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## An ethic of sharing: perspectives on the disposition of elementary students to share

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**AN ETHIC OF SHARING:  
PERSPECTIVES ON THE DISPOSITION OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS  
TO SHARE**

**MASTER'S PROJECT**

**Submitted to the School of Education  
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science in Education**

**by**

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Approved by:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact a signature.

Official Advisor

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction to the Problem

This study examined altruistic characteristics of students in the fifth and sixth grades in two midwestern school districts. Some of the students were from traditional classroom settings where students were taught and evaluated individually. Other students were from cooperative classroom settings where they worked in groups to complete assignments. This study was designed to determine if there is a relationship between the level of altruism in students in cooperative learning classrooms compared to the level of altruism in students in traditional classrooms. The second purpose was to determine if certain factors (i.e., gender, family income, and number of siblings) influence the degree of altruism in students. The final purpose was to ascertain what reasons students provide to justify altruistic decisions.

American society does not allow, for all practical purposes, people to live separate from others. People work together, live together, and spend their leisure time together. There were even times in previous centuries when it was illegal to live alone. Institutions function and prosper because of cooperation among the institutional members. Therefore, it is imperative for children to understand the value of others in society and to consider the needs of others in negotiating relationships.

One of the first values a child learns is a value of giving or sharing. The child must learn how and when to share toys with friends or siblings. An emphasis on

sharing has been displayed by educators and parents for a long time (Ritchie, 1989). The McGuffey Readers, in the 1800s, contained stories of selfishness and how characters took steps to overcome it. More recently, a number of authors directly confront the importance of altruistic relationships for young people. Appendix A provides an example of books that reflect the altruism theme. The notion of sharing is an important value that children need to learn as part of their daily lives.

According to Jean Piaget, young children cannot fully understand why sharing is appropriate, but they do know they should share simply because it is the right thing to do. However, around the time a child turns eleven or twelve and moves into Piaget's formal operation stage, he or she starts to understand the relevance of sharing (Ginsburg and Oppen, 1969). The child may start to realize that cooperative agreement and sharing of ideas is good not only for the group but also for personal best interest (Wadsworth, 1989).

If children understand the concept of sharing and if this is reinforced by significant adults, children will begin to understand that sharing facilitates cooperation, good moral reasoning, and harmony within the society (Ritchie, 1989).

The fifth and sixth graders in this study were near or at this formal operation stage. They had begun to think with a level of abstraction that enables them to consider the needs of others in relationship to their own needs. It was imperative to discover whether the teaching methods and classroom context aid in engendering altruistic dispositions in a child's thinking. Further, it was important to determine what factors influence the capacity for altruistic thought of children and to discover the children's reasons for altruistic responses.



## Research Questions

Three questions served as the framework for this study.

1. Is there a relationship between the level of altruism in students in cooperative learning classrooms compared to the level of altruism in students in traditional classrooms?
2. Do specific factors (i.e., gender, family income, and number of siblings) influence the capacity for altruistic responses?
3. What reasons do students provide to justify altruistic decisions?

## Significance of the Study

One of the purposes of this study is to examine the relationship between classroom structure and the level of altruism in children ages eleven and twelve. If classroom structure and gender-related child rearing techniques can help mold students into a more caring, selfless person, then educators need to be aware of the various influences in order to understand how their decisions influence student responses.

According to Damon (1988), "parents worry that their children are growing up bereft of traditional values. Teachers complain that their students seem ethically shallow and worse" (p. ix). However, it is difficult to teach values and moral decision making in such a way as to not offend parental family values, even though moral education has become a growing concern (Damon, 1988).

In order to avoid values teaching, teachers could improve the altruistic traits of a student by understanding the factors that influence altruistic behavior. For example, teachers could arrange a classroom in such a way as to facilitate altruistic behavior. Once the concept of altruism is understood, the principle of

"respect for others" that is essential for a moral social setting should begin to actualize (Ritchie, 1989). Our society will begin to have members who are more other-centered (i.e., more altruistic).

## Definitions

Altruism - the principle of seeking the welfare of others unaffected by rewards or punishments (Wilson, 1978).

Cooperative learning classroom - a classroom that is set up to encourage students, in small groups of three to five, to work together until a proper solution and answer is reached on a problem. It encourages students to discuss, share, debate and teach one another. Desks are usually grouped or students sit at tables.

Formal operation period - a cognitive development stage described by Jean Piaget. During this stage, the child's cognitive structures reach the highest level of development, and children are able to apply logical reasoning skills to problem solving situations. From a Piagetian perspective, children, ages eleven to fifteen, are in this stage or are beginning this stage of development.

Mutualness - the second category of students associated with the money analysis question. Students in this category divided their allocated money equally among themselves and others.

Otherness - the third category of students associated with the money analysis question. Students in this category spent the majority of their allocated money on others.

Selfness - the first category of students associated with the money analysis question. Student in this category spent the majority of their allocated money on themselves.

