Understanding the Role of Community in Moral and Character Education

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There is broad agreement that community plays an important role in moral and character education. Traditionalist character educators such as Kilpatrick (1993), Ryan (1996), and Wynne (1997), and proponents of the just community approach, such as Power, Higgins and Kohlberg (1989), disagree, however, about how to build community, specifically through the exercise of discipline. The traditionalists argue for a top-down model in which the teachers assert firm authority over students. Proponents of the just community approach maintain that teachers and students should set and enforce expectations democratically. Ascertaining which approach is a more effective way of building community requires empirical analysis based on a conceptualization of community as a type of school culture. This study focuses on school culture in relationship to the problem of stealing by comparing several just community programs with conventional high schools. The results suggest that the just community approach is an effective way of establishing a student culture based on values of community, such as trust.

It is commonplace today to emphasize community as a critical component of character or moral education in the school (see, for example, Lickona, 1991; Noddings, 1997; Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989; Shaps, Battistich, & Solomon, 1997; and Wynne, 1997). This focus on community draws on a variety of classics, such as Aristotle's (1985) *Nicomachean Ethics* as well as contemporary sources, such as Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton's (1985) Habits *of the Heart*, Etzione'*s (1993)* The *Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and The Communitarian Agenda*, and Sandel's (1982) *Liberalism and The Limits of Justice*. In spite of the many calls for building community in classrooms and schools, little consensus exists on what community means, how it can be systematically fostered, and how it can be measured.

Some character educators, such as Wynne (1997), Ryan (1996), and Kilpatrick (1993), view community as an antidote to the selfish individualism perpetuated in permissive classrooms and schools. Wynne (1997) uses the term "community" to refer to classroom and school environments that "shape" character. Kilpatrick (1993), who bases his approach to character education on Wynne and Ryan (1993), advocates an approach to community (he uses the term "ethos") modeled on the "esprit de corps" manifest in the military during "Desert Storm". To the end of building a more positive ethos in schools, Kilpatrick urges educators to emulate the army in putting forth "a vision of high purpose;" fostering a sense of pride through "rituals, dress codes, and behavior codes;" providing rigorous training; and organizing schools to be "hierarchical, authoritarian, and undemocratic" (Kilpatrick, 1993: pp. 227, 228).

Kilpatrick's view that community is built by being hierarchical, authoritarian, and undemocratic contrasts with Lickona's (1991) participative strategies for building community. Lickona advocates that teachers take a democratic approach to discipline by involving students in setting and enforcing classroom rules. Lickona justifies this participative approach with the following quotation from Piaget: "Rules imposed by external constraint remain external to the child's spirit. Rules due to mutual respect and cooperation take root inside the child's mind" (Lickona, 1991: p. 112).

Although Lickona calls himself a character educator, he holds a view on student participation similar to the one held by moral developmentalists, such as Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg (1989). In their view, student participation serves the dual purpose of promoting moral development, which Piaget describes in terms of mutual respect and cooperation, and of building community. Traditionalist character educators, like Kilpatrick, reject the use of student participation because they entertain radically discontinuous view of character development from childhood to adulthood. Believing that children lack the reason and self-control for meaningful participation in making and enforcing

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rules, they see democracy as an end but never a means of character education.

While disagreeing on the nature of character development and the role of democracy, Kilpatrick and Lickona share the notion that community involves a sense of solidarity among students and teachers and a common commitment to uphold the norms and rules of the classroom. Kilpatrick (1993), citing anecdotal evidence from Ryan and Wynne (1993) holds that solidarity and commitment can only be built through a strong and consistent assertion of the teacher's authority. Lickona (1993), presenting his own anecdotal evidence, maintains that the teacher's unilateral assertion of authority will yield nothing more than a superficial conformity to the teacher's rules, ultimately undermining the solidarity and students' commitment. Solidarity among students and teachers and a common commitment to uphold the rules appear to be important characteristics of a strong community; yet neither Kilpatrick nor Lickona propose methods for measuring them empirically. If developed, empirical measures would bring greater precision to the conceptual understanding of such notions as community, ethos, and school climate, and would allow for more informative empirical research on the most effective approach to building community.

