"My artifact is my great-grandmother":

Family Artifact Museums as part of Multicultural Social Studies Learning Surrounds

Teaching social studies often presents a challenge to classroom teachers, particularly those who are committed to developing culturally-relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and project-based curriculum (Dewey, 1938/1972) which build on the lived experience of students. Elementary school teachers frequently lack the social studies content knowledge required by national and state standards, while both elementary and secondary school teachers struggle with how to teach content knowledge once it is defined. In this article, we describe how a Family Artifact Museum Project addresses these concerns, while allowing teachers to introduce key concepts from the National Council for the Social Studies thematic stands (NCSS, 1994). This is a project which we have found to be meaningful to students of all ages, from preschool through college, albeit in somewhat different ways. Our research in this paper focuses on children in pre-kindergarten through fourth grade. It is supported by the work of Seefeldt and Galper (2000), who emphasize the role of "active experience" in these early grades, and by Bruner (1960), who advocates a "spiral curriculum" which honors the potential of children of all ages to engage with important ideas.

Major themes which run from pre-kindergarten (pre-k) through high school social studies curriculum include examining similarities and differences among individuals and within and between groups, societies, geographical regions and historical epochs; exploring cultural diversity in all of its manifestations; and understanding the relationship between individuals, families and cultures and broader historical forces (NCSS, 1984). Common pedagogical goals can also include promoting citizenship through community building and scaffolding on student cultures and experiences to promote an interest in history and the social studies and understanding of a complex world (NCSS, 1994).

Our work with pre-k through high school students and adults in teacher education programs (A. Singer, 2003; J. Singer, 1998) utilizes a project approach to social studies education (Kilpatrick, 1934; Dewey, 1938/1972; Wigginton, 1988; A. Singer, 2003, 273-299). Teachers, especially those working with

children in the younger grade, have expressed concern about their ability to weave meaningful multicultural curriculum into schools and classrooms that are increasingly driven by the demands of testing and assessment (Furth, 2003; Swope and Miner, 2000). They have also felt the need to defend the idea of introducing what we call "big ideas" or essential questions into discussions with their students (Murphy and A. Singer, 2001). In response to their concerns, this study examines the use of Family Artifact Museums as part of multicultural social studies learning surrounds to promote social studies and multicultural understanding among young children (Pang, 2001).

In his now classic essay, *The Process of Education* (1960), Jerome Bruner argues for a "spiral" or expanding horizons curriculum. According to Bruner, "If one respects the ways of thought of the growing child, if one is courteous enough to translate material into his (*sic*) logical forms and challenging enough to tempt him to advance, then it is possible to introduce him at an early age to the ideas and styles that in later life make an educated man (*sic*)" (52). He summarizes this approach to teaching and learning with the statement, "any subject can be taught to any child in some honest form" and calls for a curriculum "built around the great issues, principles, and values that a society deems worthy of the continual concern of its members. Bruner (1966) later helped developed a social studies curriculum, *Man: A Course of Study*, based on these principles.

Bruner's approach to curriculum and instruction was well received and versions of the expanding horizon curriculum were incorporated by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) into a bulletin on *Defining the Social Studies* (Barr, Barth and Shermis, 1977) and a report by its Task Force on Scope and Sequence (NCSS, 1984). Hilda Taba (1971) advocated a similar approach that stresses teaching the same social studies concepts at each grade level while increasing the conceptual sophistication employed in questioning and discussion.

There have also been critics of Bruner from both the educational "left" and "right." Howard Gardner (1991) has expressed concern with a spiral curriculum and pedagogy based on a rigid developmentalism rooted in a Piagetian conception of children and learning (28-29). Josephine Davis (2003) raises raises similar concerns, noting that four-year-old children exhibit "an intuitive sensitivity towards time and

space . . . and use objects as tangible links to the past" (18). Proponents of democratic educational philosophies such as Jeannie Oakes and Martin Lipton (1999) insist that both curriculum and pedagogy should be situated in and respect the cultures of learners; what Gloria Ladson-Billings (1992) has called "culturally relevant" pedagogy. On the other hand, Diane Ravitch (1988) charges that there is no "research justifying the expanding environments approach" and condemns the "absence of historical and cultural content in the early grades" (39). Her criticisms have helped shaped social studies texts and curriculum developed in the 1990s, especially a new content and chronology-based curriculum adopted in California (Cornbleth and Waugh, 1995).