Sharing - dividing and distributing belongings, information, and experiences with others.

Traditional classroom - a classroom that is commonly quiet with little interaction with other students when working on assignments. Desks are commonly arranged in rows.

### Delimitations

This study took place in two midwestern school districts, one suburban and one urban, during the 1992 -1993 school year. Student subjects (N = 301) were in the fifth and sixth grades. Participants were drawn from ten traditional classes and three cooperative learning. A survey distributed by classroom teachers was used with three categories of information being collected. The first category of data was collected by questionnaire to elicit students' answers to biographical information, a money analysis question, and a problem solving scenario. The second category of data compared specific factors (classroom environment, gender, family income, and number of siblings) with the level of altruistic responses. A third category of data was collected by the researcher interviewing students to elicit reasons for their altruistic decisions.

### Assumptions

Several assumptions frame the conduct and conclusions drawn from this study. First, it is assumed that each student answered the questions honestly. Students were told that their names would not be used and that their answers would not be graded. Given the level of anonymity, student responses should have been candid and honest. Second, it is assumed that the principals in each school district correctly categorized the participating teachers as being either a cooperative learning teacher or a traditional teacher. Principals were given the guidelines that a teacher who uses cooperative learning groups forty percent of the time is a cooperative learning teacher. If a teacher uses cooperative learning groups less than forty percent of the time, he or she is considered a traditional teacher. Third, it is assumed that altruism is a positive value attribution and warrants further investigation.

### Limitations

Three limitations complicate any effort to extrapolate and generalize findings to a broader context. First, the study was limited to one metropolitan area and to just two school districts. Second, only fifth and sixth graders were questioned and interviewed by the researcher. Older students were not represented even though they are included in Piaget's formal operation stage of development. Third, different types of traditional and cooperative learning teachers are evident in schools. Even though only these two categories were used, it does not mean each teacher in that category teaches in a manner similar to his or her colleagues. Teachers use different means of presenting material and evaluating students even when they structure their classrooms in similar ways.

## Chapter 2

### Review of literature

Individuals do not live in isolation. The structure of society demands that individuals constantly interact with one another. Every aspect of a person's life is either indirectly or directly affected by another person. Ritchie (1989) notes: "Since humanity does not live separately, a consciousness toward another must be developed" (p. 366).

Nel Noddings (1989), author of Caring, a Feminine Approach to Ethic and Moral Education, states that "human beings have a natural inclination to care for one another and that morality derives from, and is maintained by, people's efforts to live up to an ideal which they create from their finest memories of caring and being cared for" (p. 171). When playing, children tend to portray those events they have experienced which have some importance for them. As such, children often assume the role of care-giver, which they model from their parents' actions (Garvey, 1977). Adults have a memory of when they were cared for and use this memory to cope with tragedies. When tragic events and natural disasters occur, it is common for thousands of people to donate supplies and give of their time to help and care for those injured. Musical artists and other entertainers frequently team up to help raise money for those in need. This natural inclination to care for others also occurs on a smaller, more personal scale when tragedy occurs or problems arise within families.

However, caring for others needs to reach all aspects of daily life, not just when disaster strikes. People need to treat others in a respectful and caring

manner at all times. A democratic society requires such behavior of its people if the well-being of everyone is to be served.

Children need to understand the principle of "otherness." "Professionals studying children and social behaviors have suggested a number of different factors that may cause variation among individuals in helpfulness, generosity, and concern for others" (Eisenberg, 1992, p. 56).

Children need to be encouraged to think about others. Jean Piaget, the Swiss child psychologist argued that children, prior to the formal operation stage, do not evidence an ability to think abstractly. A child, therefore, can relate happenings to his or her own self, know what is right and wrong, but still not understand why a certain behavior or action is right or wrong. Around the age of eleven or twelve, children may begin to go through the formal operation stage in which they do develop this cognitive understanding. This stage is when it is very important to help and encourage children to become more caring (Ginsburg and Oppen, 1969).

Flapan (1968) noted: "Even though Piaget's work deals primarily with children's thinking processes about problems relating to quantity, size and shape, he has developed a more personal concept. It is called egocentricity" (p. 2). Piaget "concluded that the older child is more capable of viewing situations from the standpoint of other persons, has a more genuine interchange of ideas in his discussion, and unlike the younger child is better able to communicate the working of his thought processes" (Flapan, 1968, p. 2). If a child is given an opportunity to work cooperatively with others at a young age, then he or she will be able to understand the social benefits of cooperation and the importance of caring for others.

Studies of social development have also shown age trends. With age, children increase in empathy and in sympathy (Ausubel, 1954). In fact, there is a continuous development in both sharing and caring throughout childhood. Children begin to understand the idea of fairness, equality, and compromise. Once this has been established, children become more consistent in exhibiting this behavior (Damon, 1988).

Factors other than age and maturity affect the altruistic nature of children. Television, parental models, and a school's atmosphere may also influence children's perspectives.