The Just Community Approach

In the early 1970s, before community became a fashionable term in moral education, Lawrence Kohlberg and his colleagues began a moral education experiment that they called the just community approach (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1987). As the name implies, this approach involves building community with an emphasis on procedural justice embodies in direct participatory democracy. Kohlberg modeled the just community approach on an innovative high school program that he had observed on an Israeli kibbutz (Kohlberg, 1971). Finding in the program a rich blend of collectivism and democracy, Kohlberg focused on the special role of the educational leader, the *Madrich*. The *Madrich* insisted upon demanding ethical standards; but using democratic methods, he made the group responsible for upholding those standards. Kohlberg proposed that the teachers implementing the just community approach follow the example of the *Madrich* by becoming democratic leaders, adept at mobilizing the social dynamics of the adolescent peer group.

The just community approach involves students and teachers in making and enforcing rules and policies concerning student life and discipline. Rules and policies are established through direct participatory democracy: one person-one vote. The direct participatory democracy of just community approach differs from the practice common to most high schools of having students elect representatives to a school-wide council. Representative democracy deprives the majority of students of the invaluable experience of deliberating in common. Moreover, the students who win elections are often those who are committed to the school and who have relatively well developed social skills, not the students most in need of the developmental benefits that accrue through democratic participation. Direct participatory democracy, on the other hand, gives all students the opportunity to learn through practice.

The democracy established in the just community schools differs from the democracy established in the typical student council in one other important respect: the responsibility given to the governing body. In the just community approach, student decision-making extends beyond planning social events to sharing responsibility for maintaining discipline and a sense of community. Kilpatrick, Ryan, and Wynne maintain that extending the democratic process to the area of discipline represents a serious abdication of teacher responsibility. They entertain a dichotomous view of authority with laissez-faire permisivism as one possibility and as assertive authoritarianism as the alternative. They ignore, however, the psychological literature on authoritative parenting (Baumrind, 1989) and democratic group leadership (White and Lipett, 1960), which maintains that there is a third way of exercising authority. This is the way of the *Madrich*, who leads the peer group in pursuit of lofty ideals, but does so through democratic methods. At the heart of the just community approach is the teacher who exercises a very special leadership function within the context of a democratic process of decision-making.

The real difference between proponents of the just community approach and their character-educator critics has to do with how community can and should be built in classrooms and schools. Kilpatrick, Ryan, and Wynne advocate a hierarchical system with the teacher having the positional and generational responsibility for setting high expectations and strictly enforcing the rules. Proponents of the just community approach advocate an egalitarian model with the teacher having a positional and generational responsibility for holding forth a vision of community and guiding the democratic process in which that vision is negotiated.

Proponents of the just community approach and their character education critics agree that building community involves rituals, common activities, and symbols (e.g., Power & Power, 1992). These are time-tested, powerful means of fostering group solidarity; but without respect for the individual, they can also lead to uncritical submissiveness and conformity. Proponents of the just community approach see the democratic process as one way of balancing responsibility to the interest of the group with responsibility to the interests of the individual members of the group (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989). This concern for the individual appears to us to be particularly important in adolescence when the desire to belong often accompanies a desire to express individuality. The democratic approach also and most importantly can provide (when properly conducted) an opportunity for deliberation about whether particular rules and expectations are fair and serve the common good. The democratic approach also serves as a means to the end of building the solidarity essential for community. Partici-

pation in the process of recognizing a problem, making a policy to address the problem, and enforcing that policy fosters commitment to the expectations of the group.

Discipline as Management

The just community approach, with its emphasis on community, differs markedly from Kilpatrick, Ryan, and Wynne's traditionalist approach to character education in the area of discipline. Although both approaches share an emphasis on discipline as a means of moral and character education, they are built on contrasting conceptualizations of the school culture and the teacher student relationship. Advocates of traditionalist character education maintain that the school culture can and should be fashioned by teachers, who are charged with transmitting traditional values and maintaining strict control over students. Advocates of the just community approach agree with the seminal insights of the sociologist of education, Willard Waller (1932) who noted, that after the first few grades, the teacher-student relationship shifts from a primary group relationship characterized by mutual trust and affection to a secondary relationship marked by impersonal domination and instrumentality. In the upper grades, Waller (1932) found, teachers and their students live in two different, almost impenetrable social worlds. The students tend to bond together in strong primary groups, which teachers try to control from the outside, as it were, through extrinsic rewards and punishments.