We are strong supporters of both a spiral social studies curriculum that increasingly engages students in more and more sophisticated discussion and questioning of social studies concepts and material and of a situated, multicultural, approach to teaching that respects the cultures of learners (Lave, Wenger and Etienne, 1991; MacCurtain et al, 2001). We believe that the creation of multicultural social studies learning surrounds using projects like the Family Artifact Museum melds these two pedagogies in a way that addresses the learning standards presented by the NCSS and other national organizations, while enhancing student literacy and promoting overall student academic performance. This school-as-museum approach, which is also used by science educators, has been described by Lillian Weber in her work on open classrooms (Weber and Dyasi, 1985) as a "learning surround" and by Janice Koch (2000:93) as a "Science Circus." In a similar vein, Howard Gardner (1991) proposed creating educational environments for young children where schools are modeled on museums and children as young as seven or eight have the opportunity to work in mixed age groups and apprentice with adults who are actually engaged in exploring a particular academic discipline.

The Family Artifact Museum Project reflects many of the goals expressed by these theorists. We have used family artifacts at a number of age and grade levels to promote student interest in social studies and to create a cultural context for learning. These have included presentations of family artifacts as part of a summer long thematic project on the people of New York City in a preK-4th grade community-based program; family artifact displays in public school kindergarten, second grade and fourth grade

classrooms; a class “Museum of Immigration” at an ethnically diverse Queens, New York middle school; a “Museum of Russian Immigration” created as a cooperative learning team project by recent Russian immigrants attending a Brooklyn, New York high school; and in university-level undergraduate and graduate teacher education classes.

In the social studies methods courses which J. Singer teaches for beginning elementary school teachers, the university classroom serves as a model for the elementary school classroom. Teacher education students acquire social studies content knowledge and skills while creating, and participating in, experiential learning activities which are meaningful and accessible to elementary school children (Dewey, 1938/1972; Seefeldt and Galper, 2000). On both the university and the elementary school level, students need to have opportunities to represent themselves in their work in ways which are meaningful to them as learners. The Family Artifact Museum Project provides an opportunity for students on all levels to accomplish this as they bring their family stories into the classroom and to see how the lives of ordinary people are part of history.

This project is a creative way to address New York State social studies and literacy learning standards and NCSS thematic strands. Teachers can help children understand the concept of an “artifact” by introducing appropriate children’s literature (J. Singer, 2003; see Appendix). An artifact display potentially represents a broad cross-section of contemporary U.S. history, including waves of immigration to the U.S., the Civil Rights Movement in the segregated south, the Cold War, and technological change; all historical developments that take on meaning for teacher-education students in the process of sharing relevant artifacts. In addition, sharing family artifacts supports the development of a sense of community in the university classroom, an experience which also provides teachers with a model of how to develop community in their own classrooms.

J. Singer introduces the idea of a Family Artifact Museum by having teacher education students read and discuss one or more relevant pieces of children's literature, including "The Keeping Quilt" by Patricia Polacco or "The Hundred Penny Box" by Sharon Bell Mathis. She then shares one of her family artifacts: a kitchen implement which belonged to her grandmother, or an engraved locket her grandfather

gave to her grandmother before they were married. These objects are between eighty-five and ninety years old, and they precipitate a discussion of immigration (NCSS Thematic Strand II, Time, Continuity, and Change), courtship practices (NCSS Thematic Strand I, Culture and Cultural Diversity), and changes in technology (NCSS Thematic Strand VIII, Science, Technology, Society).

The Family Artifact Museum is created by having students arrange their artifacts and accompanying museum cards on a table. Each class member takes a turn presenting his or her family artifact, explaining where it comes from, how old it is, what it is used for, and who it has belonged to. During this presentation, a photograph is taken of each presenter. Afterwards, the photographs are arranged on a bulletin board with the museum cards, and the display becomes their Family Artifact Museum. Family artifacts, which have been shared in J. Singer's teacher education classes have included religious objects, jewelry, kitchen utensils, and an infant's christening clothes.