Television is, in fact, a large influential factor. By the time a child reaches the age of eighteen, he or she has spent over 15,000 hours watching television (Eisenberg, 1992). Eventually, the television characters' values are tacitly instilled within a child's mind. Because characters are presented visually as representing the norms of society, children begin to internalize the impressions they receive through the television medium (Eisenberg, 1992). Advertisements on television and in newspapers emphasize terminal values such as prosperity and the importance of possessions. Instead of viewing products as a want, commercials make non-necessities a need (Ritchie, 1989). Ritchie argues that "advertising institutionalizes envy and its attendant activities" (p. 371). In one study, Ritchie found that three and four-year olds, when solving the problem of sharing, determined it was better to "get another one" (toy or play thing) instead of sharing what was available.

"Parents and caregivers influence the child's capacity for caring" (Eisenberg, 1992, p. 88). This influence is ultimately carried over to adulthood. Some adults seek the easy solution in order to avoid a conflict. If children are fighting over

who gets the last piece of gum, American parents have a tendency to solve the problem by purchasing an additional piece rather than insisting on sharing the last piece (Ritchie, 1989). Ritchie points out that it is not uncommon for parents "to buy a different box of cereal for each child in a family" (p. 371). Because parents influence the child's capacity for caring and sharing, these types of situations make it more difficult for children to view their parents as caring role models (Eisenberg, 1992).

A parent's discipline plan is generally associated with a child's social behavior (Eisenberg, 1992). If a parent uses a power-assertive plan that includes physical punishment or deprivations of privileges, this correlates with a low level of prosocial behavior (Eisenberg, 1992). Children, in general, imitate their parents' social behavior whether it is positive or negative (Eisenberg, 1992).

Traditionally, a school's atmosphere is set up with desks in rows. Children are separated from friends and required to work independently (Lasley, 1987). Usually the room is quiet and there is no or limited interaction between and among classmates. This type of setting elicits competition rather than cooperation (Lasley, 1987). This pressure to compete with others for awards, honors, and attention is self-centered and does not promote a sense of otherness (Badcock, 1986).

The Japanese educational system has been successful in implementing cooperation in the classroom setting and responsibility in the students (Enloe and Lewin, 1987). Instead of emphasizing individual competition, Japanese teachers emphasize "whole person development in the social context" (Enloe and Lewin, 1987, p. 234). A child's membership in a cooperative group may help that child



recognize competition and, therefore, avoid its more pernicious forms (Lewis, 1984).

In Japan, according to Enloe and Lewin (1987), "education is not simply preparation for adulthood or citizenship; it is also very much a real participation in the present in the life of a responsible community" (p. 238). Children in the upper grades work with and help the younger children. Each child has certain daily obligations to the class and school like cleaning the classroom, toilets, and school grounds (Enloe and Lewin, 1987). Most classrooms in Japan are organized around group work. Students are heterogenously grouped with each member having his or her own role in the group. Students work together until a consensus on how to solve a problem is reached (Enloe and Lewin, 1987). Teachers reduce "competition for symbols of the teacher's attention like honors, awards, hand raising" (Lewis, 1987, p. 72). The teacher acts as a facilitator and much of the classroom authority is delegated to the children (Lewis, 1987).

In the American educational system, the cooperative learning technique is becoming much more visible. Teachers who practice cooperative learning techniques set up their classrooms in conceptually similar ways to those in Japan. Students work in heterogeneous groups of three to five students. Each student has a group role (i.e. leader, recorder, collector) and is responsible for his or her assigned duties. Students are joined with peers so that the individual succeeds only when all groups members succeed (Slavin, 1991). Cooperative learning "encourages students to discuss, disagree, and ultimately to teach one another" (Slavin, 1991, p. 71).

Classroom research over two decades has found that "the positive effects of cooperative learning on student achievement depends on the use of rewards based

on the individual learning of group members" (Slavin, 1991, p. 89). The goal is for both the individual and the group to succeed.

"There are many different forms of cooperative learning but all of them involve having students work in small groups or learn to help one another learn academic material" (Slavin, 1991, p. 71). Classroom goals, group goals, evaluating techniques, and the reward system affect how successful a cooperative learning classroom will be.

In summary, the research on sharing suggests that children will begin to develop values during their preschool years: "They learn them (values) partly from their friends, partly from television, but mostly from their family" (Eyre, 1993, p. 22). As the children approach adolescence these values develop more and are sometimes altered. Thus, parents and educators must take a proactive approach in forming the value of giving (Eyre, 1993). The research in the paper focuses on just one value of giving—altruism.

### Chapter 3

#### Methodology

One purpose of this study was to establish if there is a relationship between the level of altruism of students in cooperative learning classrooms compared to the level of altruism of students in traditional classrooms. The second purpose was to determine if particular factors (i.e., gender, family income, and number of siblings) contribute to the degree of altruism in students. The final purpose was to discover what reasons students furnish to justify altruistic decisions.