The literature on school discipline since the early 1990s largely supports Waller's (1932) grim portrayal of the impersonal control exerted by teachers over students. Bagely (1907), for example, popularized the factory metaphor in describing the classroom as a "working unit of the school plant," and discipline as effective "management," designed to "return the largest dividend upon the material investment of time, energy, and money" (p. 2). Within this framework, he characterized children as the "raw material" to be turned into a "desired product" (p. 4). This factory metaphor persists in the classroom management texts prevalent in teacher training today (e.g., Emmer, Evertson, Clements, & Worsham, 1994). Traditionalist character educators, like Kilpatrick, Ryan, and Wynne, do not directly challenge the prevalent management approach to discipline but cast it as part of an Aristotelian habituation process. Wynne (1997), for example, speaks of "designing" "for-character" environments or communities that teach virtues through "shaping" behavior (p. 65). These character educators are aware of the disciplinary problems and anomie in schools; yet they attribute these problems to adult permissiveness rather than to the structural problem of teacher dominance. They assume that the master-apprentice model of teaching a craft, which Aristotle uses to explain how virtue can be habituated, can be exported to the contemporary classroom. Yet the master-apprentice relationship relies on primary group characteristics, which, Waller (1932) argues, are missing in the relationships between teachers and students in junior high and high schools.

Stealing in School

Waller's depiction of the divided culture of the school suggests that teachers must win the support of the student peer group to have a significant influence on students' character. The study reported below attempts to provide some support for Waller's perspective by investigating how students respond to the problem of theft in school. Theft is the most common crime committed in school (Safe School Study, 1977). About fifty percent of adolescents admit to engaging in some petty theft in their early teenage years (Miller, 1997). Theft in school, like cheating and drug use, is a covert problem that teachers and administrators cannot address directly, in contrast to such discipline violations as skipping class or fighting. There is even some evidence to suggest that the climate prevalent in schools may play a role in encouraging stealing. For example, Power (1994) reported an incident in which a student had stolen a tape recorder from an unlocked locker and later bragged about it to his friends. Discussing the theft, students acknowledged that stealing was wrong but thought that the victim was at fault for his carelessness. They denied that they had any responsibility for addressing the problem, noting that the adults were to enforce the rules of the school. Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg (1989) described similar responses in a community meeting held in the early days of the Cluster School, the first just community school. Students later accepted responsibility for stealing, which Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg (1989) described as a change in the culture of the school brought about through the democratic process. Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg (1989) also report interview data with students from traditional high schools that showed most students believed that there was little that they or anyone could or should do about stealing in their school.

These studies do not explain why students steal in school, but they do show that students may subtly encourage petty theft by their indifference and by blaming the victim for failing to exercise sufficient caution. Further evidence that stealing in school may be fostered by the typical culture of the school comes from a study by Moncher and Miller (as cited in Miller, 1997), who found that adolescents with the highest levels of self-reported stealing had the most negative perceptions of the fairness of school policies and of teachers' respect for and treatment of students. These negative perceptions may not be based in reality, but they are difficult to address with an authoritarian approach to discipline that is not designed to address alienated students.

Community and School Culture

The challenge for character educators is to foster an environment in schools that students perceive as genuine communities. At the very least, students should perceive

such schools as fair and relatively free of such problems as theft. Whether such an environment can best be brought about through the strong assertion of authority or by democratic participation will only be decided through careful studies of how educators can foster community in schools. Community, in our view, is a quality of the school culture, which arises through the interactions of members of a group over time. Culture should be distinguished from other aspects of the school climate, such as a governance structure, as Anderson (1979) makes clear by dividing climate into four dimensions:

(1) Ecology: Physical characteristics
(2) Milieu: Aggregate of individual attributes
(3) Social System: Organizational characteristics
(4) Culture: Shared norms, values, and meaning systems

The ecology, milieu, and social system of the school all contribute to the building of community. For example, small-sized classrooms and schools foster the face-to-face interactions among students and teachers necessary for effective moral discussions and primary group attachments. Small size alone does not guarantee the culture of community, nor does small size in combination with factors related to other dimensions, such as democratic participation, a characteristic of the social system. These other dimensions can help bring about the culture of community, but the culture must be studied directly.