During the 2002-2003, student teachers implemented family artifact projects in her classroom based on the model developed by J. Singer in her methods class. One student teacher described the responses of the children: "Sara brought a heart shell box and Carey brought in his card talking about his baby blanket. I had each child sit in front of the class and present their family artifact. It was really good to see how the children reacted to each other and each other's work. They sat and listened to their classmates and showed interest in seeing the artifacts. . . They ended up wanting to walk around the room and exchange with everyone."

In a second elementary education class, a teacher described the responses of her second graders to the family artifact project in their classroom: "All the children were really into it. They really loved sharing their artifacts. They have the feeling of being more connected to each other, of getting to know each other's family backgrounds, of why that artifact is so important to them, or who gave it to them. I really thought it was a great project. And it was appropriate for second grade. I thought it was age appropriate. They understood it; they got into it. And they read the book that Julie (student teacher) made. And the principal loved it, too. She loved it. She thought it was a great idea." Citing the principal's support in this

time of standardized teaching and learning is a powerful affirmation of a project which focuses on individual children and how they represent themselves.

The authors of this article have helped to create "Family Artifact Museums" in early childhood and elementary school classes where we tested our ability to implement Bruner's notion that "any subject can be taught to any child in some honest form." At one site, the museum was part of a theme unit on the people of New York City at a pre-K through 4th grade educational program in an inner-city community. The other two sites reported on here were a second grade classroom in a suburban area and a fourth grade classroom in an urban community .

At the pre-school/afterschool, classes read about local history and visited a number of community sites and museums in preparation for creating their own Family Artifact Museum. Teachers, children and some family members participated in the culminating activity by sharing and describing family artifacts that were exhibited in the school's community room where children gave tours of the exhibit to other classes and their parents at scheduled times. These artifacts included written documents, jewelry, clothing, photographs, foods and music. Express goals of the project were to involve students in thinking about and understanding history and the contemporary world while bringing the cultural and historical experiences of students and their families directly into the classroom and the learning process.

The family artifact project was introduced into each classroom with a reading from a work of children's literature and by a teacher showing children her own family artifact. In general, teachers offered a simple definition of a family artifact as "something that is old and is important to your family." Where possible, children handled the sample artifacts, and they discussed what they were used for and why they were important to families. During this process, teachers modeled a Family Artifact presentation (Bandura, 1986).

The children were encouraged to bring their artifacts to school prior to the day of the museum so they could practice explaining them in their classes. In one school age classroom, an eight-year-old presented a hat woven by her grandmother from palm fronds in the Dominican Republic. She explained that it was passed on "from my *grand*-mother to my *other* grand-mother, to my *mother* and then to *me*" and that for

thirty years "no one has ever worn the hat." As the other children tried to understand more about this artifact, each repeated, "from your *grand*-mother to your *other* grand-mother, to your *mother* and then to *you*." Another child brought a photo album given to her mother ten years earlier. She walked around the circle, showing a few photographs to each child. Even though they were growing restless, each child became attentive at his or her turn to see the picture.

From our perspective as educational researchers, one of the most interesting presentations was by a three-year-old in a preschool classroom who presented a picture and proudly proclaimed, "My great-grandma is my artifact. She is almost 100 years old." Significantly, when we examined photographs and the museum cards that parents and teachers helped students prepare for the final museum display, another young children had also identified an older relatives as his artifacts.

The pre-school/afterschool Family Artifact Museum display and presentations which we observed and photographed, allowed teachers to introduce young children to the underlying concepts behind five of the ten NCSS thematic strands. Figure 1 explains the ten NCSS thematic stands. Figure 2 describes the artifact presentations from two classes of three-year-olds (with 19 and 16 children) and the NCSS thematic strands introduced during their presentations. For example, an Ecuadorian bead and string bag was used to introduce a sense of family (Institutions), ethnic culture (Culture) and of geographic space (Geography). Baby pictures were used to discuss individual development (Development). It is evident from these charts that children repeatedly named their family artifacts in ways that were meaningful to them.

The children were helped in preparing their presentations by their parents and teachers. They were photographed with their artifacts by their teachers who mounted the photographs on colorful display paper along with the child's name and a brief written description of the artifact based on their presentation.

Figure 1. National Council for the Social Studies Thematic Strands

The ten NCSS thematic strands are (available on the web at www.ncss.org/standards/ stitle.html):

1. Culture and Cultural Diversity (Culture): Ways that human groups learn, create, and adapt, in order to meet their fundamental needs and beliefs they develop to explain the world.