#### Design of Study

Two types of data were collected for the purposes of this study. The first set of data was collected through a questionnaire that elicited student responses to biographical information, a money analysis question, and a problem solving scenario. These data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A second category of data consisted of structured interviews conducted to identify the reason for students' altruistic or sharing decisions, especially with regard to their responses to the money analysis question.

#### Selection of Participants

The population chosen for this study consisted of fifth and sixth grade students (N = 301) in two midwestern school districts, one urban and one suburban. The participants' ages ranged from ten to thirteen. Students were selected from two types of classrooms, traditional (N = 233) and cooperative (N = 68). The classrooms were categorized as representing either traditional or cooperative

learning styles based on the teaching style of the classroom teacher. The teaching style of the teachers were judged cooperative or traditional by the principal of each participating school. The principals were asked to consider a person a "cooperative learning teacher" if he or she utilized cooperative groups about forty percent of the classroom instructional time. Seven classrooms were labeled as traditional, and three classrooms were categorized as cooperative learning classrooms by the principals.

#### Methods Used to Collect Data

After the principals categorized each teacher as cooperative or traditional, teachers received a letter explaining the purpose of the study (see Appendix B) as well as a questionnaire that included biographical information, a money analysis question, and a problem solving scenario (see Appendix C). Each questionnaire was coded by type of classroom and school district. Teachers had a week to complete questionnaires with their students and return them to the researcher.

Two students, a boy and girl, were interviewed after the questionnaire responses were divided into three categories. The interviews were conducted to acquire insights as to reasons for the children's answers to the money analysis question (see Appendix D). The researcher determined interviewees based on their altruistic responses and because they came from similar home environments. The interviews were structured, tape recorded, and transcribed.

#### Characteristics of the Data

The students' responses to the questionnaire were arranged into three categories according to how they spent their money on the money analysis

question. The money analysis question asked that students identify how they would spend one hundred dollars. Student responses were inductively categorized as Selfless, Mutualness, or Otherness. Category one (titled "Selfness") students were those who spent the majority of the money, (i.e., over seventy-five dollars, on themselves); category two ("Mutualness") students divided the money equally between themselves and others; and category three ("Otherness") students spent the majority of the money on others. Statistical information on the different groups was collected and is provided in Figure 1.

Two Otherness students, those who spent the majority of the money on others, were purposefully identified (one boy and one girl) and interviewed. The two students were chosen because of their altruistic responses to the money analysis question and to their similar home environments. Both had an equal number of siblings and both were from single parent homes. The structured interviews were conducted during the spring of 1993 and were intended to acquire insights as to reasons for the children's altruistic answers to the money analysis problem. Appendix E provides a transcription of the tapes. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the subjects.

**Figure 1**  
**Student Categories**

	<b>Selfness</b>	<b>Mutualness</b>	<b>Otherness</b>	<b>Mixed Responses</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number of Boys</b>	43 (30%)	34 (24%)	51 (35%)	16 (11%)	144
<b>Number of Girls</b>	41 (26%)	52 (33%)	53 (34%)	11 (7%)	157
<b>Total</b>	84 (28%)	86 (29%)	104 (34%)	27 (9%)	301

## Chapter 4

### Analysis of the Data

One purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between the type of classroom setting (which includes selected demographics) and the level of altruism in children, specifically comparing the traditional style to cooperative style of teaching. The second purpose was to determine the relationship between specific factors (i.e., gender) and the degree of altruism in students. The third purpose was to identify the reasons that students express to justify altruistic decisions.

This study took place in two midwestern school districts, one suburban and one urban. Student subjects (N=301) were in the fifth and sixth grade, with ages ranging from ten to thirteen years. Classrooms selected for participation consisted of seven traditional classrooms and three cooperative learning classrooms.

A regression analysis was completed relative to all the demographic data in an attempt to identify predictors of altruistic behaviors. No variable emerged as salient predictors. There was not a significant finding as to whether the learning style of the classroom, family income, or number of siblings, influenced altruistic responses to the money analysis question. The researcher had hoped that some predictive relationship between the type of classroom and the students' dispositions toward altruism or sharing behavior would be found. Unfortunately, no such predictive relationship was identified.

To determine whether differences existed relative to how boys and girls would spend the one hundred dollars (see Appendix C), a chi-square was computed.

Statistical significance did occur, with girls showing more altruistic dispositions. This difference was significant at a .04 level (see Table 1).

Students were given a questionnaire to elicit responses to biographical information, a money analysis question, and a problem solving scenario. The students' responses were arranged into three categories: Selfness, Mutualness, and Otherness. The categories were inductively derived based on how the students allocated their money on the money analysis question. Two Otherness students were purposefully identified and interviewed. These two students, a boy and a girl, were interviewed to identify the reasons for their altruistic responses in their money decisions. These students were chosen because of their similar altruistic answers and similar home environments. The interviews were taped and transcribed (see Appendix E).