The development of the following approach to assessing the moral culture of high schools began with the hypothesis that the just community approach would overcome the gulf between teachers and students by establishing shared norms of discipline and peer interaction. In just community theory, the ideal moral culture is conceptualized as a community in which relationships are valued for their own sake and the individual's action proceeds from and expresses the norms and values of the group. A community has primary group features that distinguish it from a secondary group in which relationships tend to be valued instrumentally and the individual's action proceeds from and manifests a sense of duty and personal values. A community has also distinctive norms that go over and above what is expected in other forms of association. For example, in a community members are expected to care for and trust each other. The norms of caring and trust include but go beyond norms of respect for the individual and for property.

In the typical school, administrators and teachers respond to incidents of stealing by recommending greater caution, by attempting to deter it by harsher sanctions, and in extreme cases by attempting to catch the thief. All of these responses are premised on the assumption that theft is inevitable and is the individual victim's (or potential victim's) concern. In a just community, on the other hand, theft is seen as a violation of communal bonds of caring and trust, and dealing with theft is, therefore, everyone's responsibility (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989). We believe that the just community approach succeeds in addressing disciplinary problems like theft and cheating because it encourages its members to share communal values and ideals. In other words, the just community approach appears to succeed because it establishes the kind of school culture that Wynne might call "pro-character."

Measuring School Culture

Initial research indicated that the culture of just community schools-within-schools was markedly different from the culture of the large traditional high school (Power, Higgins, &Kohlberg, 1989). That research was based on interviews that asked students how they and their peers respond to typical problems occurring in their school. Students from the just community schools described their schools as having strongly held shared norms prohibiting stealing, cheating, and skipping class. Students from the conventional high schools described no such shared expectations in their schools. In fact, many students from the conventional high schools referred to the presence of counter-norms, such as not reporting a student who stole.

The Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg (1989) study used open-ended interviews that provided considerable insight into students' perceptions of the school culture but made blind assessment impossible. Moreover, the open-ended interview was limited by students' ability to generate descriptions of shared norms and values. The forced-choice questionnaire used in the present study asked students to recognize features of their culture by simply indicating their agreement or disagreement with pre-formulated items derived from proto-typical responses to the open-ended interview.

Method

Participants

The sample consists of students from four just community programs and two large public high schools. Two of the just community programs, JCR (Just Community Richardson) and JCAR (Just Community At-Risk), were located in RHS (Richardson High School), a large urban high school with a predominantly minority (African-American and Hispanic) and lower SES student population. JCR was sampled in its first and second year; therefore, the samples are designated JCRI and JCRII. JCAR was sampled early in its first year. Higgins (1991) describes the establishment and function of the just community approach in JCR and JCAR. The third just community program, JCB (Just Community Booth), is located in BHS (Booth High school), a large urban school for high achieving students with a mixed ethnic and SES student population. JCB was sampled in its first year. The fourth just community program, JCS (Just Community Sunnymeade), is an alternative suburban high school with predominantly Caucasian and high SES student population. It was sampled in its fifth year as a just community school. The two large comparison high schools in this study were RHS and BHS, which housed

three of the just community programs. Because of its high achieving student population, BHS was used as comparison group for JCS. A group of at-risk students from Richardson High School, ARRHS (At-Risk Richardson High School) was added as a comparison group for JCAR, a just community program for at-risk students. Representative samples of 10 to 30 students, equally divided between female and male from all grade levels, were selected. The problem of stealing had been discussed thoroughly in JCR (Higgins, 1991) and to a limited extent in JCS. The problem had not been discussed in the other just community programs or in the comparison schools.

Procedures

The questionnaire was subdivided into four major sections. Students were asked to respond to items on a five-point Lickert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Items in the first section addressed whether students were aware of the particular rule or norm in question and how fairly and effectively they believed the teachers enforced it. Items in the second section focused on students' perception of their peers' commitment to uphold the norm prohibiting stealing. Items in the third section asked students why it is wrong to steal. Students were asked to what extent they regard moral, conventional, personal, or communal justifications for not stealing as relevant (see Nucci, 1989). In this section, a subsample of students in JCR and RHS were also asked to give their own reasons for why stealing is wrong. These reasons were assessed for moral stage according to the procedures discussed in Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg (1987). Items in the fourth section addressed the acceptability of excuses given for not upholding the rule against stealing in school.