2. Time, Continuity, and Change (History): Ways that human groups locate themselves historically.

3. People, Places, and Environments (Geography) : The influence of geography on human cultures and history.

4. Individual Development and Identity (Development): Relationships between the ways that people perceive themselves and their membership in social groups.

5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions (Institutions): Roles played by social institutions like schools and families in a society and their impact on individuals and groups.

6. Power, Authority, and Governance (Government): Ways that individuals and societies make decisions about rights, rules, relationships, and priorities.

7. Production, Distribution, and Consumption (Economy): Ways that individuals and societies make decisions about the things people need to survive and how they will be provided.

8. Science, Technology, and Society (Technology): Methods and tools used by people to produce and distribute what they need and want within an economic system.

9. Global Connections (Global): The increasingly important and diverse relationships among societies.

10. Civic Ideals and Practices (Citizenship): The relationship between the expressed beliefs of a society and implementation of these beliefs in actual practice.

Figure 2. Introducing Social Studies Thematic Strands and Concepts to PreK 3 year olds

Three-year-old Class 1 (19 artifacts) / **NCSS Thematic Strands**.

1. An Ecuadorian bead and string bag with images of Ecuador brought by the family to the United States / **Family (Institutions). Culture. Geography**.
2. Bibles (3), Religious Pendant and Communion dress/ **Beliefs (Culture). Family (Institutions)**.
3. Trinidadian map to show were we can from / **Family (Institutions). Culture. Geography**.
4. Grandmother / **Family (Institutions)**.
5. An old coin that was found by a parent / **Family (Institutions)**.
6. Childhood toys (4) / **Family (Institutions). Individual Development (Development)**.
7. Souvenir handbag from a Florida vacation / **Family (Institutions). Geography**.
8. Family photographs (2) / **Family (Institutions).**
9. Baby photograph / **Individual Development (Development)**.
10. Baseball / **Family (Institutions)**.
11. Baby's gold chain / **Family (Institutions). Individual Development (Development)**.

Three-year-old Class 2 (16 artifacts) / **NCSS Thematic Strands**.

1. Family photograph (1) / **Family (Institutions).**
2. Baby Photographs (2) / **Individual Development (Development)**.
3. Maraca from Hispanic Caribbean / **Culture. Geography**.
4. Souvenir cup from the Dominican Republic / **Culture. Geography**.
5. Ecuadorian map to show were we can from / **Family (Institutions). Culture. Geography**.
6. Puerto Rican Coqui (frog) statue / **Culture. Geography**.
7. Cross to protect a child as a baby / **Beliefs (Culture). Individual Development (Development)**.
8. Bible Song book / **Beliefs (Culture). Family (Institutions)**.
9. Mother's copy of the book *Roots* by Alex Haley / **Culture. Family (Institutions)**.

10. Picture of Haiti / **Culture. Geography**.
11. Mother's childhood church dress / **Family (Institutions). Culture**.
12. Easter Shoes passed down among family members/ **Family (Institutions). Culture**.
13. Handkerchief from Jamaica / **Family (Institutions). Geography**.
14. Homemade family quilt / **Family (Institutions). Culture**.
15. Jamaican flag / **Culture. Geography**.

One of the teachers who participated in this project is a second grade teacher in a suburban elementary school where he works with seven and eight years old children. He uses the project to engage students as historians as they examine the material culture (artifacts) of their own families. He had children read a series of artifact-related books and he read some more difficult chapter books to the class. The ability of literature to promote social studies understanding was evident when students defined and explained the meaning of an artifact in their reports and in full class discussion. Definitions included: "Something passed down to you"; "Special family treasure": "It could be something special to your family that they really care about"; Something that is important to your family that you pass along"; "It could be hand-made."

What was also significant in these reports was a growing sense of "historical time" and of "geographical place" (Epstein 1997). For example, a family Bible was no longer understood as just a religious item or an example of beliefs, but also as a record of family genealogy. The sense of an added dimension of "historical time" extended to student discussion of the technological changes represented by the artifacts. There were numerous exclamations from the class when an artifact was over one hundred years old. Many students were also able to locate the place of origin of the artifact on a world map.