The first question in the interview dealt with why the children chose to spend the money the way they did and if they would change the answers now. On the money analysis question, the girl spent all of the one hundred dollars on others. She decided to spend forty dollars on her mom and the new baby; twenty dollars on shoes for her brother; and forty dollars on food for her family. The boy spent the majority of the money on others; fifty dollars on clothing for the poor; thirty dollars on food for his family; and twenty dollars on games for himself. The girl responded that she did not feel right spending the money on herself because her mom did not have a job, money, or many clothes. She stated that she would not change her answer, even if she had the opportunity, except that she also might buy something for her dog. The boy said he decided to spend the money the way he did so the poor could buy what they need, so his family could eat, and so he



**Table 1**  
**Comparison of Boy and Girl Responses to Money Analysis Question**

	<b>A</b> \$95 on others	<b>B</b> \$70-90 on others	<b>C</b> Combination	<b>D</b> \$50+ on others	<b>E</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Boys</b>	28 64%	15 38%	34 40%	51 49%	16 59%	144 48%
<b>Girls</b>	16 36%	25 62%	52 60%	53 51%	11 41%	157 52%
<b>Total</b>	44 15%	40 13%	86 28%	104 35%	27 9%	301 100%

Chi-square 9.901;  $p < .05$

**Category groups**

**Selfness = Category A and B**

**Mutualness = Category C**

**Otherness = Category D**

could entertain himself. He also stated that he would not change his answer.

Both students felt their answers were true indications of how they felt.

When asked how each felt about sharing toys with others, the girl said she felt happy because the others could enjoy the toy, especially if they did not have a toy like it. The boy responded that he thought sharing is fine if one likes the person, but he would not share if he "hates the person."

The two responded differently to the question about which they liked better, giving or receiving. The girl said she liked "mostly giving because I have tons of clothes and tons of everything so I probably want to give." When asked what she did not like about sharing, she said she did not like the fact that her items could become broken. She also was concerned that the person who gave her the gift would have hurt feelings if it were broken. The boy said he liked receiving gifts more than giving "because some stuff I don't have that I'd like to get so I like receiving." However, he stated that he gives more than he receives (e.g., sharing clothes with his friends). He gave a response similar to the girl's when asked about negative aspects of sharing. He was afraid that his items might become ruined.

The children were then asked for a definition of what it means to cooperate with others. The girl responded by saying: "It means to like if they have an answer and you have an answer and you both cooperate to get it so you don't get mad at each other. You try to cooperate so you don't get the wrong answer and also so you don't get into a fight or anything." The boy's response was "Treat them nicely." When the researcher asked him if he wanted to elaborate, he said "No."

The last question posed was whether the children had to share anything at home. The girl indicated that sometimes she had to share her guinea pig, Nintendo, and Super Nintendo with her brother. The boy said he did not have to share anything at home. The researcher then asked again why he decided to share the money with the poor and with his family. His response was "I think it's nice sharing with the poor because all they do is live in the streets and if I give the fifty dollars they can at least get something like stay in a cheap hotel or something."

According to Webster's New World Dictionary, the definition of altruism is "an unselfish concern for the welfare of others; selflessness." Both children spent the majority of the money on others. They expressed a concern for those less fortunate. They both indirectly stated that sharing is important when others need it more. Both children displayed the importance of having the basic necessities of food, shelter, and clothes, but they consider the welfare of others as just as significant as their own needs. The boy said the poor should have some place to stay like in a "cheap hotel," and that his family needed money for food. The girl thought it was more important for her mother to have clothes and food on the table than for the some of the non-essential items she wanted.

Even though the selection of the two Otherness children was based on specific and similar criteria, the girl gave more altruistic and selfless responses than the boy. The girl showed empathetic feelings when discussing how the giver of a gift would feel if that gift were broken. She did not want such an event to happen because "the person that gave it to me would be hurt." The boy did not express similar regret. The girl also exhibited a good understanding of what it means to cooperate with others. She recognized that people sometimes disagree and that to

resolve conflicts, people must cooperate and compromise, even if the compromise meant some self-denial.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Recommendations

One purpose of the study was to determine if there is a relationship between the level of altruism in students and the types of classroom setting of the teacher, traditional and cooperative learning. The second purpose was to determine if specific factors (e.g., gender, family income, and number of siblings) influence children to answer in an altruistic fashion. The third purpose was to determine why students give altruistic responses and to identify the reasons.

A regression analysis was completed in order to identify predictors of altruistic characteristics of students related to their demographics (i.e., gender, family income, and number of siblings). No significant predictors emerged.

A chi-square was computed to determine if a relationship existed between the classroom structures of the teacher, traditional and cooperative, and the level of altruism manifested by the student. Again, no significant findings emerged.

