my experience at Fieldston and analyzing my own ethics notes from the first two years of high school and the website description of the ethics department, I organized Fieldston ethics curriculum (not the school ethos or mission) into three domains which I would like to share with you.
  - The conceptual: key theorists and philosophers related to ethics and social justice as well as social justice terminology related to power, privilege, and oppression. This can be used to frame the practical and personal domains.
  - The practical: social justice issues–whether it was the Flint Water Crisis or The Dakota Pipeline or Police Brutality and Mass Incarceration–real life social justice issues that society faces and that can be used to contextualize the conceptual domain
  - The personal: self identity and how it impacts our role in society, how we see the world, how were seen, and how we interact/engage with it. This must intersect with the other two domains to make it truly impactful

Do you think this encompasses the Ethics curriculum/content at Fieldston?
  - Is there anything you would add that is not included in these three domains?

Where do you see ethics, in the traditional sense of the word, showing up the most in the Ethics curriculum? What makes this curriculum an ethics class rather than just a social justice class?

What impact does ethics have on other aspects of the school?
  - Extra curriculars/clubs/assemblies?
  - Other academic courses?
  - The physical environment (classrooms, the campus, etc.)
How do you think the ethics program at Fieldston impacts school culture?
  - Specifically related to student-teacher relationships, school connectedness/unity, and student belonging

Is ethics education working at Fieldston? Why or why not? How do you know?
  - If its not working, what must change to make it work?
  - If it is working, would it work in any school environment or would this curriculum only work at Fieldston
  - What would have to change with the Ethics curriculum for it to be effective in another, more socio economically marginalized, community or in a school community with a higher percent of racially minoritized students?

Appendix B: Student Artifacts

Cycle of Liberation

Intrapersonal
Change within the Core of People about What They Believe about Themselves

Waking Up
Critical Incident That Creates Cognitive Dissonance

Reaching Out
Movement Out of Self Toward Others
Seeking Experience and Exposure
Speaking Out and Naming Injustices
Taking Stands,   Using Tools
Exploring and Experimenting

Interpersonal
Change in How We Value Others and See the World

Getting Ready
Empowerment of Self
Introspection
Education
Consciousness Raising

Gaining
Inspiration
Authenticity

Dismantling
Collusion
Privilege
Internalized
Oppression

Developing
Analysis and Tools

Building Community
Working With Others
A. People "Like Us" for Support
B. People "Different from Us" for Building Coalitions, Questioning Assumptions, Rules, Roles, and Structures of Systems

Core
Self-Love
Self-Esteem
Balance
Joy
Support
Security
Spiritual Base

Coalescing
Organizing,
Action Planning,
Lobbying,
Fund Raising
Educating,
Renaming Reality
Refusing to Collude
or Take Privilege
Being a Role Model,
an Ally
Transforming Anger
Moving Into Action

Maintaining
Integrating
Spreading Hope and Inspiration
Living Our Dreams
Modeling Authenticity, Integrity and Wholeness
Taking Care of Self and Others

Creating Change
Critically Transforming Institutions and Creating New Culture
Influencing: Policy
Assumptions
Structures
Definitions, Rules
Taking Leadership
Risks
Guiding Change
Healing
"Power Shared"

Systemic
Change in Structures, Assumptions, Philosophy, Rules, Roles

Source: Developed by Bobbie Harro

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First Socialization
Socialized
Taught on a Personal Level by Parents, Relatives, Teachers, People We Love and Trust:
Shapers of Expectations, Norms, Values, Roles, Rules, Models of Ways to Be,
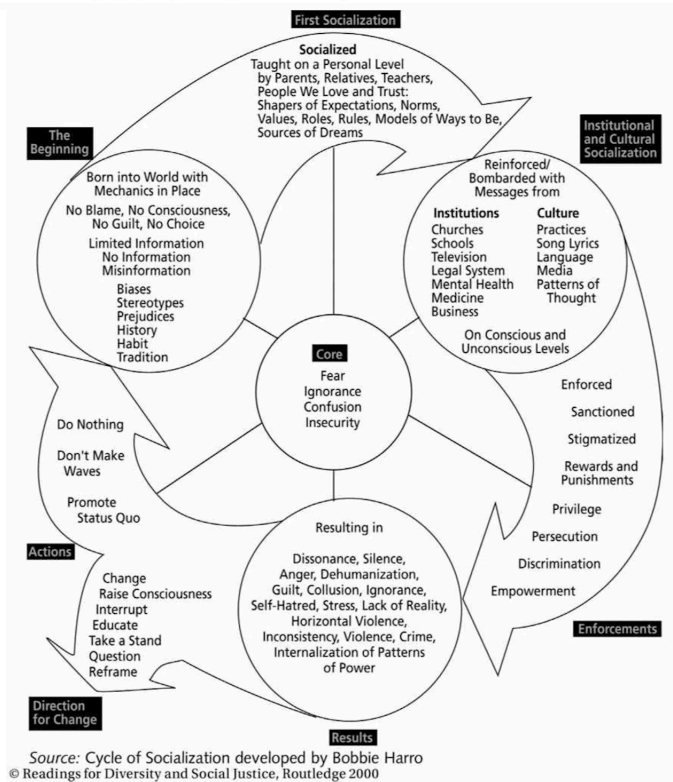Sources of Dreams

The Beginning
Born into World with Mechanics in Place
No Blame, No Consciousness, No Guilt, No Choice
Limited Information
No Information
Misinformation
Biases
Stereotypes
Prejudices
History
Habit
Tradition

Institutional and Cultural Socialization
Reinforced/ Bombarded with Messages from

Institutions
Churches
Schools
Television
Legal System
Mental Health
Medicine
Business

Culture
Practices
Song Lyrics
Language
Media
Patterns of Thought

On Conscious and Unconscious Levels

Core
Fear
Ignorance
Confusion
Insecurity

Enforced
Sanctioned
Stigmatized
Rewards and Punishments
Privilege
Persecution
Discrimination
Empowerment

Enforcements

Do Nothing
Don't Make Waves
Promote Status Quo

Actions
Change
Raise Consciousness
Interrupt
Educate
Take a Stand
Question
Reframe

Resulting in
Dissonance, Silence, Anger, Dehumanization, Guilt, Collusion, Ignorance, Self-Hatred, Stress, Lack of Reality, Horizontal Violence, Inconsistency, Violence, Crime, Internalization of Patterns of Power

Direction for Change

Results

Source: Cycle of Socialization developed by Bobbie Harro
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