Every student (a total of nineteen) in the class came to the display table in front of the class, presented a Family Artifact and read from a museum card. Many children had artifacts from World War II that had been passed down by family members. Interestingly, by second grade, the children apparently understood that an artifact is a thing, not a person. Five photographs were presented and in each case the photograph,

not the person, was the artifact. In addition, to the classroom teacher, the school's principal, an inclusion teacher and a class aide presented artifacts.

The involvement of the classroom adults (teacher and assistant) and parents clearly contributed to the excitement experienced by students during the presentations and their excitement about history. The middle class children in this suburban community had more items to present than did students from inner-city communities.Only two of twenty-one students presented material of a religious nature and neither of the children mentioned religion in their presentation. The student who presented a bible focused on it as a record of family history and the student who presented a Christmas ornament focused on the fact that it was embroidered (hand stitched) by a family member. There were five photographs, two of which were accompanied by physical artifacts. One photograph showed a grandmother wearing a necklace and the child also brought in the necklace. Another showed a grandfather in World War 2 uniform and the child also brought in the binoculars taken from a German prisoner. Two artifacts were either too expensive or rare to bring to school so students brought photographs of the artifact. A number of the artifacts were special because they reminded the child of a loved one who was either deal or lived far away. It was clear from their presentations that these fourth grade students understand that artifacts were things, not persons.

Analysis of a video of the Family Artifact presentations and museum at this school showed that the project allowed teachers to introduce elementary school students to the underlying concepts behind six of the ten NCSS thematic strands (see Figure 3). For example, an ice pick from 1915 led to a discussion of historical change (History), what families value and keep (Institutions) and how changes in technology have changed the way that we live (Technology). A report on a Brooklyn Dodger baseball cap from a Zaida (Jewish for grandfather) "who lives in Florida amd I miss" included an explanation of the Yiddish language (Culture), who the Brooklyn Dodger's were (History), where Florida is (Geography), and a boy's relationship with his grandfather (Family as an Institution). It also supported the ability of students to examine cultural similarities and differences, an important social studies and multicultural goal, as they discussed what families valued and decided to pass on to future generations. In Figure 3 we can see the emerging importance of history alongside culture and geography in student presentations.

Figure 3. Extending Student Understanding of Social Studies Thematic Strands and Concepts in a 2nd Grade Suburban Classroom

Artifacts

1. A family Bible, Old Testament, where family events are recorded / **Beliefs (Culture). History. Family (Institutions).**
2. An embroidered Christmas decoration / **Beliefs (Culture). History. Family (Institutions).**
3. A "family tree" faxed by a grandparent in Florida / **History. Family (Institutions).**
4. A thirty-one year old birthday book that her grandmother gave to her aunt and that reminds her of her grandmother / **Culture. History. Individual Development (Development)**.
5. A key chain from 1950 from the grandfather I was named after / **History. Family (Institutions). Technology.**
6. Binoculars taken from a German prisoner of war during World War II and a picture of a grandfather in uniform / **History. Geography. Family (Institutions). Technology.**
7. 1950s era photograph showing a grandmother wearing a rhinestone necklace and the necklace / **History. Family (Institutions).**
8. Lizard pendant given from grandmother to mother to child / **History. Family (Institutions).**
9. Photograph of an antique silver teapot from Turkey that was a wedding gift for great grandparents / **Culture. History. Geography. Family (Institutions).**
10. An ice pick from 1915 that belonged to great-grandfather / **History. Family (Institutions). Technology.**
11. Photograph of an Irish family before migrating to the United States circa 1920 / **History. Geography. Family (Institutions).**
12. Trophy won by a family member in a boat race / **Family (Institutions)**.
13. Brooklyn Dodger baseball cap from Zaida (Jewish for grandfather) who lives in Florida and I miss / **Culture. History. Geography. Family (Institutions)**.

14. Grandfather's World War II era Civil defense bag from Long Beach. Boy was named after this grandfather / **History. Geography. Family (Institutions)**.
15. Photograph of Brazilian native ceremonial mask sent by family member who was journalist / **Culture. Geography. Family (Institutions).**
16. A photograph album showing grandmother with British Royal family in Canada / **History. Geography. Family (Institutions).**
17. 100 year old pocket watch given to great-grandfather at birth / **History. Technology. Family (Institutions)**.
18. Quilt crotcheted by great-great grandmother for my Mom when she was a baby / **History. Technology. Family (Institutions)**. **Development.**
19. Grandfather's war medal / **History. Family (Institutions)**.