A second chi-square was completed to determine differences between boys and girls in the sample classes regarding how they would spend one hundred dollars on the money analysis question. The girls answered the money analysis question with more altruistic responses. This difference was significant at a .04 level. Based on the students' responses, three categories of response data were inductively derived: Selfness, Mutualness, and Otherness. Students in the Selfness category were those who spent the majority of the money, over seventy-five dollars, on themselves; students placed in the Mutualness category divided the money equally between themselves and others; and those in the final category, titled Otherness, spent the majority of the money on others.

A boy and a girl, who spent the majority of their money on others and were in the Otherness category, were interviewed. Both displayed altruistic dispositions by expressing concern for those less fortunate. According to their answers, it was more important for others to have basic necessities than for them to selfishly acquire something unneeded for themselves.

The girl's answers, however, expressed an understanding of why sharing is important. She gave a clear definition of what it means to cooperate and was able to elaborate on this topic. The boy's responses were less reflective and thoughtful. For him it seemed that sharing was the "thing to do," but he did not necessarily appreciate why sharing was important.

### Implications

Girls in this study tended to answer the questions in a more altruistic manner than boys which has implications for both parents and educators. Assuming that the environment of a child influences his or her psychological development, parents and educators should be aware of how they interact with girls as compared to boys. Perhaps from the time of birth girls are treated in a more gentle and caring way. They are told it is okay to be sensitive, empathetic, and sympathetic. Boys, on the other hand, may be treated as if they are tough and strong. They may be told that it is not masculine to be sensitive and empathetic. Perhaps teachers interact with the girls in a softer, kinder voice, and are more patient with them. Touching a student represents "all that is caring, supportive, or confirming" (LaFrance, 1985, p. 40). Good teachers touch because it is reassuring and friendly. Research has shown that females are touched more than

males. "This pattern replicates the studies on personal space which show that people move closer to women than men" (LaFrance, 1985, p. 40). Perhaps these results indicate greater warmth and caring of females in a social setting. That greater warmth may ultimately influence the female sharing response.

### Recommendations

That fact that there was a significant difference between boys and girls and their altruistic dispositions when answering the money analysis question suggests that a study needs to be completed to see if and how the two sexes are treated differently and how this affects a child's value system and decision making.

The fact that there was not a significant difference between students in a cooperative learning setting compared to a traditional setting could be due to the relatively small sample studied. Also, the sample was not equally divided between students from cooperative learning classrooms and traditional classrooms. Another study should be completed using a larger number of subjects and equal numbers of each type of classroom. These students should be questioned and interviewed in order to arrive at a more accurate conclusion about the influence of classroom settings.

Perhaps another reason for the lack of significant findings was related to the criteria or system used to define cooperative and traditional classrooms. If these concepts were more fully defined and controlled, the findings could change. Student subjects should be a member of the same type of classroom, either traditional or cooperative learning, for a consecutive number of years. The aggregate impact of each type of classroom could be accurately measured for the full influence.

A study that looks at how children arrive at their altruistic decisions should be conducted. By understanding the process by which children reach a decision, parents and educators could accurately guide and help children in making caring and selfless decisions.

Another study that tests the validity of the three categories represented in this study (Selfness, Mutualness, Otherness) should be conducted. A similar study looking at how children share toys, school supplies, or food, for instance, should be done to determine if there is a significant difference between students' responses and specific factors (e.g., gender, family income, and number of siblings).



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## Appendix A

The book titles and annotations provided on the following pages are examples of literature for children and young adults that reflect the altruistic theme.

### Children's Picture Books

*Chicken Sunday.* Patricia Polacco. Philomel Books, 1992.

Two boys and a girl of different religions and races have a common bond of love for an older woman, Miss Eula. They love her and know that she loves them. Though poor, Miss Eula has an abundant ability to share her personal gifts with the children. The children, in turn, want to give a gift to Miss Eula—a beautiful hat. The children learn how to encounter and deal with difficulty even when trying to do something good for others. They succeed in purchasing the gift and the lessons of the "journey" are a part of their adult understanding when they leave the neighborhood to start their own lives.

*I Know A Lady.* Charlotte Zolotow. Greenwillow Books, 1984.

A little girl befriends an older woman who shows her the gift of friendship. The woman shares her love for the natural beauty of the world and shows her how to appreciate the importance of love. The little girl begins to reflect on her own life and hopes that, like her older friend, she will be able to love in the same way.

*Mama, Do You Love Me?* Barbara M. Joose. Chronicle Books, 1991.

A beautiful story about the selfless love of a parent told in the traditions of the Inuit Eskimo. A young Inuit child questions her mother on the conditions of love. The mother describes her feelings about the actions and misbehaviors of the child, but she makes it quite clear that absolutely nothing could deter the fullness of her love for her Dear One.

*Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters.* John Steptoe. Scholastic, 1987.

Two daughters, Manyara and Nyasha, live in a small, remote village with their father. Nyasha is kind and gentle; Manyara is selfish and almost always angry. The King of their magnificent land seeks a new wife and asks to see both young women. Manyara leaves during the middle of the night in order to get a head start on her sister. On the way she meets people in need—she scorns or laughs at all of them. Nyasha leaves the next morning, meets the same people but responds with love. The daughters discover that those whom they met were really the King. He rewards the kind daughter by marrying her.