Results

Most students in all of the schools were aware that there was a rule prohibiting stealing. Students in JSR were, however, more aware of the rule than their counterparts in RHS (χ^2=19.7, df = 2, $p < .001$). Students in JCR and JCS were significantly more satisfied with their teachers' consistency (JCR vs. RHS : $\chi^2 = 11.9$, df = 1, $p < .001$; JCS vs. BHS: $\chi^2 = 4.7$, df = 1, $p < .05$) and fairness in enforcing the rule against stealing (JCR vs. RHS: $\chi^2 = 10.2$, df = 1, $p < .001$; JCS vs. BHS: $\chi^2 = 4.3$, df = 1, $p < .05$).

The students in all of the just community programs perceived that their peers are more committed to uphold the stealing norm then are the students in the comparison schools (See Table 1). Significant differences were found between three of the four just community programs and their comparison schools.

There were few differences between the just community programs and their comparison groups on the fairness (students should not steal because it is unfair to those who lose their property) and personal (students should not steal because one should develop the good habit of earning things through hard work) orientations of students' justifications for not stealing. As expected, students from the just community programs (with the exception of JCAR) rated the community orientation higher than did students from the comparison schools (See Table 2). A content analysis of the open-ended question "Why do you think student should not steal in your program?" showed that 12 of 14 JCR students (86%) in contrast to none of their peers in RHS referred to community as a reason for not stealing.

A factor analysis indicated that students did not discriminate among stage-typed items but responded consis-

Table 1
Perceptions of Students' Committment to Uphold the Rule against Stealing

Group	*M*	*SD*	*n*
JCS	25.17**	3.74	12
JCB	17.36	3.74	22
BHS	16.72	4.88	18
JCRI	18.30*	3.79	30
JCRII	18.67**	3.99	33
RHS	14.51	2.57	31
JCAR	17.35*	2.58	34
ARHS	14.10	2.56	10

$F = 13.97$*; $df = 7, 182$

*$P < .01$
**$P < .001$

Table 2
Community as a Justification for Not Stealing

Group	*M*	*SD*	*n*
JCS	5.00**	0.00	12
JCB	4.65*	0.65	23
BHS	4.21	1.03	19
JCRI	4.77*	0.43	30
JCRII	4.45	0.70	35
RHS	4.37	0.73	35
JCAR	4.17	0.88	36
ARHS	4.31	0.63	13

$F = 33.3$**; $df = 7, 195$

*$P < .05$
**$P < .01$

Table 3
Mean Ratings for Excuses for Not Enforcing Stealing Norm

	It's okay for students not to enforce the stealing rule or not report others because...				
Group	A	B	C	D	E
JCS	2.09	1.64**	2.09**	1.45*	1.09*
JCB	3.62	2.41**	3.19	2.29	1.57
BHS	2.94	3.65	3.35	2.41	2.24
JCRI	2.87	2.80**	2.50	2.53	2.30
JCRII	2.71	2.82**	3.00	2.97	2.66
RHS	3.31	3.72	2.69	2.89	2.56
JCAR	3.25	3.28	3.14	3.17	3.13
ARHS	2.92	3.31	2.69	3.08	2.53
F	1.97	5.33****	2.23*	3.74***	5.56****
df	7, 191	7, 192	7, 189	7, 189	7, 191

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$
***$p < .001$
****$p < .0001$

Note: A = there is no guarantee that a student who is reported will be treated fairly
B = you might get beaten up if you say something
C = students should not be asked to betray their loyalty to each other
D = it's none of your business if others choose to steal
E = students should not have the same responsibilities as adult authorities in the school

tently by orientation (fairness, community, personal, and conventional). An analysis of student responses to the open-ended question asking why stealing was wrong showed that the JCR students were significantly higher on the stealing norm than their peers in RHS (M_{JCR} = 294; M_{RHS} = 231, $t = 3.6, p < .001$).

Results from the last section of the questionnaire indicated that students in JCS were consistently less accepting of excuses for not supporting the stealing rule than were their peers (see Table 3). Students in all of the just community programs were less accepting of the excuse most indicative of a low stage moral culture "You might get beaten up if you say something."