Another of the teachers who participated in this project worked with ten-year-old students at an academically under-performing inner-city school. Seventeen of the twenty-eight students in the class presented an artifact as part of the Family Artifact Museum (a significant achievement in this school) and addressed six questions in their report: What is it? Who gave it to you? Why is this an artifact? When did you get it and how did it become an artifact? Where did it come from? Explain how the artifact is important to you?

The artifacts included a Columba (Thumb organ) that was originally from a great-grand-father who purchased it in an antique store in Africa; an autographed baseball, "a gift from my father who taught me how to play"; and socks that "belonged to my great-great grandmother who brought them from Jamaica to keep her feet warm." Many of the other artifacts had also been brought to the United States by immigrants from the Caribbean. One student had no physical artifact, but told the class about his father, who recently died during heart valve surgery and had left behind no pictures or memorabilia. As students presented their reports, other students asked them follow-up questions. As the lesson progressed, more and more students had follow-up questions, a measure of the classes engagement in the project. Perhaps of greatest significance in this class was the depth of student involvement in the activity by both presenters and non-

presenters. Student presentations in this class showed a significant focus on the NCSS thematic strands Culture and Cultural Diversity (Culture) and Time, Continuity and Change (History) and People, Places & Environments (Geography).

In the student presentations in the fourth grade class of students from an inner-city community, there was a much greater focus on family culture and place of origin (geography) than in the second grade suburban classroom. On the other hand, there was less attention to historical connections. This is attributable to the nature of the artifacts themselves, but also probably to family circumstances and involvement in the project. Many of the items presented by students had a religious connotation, but in their reports students discussed their family, rather than their religious significance. While a large number of the artifacts were symbolic reminders of departed or distant loved ones, there were no family photographs. An important theme was also the African and Caribbean cultural roots of Black Americans. It was also clear from their presentations that these fourth grade students understand that artifacts were things, not persons.

Figure 4. Extending Student Understanding of Social Studies Thematic Strands and Concepts in a 4th Grade Inner-City Classroom

Artifacts

1. Columba (Thumb organ): Originally from great-grand-father. Purchased in an antique store in Africa / **Culture. Geography. History. Technology. Family (Institution)**.
2. Autographed baseball. Gift from father who "taught me how to play baseball" / **History. Family (Institution). Development**.
3. My Dad (no physical artifact). Father recently died in Canada during heart valve surgery and left no pictures or memorabilia / **Family (Institution).**
4. Baby NY Yankee Jacket. Gift from father / **Family (Institution). Development**.
5. Socks. Belonged to great-great grandmother who brought them from Jamaica to keep her feet warm / **History. Family (Institutions). Geography**.
6. Picture of Africa from a magazine. His mother cut it out of a magazine when she was a child and has

saved it since then / **Culture. Family (Institutions).**

7. Necklace. A present from aunt Tina who "loved me". Necklace has a small glass cross but student does not identify it as such or offer religious significance. Student's name is lettered on a piece of rice inside the glass cross. Aunt purchased necklace on a trip to Tampa, Florida / **Family (Institutions). Geography**.
8. Music Box Bible and praying hands. This was my grandmother's favorite. Important because my grandmother died / **Beliefs (Culture). Family (Institutions). History.**
9. Brooch. Seventy-years-old. Her grandmother gave it to her mother when her mother was seventeen years old to wear to church. **Beliefs (Culture). Family (Institutions). History.**
10. Wooden African statues. Gift to remind us of where we are from. **Culture. Geography.**
11. Pearl Earrings. My great grandmother Ruby brought them from Jamaica / **Geography. Family (Institutions). History.**
12. Sport's cap with that uncle gave as a gift. Monogrammed with Uncle's name. Uncle has since died. **Family (Institutions). Development**.
13. Recipe for Black Fruit Cake from Trinidad. Contains rum. Great-great grandmother's recipe / **Culture. Geography. Family (Institutions). History.**
14. Ceramic statue of a bear holding a baseball. Gift from father who got it from his father. Purchased in Jamaica / **Geography. Family (Institutions). History.**
15. Pen with school name. Presenter found the pen. Reminds him that his grandfather went to the same school / **Family (Institutions). History.**
16. Gold chain. A gift from a father who died. Chain is from Haiti. **Geography. Family (Institutions).**
17. House. Across the street from the school. Built by my grandfather in 1971. **Technology. Family (Institutions). History.**