*The Story of Jumping Mouse.* John Steptoe. Luthrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1984.

A mouse begins a long journey to a far off land. Although he is small and vulnerable, he has a dream of traveling to distant places. As he starts his journey, he realizes how difficult travel can be. Several other animals help him, but each time they assist he selflessly gives them one of his personal gifts—his sense of

smell or his sense of sight. After traveling for days, he ends up incapacitated by his own self-sacrificing acts earlier in the journey. A magical frog appears, recognizes the spirit of giving that characterized the mouse and gives him a new gift that will enable his dream of travel to be a reality, the gift of flight.

### Young Adult Literature

*Drylongso*. Virginia Hamilton. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1992.

Lindy and her parents live in the dust bowl of the United States. This particular year has been unusually dry and dusty. Lindy's job is to clean the dust off of the sunflowers and other crops. She dreams of what life could be "if it rains."

As they plant tomatoes, a dust storm comes quickly and dramatically. The family attempts to keep the dust out of their house with wet rags in the window cracks. During the storm, a visitor named Drylongso comes in their door and falls on the floor.

Drylongso becomes the savior of their livelihood, the farm. He shares a message about soil conservation and finds an underground spring on the property to help the crops grow. He saves their farm by digging trenches and planting, then moves on to save others. "Where he goes, life will grow better," his mother said when he was born.

*Number the Stars.* Lois Lowry. Dell Publishing, 1989.

In Copenhagen, 1943, King Christian X rides on horseback through the city to greet his subjects daily, even during the Nazi occupation of the city. A blonde, 10 year-old Danish girl named Annemarie finds herself involved in the Resistance because of her best friend Ellen's family; as Jews, the Rosens are in danger.

After a warning from the local Rabbi, Annemarie's parents immediately make arrangements for the Rosens to hide from the German Soldiers. Family members put everything on the line to stop the terrible results of "relocations." More than once Annemarie lies to save Ellen—she finds out what fears go hand and hand with bravery.

Phone calls to her Uncle Henrick are in code. In spite of one girl's death the family continues to do the right thing to help others. As a nation of families the Danes move almost 7000 Jews to Sweden in a matter of several weeks "to create an ideal of human decency."

*Shiloh.* Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. Macmillan Publishing Co., 1991.

Living in a four room house between three hills in West Virginia, Marty feels like he has the best of all worlds. After his eleventh birthday, the one when he gets his new rifle, Marty discovers a dog—a cute beagle who walks with his tail between his legs, his belly on the ground. He finds out that the owner is a man named Judd, a person he has known to cheat others and kill deer out of season.

To save the dog from abuse, Marty steals food from and lies to his parents. He breaks a promise made to Judd in front of his father and tells lies about his

family to people in town—all to save "Shiloh" from being kicked and/or starved. Sadly, his protective measures almost get the dog killed.

While at the doctor's, Shiloh gets "found out" and Marty has to find another more honest way to keep the dog away from Judd. The amazing twist is that his hard work and honest perseverance are what impress the tough woodsman, not the emulation of Judd's own cheating ways.

*Summer of My German Soldier.* Bette Green. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publ. Group, 1988.

Patty Bergen, a twelve-year-old Jewish girl, risks everything for an escaped German prisoner of war—and does it in the state of Arkansas. This alone would make a great story of selflessness, but there is more. Patty is a physically and emotionally abused child whose only friends are her black housekeeper and a boy down the street, who lives in a shack. Patty tries diligently to win the affection of her parents and girls her own age. She eventually finds herself paying for her kindnesses with accusations of treason and a stint in a girl's reformatory. Still she persists. She does anything necessary to preserve truth and human dignity. Her next deed is to expose the conditions of the reformatory.

**Appendix B****December 5, 1992****Dear Sixth Grade Teachers,**

**I am currently working on my Master's project at the University of Dayton. In the study, I am looking at the level of altruism in sixth grade students.**

**I have spoken with each building principal about my project. They have agreed to let me question the sixth graders in (name of school district).**

**Attached are forms that I would like your students to complete. I have field tested this questionnaire with my students, and it took ten to fifteen minutes to complete.**

**Please return the forms to your building principal by Thursday, December 17, 1992.**

**Thank you in advance for your cooperation.**

**Sincerely,**

**Melissa Bogan**



## Appendix C

## Student Information

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

I am a boy \_\_\_\_\_ girl \_\_\_\_\_.

I live with:

\_\_\_\_\_ both my parents  
\_\_\_\_\_ my father  
\_\_\_\_\_ my mother  
\_\_\_\_\_ a relative (aunt, uncle, grandparents)

Does your father have a job?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know

If yes, describe that job:

\_\_\_\_\_

Does your mother have a job?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know

If yes, describe that job:

\_\_\_\_\_

How many brother do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

(Include step and/or half brothers who live with you).