Discussion

In sum, these findings with the forced-choice moral culture questionnaire are consistent with those reported in the first evaluation of the just community programs (Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg, 1989). No longitudinal change was found, however, between JCRI and JCRII. As expected, JCS fared the best of all of the just community programs on all of the indices of moral culture. JCS was a well-established just community program and stealing and the related issue of cheating had been thoroughly discussed there over a number of years. The other just community programs were sampled relatively early in their development, and only in JCR had the problem of stealing been directly addressed. The results suggest that democratic discussion played a crucial role in helping JCR students to appreciate their teachers' and their fellow students' commitment to uphold the rule against stealing and to help the JCR students see stealing as an offense against community. Anecdotal evidence suggests that JCR's lack of progress from its first to its second year may be explained by students' disappointment in the second year that some stealing still occurred in their program (Higgins, 1991). Measures of moral culture are vulnerable to the fact that as individuals raise their expectations, they become more critical and less satisfied. Although JCR had far smaller percentage of stealing incidents than in RHS, the students in JCR were, nonetheless, upset that any stealing would occur.

The finding that students in the just community programs regard their teachers as enforcing the rule against stealing more consistently and fairly addresses the traditionalists' concern that democratic participation may erode respect for authority or is irrelevant to the process of character education. The democratic meetings provide teachers with an opportunity to present themselves as supporting the common good rather than asserting their will as adult authorities. The democratic meetings also appear to help students to perceive their peers as more supportive of the school's rules and norms, as the results presented in Table 2 suggest. The students in the comparison schools tend to perceive their peers as less concerned about upholding the stealing rule than they are. Students in the comparison schools, moreover, tend to see their peers as more accepting of stealing. Establishing a culture of community in school seems to require that, at the very least, students sense a common commitment to uphold fundamental norms and values. The experience of democratic deliberation seems to provide an effective wayfor students to communicate that they are well intentioned as individuals and that they are willing to invest themselves in supporting the good of their school.

The results from the third and fourth sections of the questionnaire suggest that democratic deliberation may be a fruitful way to promote students' understanding of their responsibility to uphold school rules and policies. Character educators would not be surprised by these findings. They would, however, call into question their relevance. Moral reasoning seems to play a peripheral role in the acquisition of a virtue of respect for property because children know that stealing is wrong well before they get into high school. The challenge from a character education perspective is to habituate students to avoid stealing. Habituation appears to involve practice, not reflection. Yet, if habituation were simply a matter of practice, one might expect that, as children matured, they would steal less frequently. There is some evidence, however, that stealing increases in adolescence (Miller, 1997). Although this increase may be influenced by the greater freedoms and temptations of adolescence, this increase may also be related to adolescents; susceptibility to negative peer group influences (Berndt, 1979). This susceptibility has an important cognitive dimension; adolescents reasoning at Stages 2 and 3 experience genuine conflict between pleasing peers and pleasing authorities. Only at Stage 4 social systems perspective can resolve this conflict. Democratic discussions in the just community meetings focus precisely on the individual's responsibility to the group.

Ryan (1996) claims that the practice of democracy gives students responsibility that is not theirs. Although students are arguably incompetent to make decisions about many aspects of schooling, such as the structure of the curriculum, they are certainly competent to make decisions about disciplinary issues, such as stealing. The just community schools that took up the problem of stealing in community meetings helped students to see the connection between stealing and community and to be less accepting of excuses for stealing. These findings suggest that the practice of democracy empowers students to address the negative peer pressure and alienation that breeds and protects covert problem behaviors, such as stealing, cheating, and drug and alcohol use. On the other hand, these findings also imply that the unilateral assertion of adult authority may well encourage student irresponsibility and apathy.

The study presented here represents a preliminary effort to identify and to investigate some of the critical features of a community culture. The significance of any one of these features is open to debate. Moreover, there are issues other than stealing that need to be studied, such as cheating and fighting. We hope that this research can at the

very least encourage educators to make more precise and empirically based claims about how to build a culture of community in schools. Although the results of this study suggest that democratic participation can play a significant role in developing a community in high schools, they do not demonstrate that democratic participation is necessary for community. The non-democratic schools investigated here may not represent the kind of authoritarian leadership advocated by some character educators. It is unclear, however, how an authoritarian approach can address a high school culture in which the peer group wields considerable influence over covert behavior. Finally, an authoritarian approach seems ill suited for fostering and educational community in a democratic society. This study adds to a growing body of data indicating student participation fosters the habits of responsible participation essential for a flourishing democratic society.

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