The New York State Social Studies Standards include a requirement that elementary school children learn about themselves and their place in history. Based on our work with Family Artifact Museums, we

believe they are a highly effective approach to achieving this goal as well as for introducing students from different age groups to what it means to be an historian. What was particularly striking is the way that all students at all of the age-levels were able to participate in a developmentally appropriate way, the ability of teachers to use the project to scaffold on student cultural experience to introduce social studies themes (an important practice in culturally relevant pedagogy) and the increasingly sophisticated notions of time and place we noted in the classrooms.

One of the most powerful aspects of this project is the way it builds a sense of community in the classroom, at all ages and grade levels. As they listen to one another and examine each artifact, students express pride in learning new stories about their own families and in sharing their new knowledge with classmates. This observation supports earlier work by Judith Y. Singer and others, who argue the importance of cross-age community-building in promoting the understanding of complex ideas among younger children, especially in the social studies (Singer, 1997; Milleta, 1996; Hoffman, 2002) and work that shows the value of involving the broader community in schools to promote multicultural education and culturally-relevant pedagogy (Woodruff, 1996).

The results of this study show that the "Family Artifact Museum" can support multicultural and culturally relevant pedagogy (Jones, Pang and Rodriguez, 2001), transform social studies classrooms into "laboratories of culture" that are "inherently multicultural" (Levstik, 2001:4), promote family literacy and introduce children and their parents to what it means to be an historian. In addition, it validates the idea of a spiral curriculum as students as young as three-years-old interpret the idea of an artifact in their own unique, yet meaningful, ways.

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Appendix. Children's Literature Used to Introduce the Family Artifacts Project and Social Studies Thematic Strands and Concepts

The Patchwork Quilt by V. Flournoy, illustrated by J. Pinkey (1985). NY: Dial Books for Young Readers. In this story about an African American family, the craft of quilting is passed down from Tanya's Grandma and Mama to Tanya. As her grandmother prepares the squares for a new quilt, Tanya finds a square cut from her brother Jim's favorite blue corduroy pants, another from colorful material left from Tanya's African princess costume, and one from the gold material Mama used to make the dress she wore on Christmas night. The last squares are made from Grandma's own faded quilt, which her mother made for her when she was only Tanya's age. The new quilt holds the history of Tanya's family. Grandma tells Tanya, "A quilt won't forget. It can tell your life story." **In our experience, this book introduces children to NCSS thematic strands Culture and Cultural Diversity; Time, Continuity, and Change; Individual Development and Identity; and Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.**

The Keeping Quilt by P. Polacco (1998). NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. This second quilt story spans several generations of a Jewish family, beginning with Anna, the author's great grandmother, who travels as part of an immigrant family from Russia to the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The clothing Anna outgrows as a child is cut into shapes to become her family's Keeping Quilt. As Anna's family grows and travels the quilt becomes a wedding canopy, a Sabbath tablecloth, swaddling clothes for new babies, and again a quilt to keep an elderly person warm. The author tells us, "The quilt welcomed me, Patricia into the world, and it was the tablecloth for my first birthday party." At the end of the book, Patricia is looking forward to passing on the story to her own grand-babies. In this story, readers learn that cultural traditions can become more inclusive of different beliefs, even while they help families connect to the past. **In our experience, this book introduces children to NCSS thematic strands Culture and Cultural Diversity; Time, Continuity, and Change; People, Places, and Environments; Individual Development and Identity; and Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.**

The Rag Coat by L. Mills (1991). Boston: Little, Brown. The third quilt story is about Minna, a little girl from Appalachia who wants desperately to go to school, but her father has died from miner's cough, and her mother has no money to buy her a coat. The quilting mothers who come to make quilts with Minna's mother decide that they will make Minna a coat using scraps from their own quilts. Minna learns the story of each patch as it is sewn into her coat. When the coat is finally finished, Minna is ridiculed by the other children who call her "Rag-Coat." At first Minna runs away, but she returns to tell the other children the stories which she learned from the patches in her coat. Minna tells them, "Don't you see? These are all *your* rags!" In this story, the coat is an artifact with stories to tell about a whole community. Quilts hold people together, and they are also a source of income, as people struggle to make a living in Appalachian coal country. **In our experience, this book introduces children to NCSS thematic strands Culture and Cultural Diversity; People, Places, and Environments; and Individual Development and Identity.**