How many sisters do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

(Include step and/or half sisters who live with you).

Do you share a room with a brother or sister?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

What chores do you regularly do around the house?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Spending My Money

You have just been given a total of \$100 to spend in any way you wish. You can spend it on yourself or on others. Describe 3 different ways you might spend the money.

1. What amount would you spend? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you buy? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is it for? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What amount would you spend? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you buy? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is it for? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What amount would you spend? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you buy? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is it for? \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ (You cannot go over \$100)

### What Would You Do?

Pretend your classroom has a reading area that has six fluffy pillows. You and your classmates go there and sit on the floor when your teacher reads to you. However, when your class is called to the reading area, several of the same students always manage to lean against the six pillows. This is starting to cause many disagreements. What can be done to help this situation?

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## Appendix D

### Interview questions

1. Why did you decide to spend the \$100 the way you did? Is there anything you would change now?
2. When sharing one of your toys with someone else, how does it make you feel? Why?
3. Which one makes you feel happier, giving or receiving? Why?
4. What don't you like about sharing?
5. What does it mean to cooperate with others?
6. Do you have to share things at home? If so, what things and with whom? How does this sharing make you feel?

## Appendix E

Interview 1  
Girl  
Spring, 1993

**QUESTION:** Why did you decide to spend the \$100 the way you did?

**ANSWER:** Well, because I don't think I should spend it all on myself and since my mom doesn't have a job and Jim has a job but he doesn't make that much money. My mom doesn't have a lot of money to buy a lot of clothes or anything.

**QUESTION:** Is there anything you would change now?

**ANSWER:** I'd keep it the same or maybe keep a little money to buy something for my dog.

**QUESTION:** When sharing one of your toys with someone else, how does it make you feel?

**ANSWER:** I share toys because I don't care if they get broken or anything. I feel happy that they like the toy or something and they get to play with it. It's like they don't have it so I let them play with it.

**QUESTION:** Which one makes you feel happier, giving or receiving? Why?

**ANSWER:** Mostly giving because I have tons of clothes and tons of everything so I probably want to give. Because some of my stuff I give to my friend, Jackie, because Karen has six kids and she has trouble. They are on welfare and everything even though her husband has a job.

**QUESTION:** What don't you like about sharing?

ANSWER: Well, sort of like, I guess, when you have something really expensive that someone gives you, I'm afraid that it would get broken and then I'm afraid that the person that gave it to me would be hurt. But I still like sharing.

QUESTION: What does it mean to cooperate with others?

ANSWER: It means to like if they have an answer and you have an answer and you have to cooperate and both cooperate to get so you don't get mad at each other. You try to cooperate so you don't get the wrong answer and also so you don't get into a fight or anything.

QUESTION: Do you have to share things at home? If so, what things and with whom?

ANSWER: Yes, sometimes. I have a guinea pig that I let my brother see because even though it was some of my money and some of my mom's and we have to share Nintendo and Super Nintendo and all that. Since I bought the dwarf hamster and gave it to him and even though I bought the stuff that you put on the bottom, like the gravel and stuff, I still have to share it with him.

QUESTION: How does this sharing make you feel?

ANSWER: I don't mind and usually I let my brother see my guinea pig anyway. The only time I'm nervous is when my little cousin, Amber, comes over and wants to pick it up because they sometimes throw it and stuff. That's the only time I'm nervous.

Interview 2  
Boy  
Spring, 1993

QUESTION: Why did you decide to spend the \$100 the way you did?

ANSWER: I want to spend some on the poor so they can buy stuff and \$20 more dollars for myself for entertainment and games for me and \$30 in food so we have something to eat.

QUESTION: Is there anything you would change now?

ANSWER: No.

QUESTION: When sharing one of your toys with someone else, how does it make you feel?

ANSWER: If I like the person I don't care, if I hate the person I wouldn't.

QUESTION: Which one makes you feel happier, giving or receiving? Why?

ANSWER: Receiving. Because some stuff I don't have that I'd like to get so I like receiving.

QUESTION: Do you give more now than you receive?

ANSWER: Yes. I let my friends borrow my clothes sometimes and stuff.

QUESTION: What don't you like about sharing?

ANSWER: If I really like something and they have it and I'm afraid that they are going to ruin it. My cousins break stuff of mine and blame it on me.

QUESTION: What does it mean to cooperate with others?

ANSWER: Treat them nicely.

QUESTION: Is there anything else?

ANSWER: No.

QUESTION: Do you have to share things at home? If so, what things and with whom?

ANSWER: No.

QUESTION: How does this make you feel? Why?

ANSWER: Happy. Cause I just said I don't like sharing stuff.

QUESTION: Why did you decide to share your money with the poor and with your family if you don't like sharing things?

ANSWER: Cause I think it's nice sharing with the poor because all they do is live in the streets and if I give them \$50 they can at least get something like stay in a cheap hotel or something.



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