The Chalk Doll by C. Pomerantz, illustrated by F. Lessac. (1989). NY: HarperCollinsPublishers. In this story Rose begs her mother for stories of what her life was like as a young girl, growing up in Jamaica. Rose learns that her mother had a rag doll which she made herself, but her mother always wanted a "chalk" doll, a store-bought, white china doll. After Rose hears Mommy's stories about condensed milk, a late birthday dress, and high-heeled shoes made from mango pits, she decides it is time for her to have the one toy she doesn't own. Rose and her mother settle down to make a rag doll. The new rag doll will become an artifact which helps them hold onto the memories of an earlier time in Jamaica. **In our experience, this book introduces children to NCSS thematic strands Culture and Cultural Diversity; People, Places, and Environments; Individual Development and Identity; and Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.**

The Ticky-Tacky Doll by C. Rylant, illustrated by H. Stevenson (2002). NY: Harcourt. This is the story of another rag doll, an artifact which is created by a wise grandmother for a little girl who is frightened to go

to school and leave her favorite doll at home. The little girl and her ticky-tacky doll do everything together, but when it comes time for the little girl to go to school, the ticky-tacky doll has to stay home. The little girl was so sad, she did not eat. "And she did not count to ten." Only Grandma knew what was wrong. Grandma made the little girl a ticky-tacky child that was so small, it could be stuffed in a corner of her book bag, where no one would ever notice it, except the little girl. In this story a new artifact is created, one which speaks to the need of little children to feel connected to their homes, even when they embark on new adventures. **In our experience, this book introduces children to NCSS thematic strands Culture and Cultural Diversity and Individual Development and Identity.**

The Hundred Penny Box by S. Mathis, illustrated by L. & D. Dillon (1975). NY: Puffin. A little boy named Michael, from an African American family, understands how much his great-great-Aunt Dew needs to hold on to her artifact: a wooden box containing one hundred pennies, one for every year of her life. Michael's mother wants to give Aunt Dew a new box that is smaller and prettier than the big clumsy one she has. But, like the Little Girl with her ticky-tacky doll, Great-great-Aunt Dew needs to have her old, cherished box at her side. Each penny holds a memory of a year of her life. It is full of stories about herself and her family. "When I lose my hundred penny box, I lose me" Aunt Dew announces to her great-great-nephew Michael. This story reminds us again of the importance of connections among family members, for all kinds of families. **In our experience, this book introduces children to NCSS thematic strands Culture and Cultural Diversity; Time, Continuity, and Change; Individual Development and Identity; and Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.**

Dumpling Soup by J. Rattigan, illustrated by L. Hsu-Flanders (1993). Boston: Little, Brown. Not every artifact is an object. Recipes can be artifacts as well. Marisa, a little girl in Hawaii, helps make soup dumplings for the first time, a special dish much prized in her large Asian family. The recipe and the dumplings are family artifacts made with care each time this family comes together. The most important ingredient is the care and affection Marisa experiences as members of her family praise her dumplings,

the “best mandoo” her grand-mother has ever tasted! Each time the family eats dumplings, they will remember Marisa’s dumpling story. **In our experience, this book introduces children to NCSS thematic strands Culture and Cultural Diversity; People, Places, and Environments; Individual Development and Identity; and Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.**

Singing with Momma Lou by L. Altman, illustrated by L. Johnson (2002). NY: Lee & Low. An African American girl uses old photographs and newspaper clippings to help her communicate with her grandmother, Momma Lou, who has Alzheimer’s disease. As Tamika shows her these artifacts, Momma Lou seems to remember events in her life, like holding her first grandchild or being arrested with protesters and singing “We Shall Overcome” in jail. At the same time that the photographs and songs remind Momma Lou of her life, they help Tamika gain a new appreciation of her grandmother’s participation in the Civil Rights Movement. **In our experience, this book introduces children to NCSS thematic strands Culture and Cultural Diversity; Time, Continuity, and Change; Individual Development and Identity; Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; and Civic Ideals and Practices.**

"My artifact is my great-grandmother":

Family Artifact Museums as part of Multicultural Social Studies Learning Surrounds

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