

Moral and Character Development

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Moral character development has been a topic of concern for thousands of years. It was central to the development of American schooling, but lost favor in the middle of the 20th century. Over the last several decades there has been increased attention paid to the importance of moral character as central to the purpose of schooling. This paper reviews the most important theories related to moral character development and suggests methods for including it in the school setting.

The development of moral character has been the subject of philosophical and psychological investigation since Aristotle theorized three levels of moral character development: an ethics of fear, an ethics of shame, an ethics of wisdom (Kraut, 2001). Philosophers, psychologists, and educators as diverse as John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, and John Dewey, and as ancient as Confucius, Plato, and Aristotle have viewed the development of moral character as the primary purpose of schooling (Purpel & Ryan, 1976). From the beginning of American public education in the 1600s until the first third of the 20th century, our nation's educators, working closely with parents and the community, performed this moral-educational role with commitment (McClellan, 1992). In the middle of the 20th century, moral character education in the schools (hereafter used interchangeably with the term character education) began to decline as a result of increased cultural diversity, perplexing and seemingly prohibitive First Amendment decisions, uncertainty about what values to teach and how to teach them, a preoccupation with social movements, and a Cold War emphasis on increasing academic achievement (Vessels & Boyd, 1996; Wynne & Walberg, 1997). A few variants emerged out of social necessity including civic education, global education, multicultural studies, prudential education, social skills training, and values clarification. But as Heslep (1995) points out, these variants continued without moral education providing the "unifying context of principles" that is central to character education.

A renewed interest in character education and a willingness to find legal and culturally sensitive ways to carry it out emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s among educators who were interested in promoting all aspects of child development, and among most American citizens who believed their lives were being negatively impacted by decades of too little emphasis on moral values (Bennett, 1993; Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1993; Gallup, 1975, 1980). The public was out in front of the educational establishment on this issue and gave the new generation of instructional pioneers enough support to rekindle educators' interest in moral and character education. Programs like the Basic School, the Child Development Project, the Character Counts Coalition, Character First, the Cooperating School Districts, and the Responsive Classroom gave renewed life and a new methodological diversity to character education (Vessels, 1998).

Since the early 1990s, the need to educate for character and community has been viewed as critically important by a majority of Americans, ranking ahead of concerns about academic achievement or other social pressing issues such as racial and gender equality (Myers, 2000). In

spite of (a) extensive public support, (b) a variety of successful programs around the country, and (c) both politicians and educational administrators calling for character education in addition to higher test scores, most schools and school systems have adopted reform models that (a) paradoxically narrow the curriculum, (b) largely ignore critical areas of development besides academic, and (c) fail to effectively educate for character (Damon, 2002). Rather, most current approaches to whole-school reform reflect the current political push to accelerate students' academic learning and to raise test scores while failing to adequately promote other important aspects of child development including social, moral, intellectual, artistic, emotional, and personality (Huitt, 2004).

Sommers (2002) states that in order for education to fully address (1) public concerns about decency and literacy, (2) students' developmental needs, and (3) political pressures to improve schools, a K-12 curriculum infused with moral content is needed. We concur and believe that the road to success with character building is paved with (1) content that conveys universal moral principles and virtues, and (2) instructional methods that ensure their internalization and the cultivation of moral emotions, moral commitments, and moral reasoning that necessarily underlie moral action. In order to set these cornerstones of socially conscious and effective educational reform in place, we must (1) define moral character, (2) explain the known developmental pathways to moral maturity, (3) use any and all strategies thought to be effective at any point in time, and (4) use methods of assessment that will determine the most effective strategies. Stated simply, we must know the qualities of character we want to promote and must determine through research how they emerge and what can be done by parents, teachers, and other concerned citizens to ensure that moral potential is fully realized. The remainder of this chapter will address these issues.

Moral Character Defined

Damon (1988) identified six ways that social scientists have defined morality: (1) an evaluative orientation that distinguishes good and bad and prescribes good; (2) a sense of obligation toward standards of a social collective; (3) a sense of responsibility for acting out of concern for others; (4) a concern for the rights of others; (5) a commitment to honesty in interpersonal relationships; and (6) a state of mind that causes negative emotional reactions to immoral acts. This categorical scheme may not accommodate all useful definitions, particularly the more substantive definitions offered by philosophers and theologians, but they reflect the wide variety of definitions and the need for an explicit operational definition that can guide programming and research.

A number of authors proposed definitions of moral character in rather traditional terms. For example, Wynne and Walberg (1984) wrote that moral character is "engaging in morally relevant conduct or words, or refraining from certain conduct or words" (p. #). Others, such as Piaget (1969) focused on the source of one's behavior as being especially important. He said that the essence of morality is respect for rules and that acting on internalized principles (autonomy) represents a higher level of morality than performance based on rules imposed by others (heteronomy). Others, such as Pritchard (1988) focused on moral character as a personality construct: "a complex set of relatively persistent qualities of the individual person, and the term has a definite positive connotation when it is used in discussions of moral education" (p. 471). Berkowitz (2002) said that moral character is "an individual's set of psychological characteristics that affect that person's ability and inclination to function morally" (p. 48). Still others, such as

Havighurst (1953) equated morality with altruism. Lickona (1991) attempted to connect psychological and behavioral components when he said that “Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good—habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action” (p. 51).

While most researchers support a multidimensional aspect to moral character, especially Lickona’s (1991) advocacy of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components, several authors support additional components. For example, Narvaez and Rest (1995) suggest that the skills of moral and character development should be considered in terms of four psychological components. They say that the focus should be on the internal processes and behavioral skills that are required for moral behavior and propose that sensitivity, judgment, and motivation emerge from the interaction of cognitive and affective processes.

1. *Ethical Sensitivity*—the perception of moral and social situations, including the ability to consider possible actions and their repercussions in terms of the people involved;
2. *Ethical Judgment*—the consideration of possible alternative actions and the rationale for selecting one or more as best;
3. *Ethical Motivation*—the selection of moral values most relevant in the situation and the commitment to act on that selection;
4. *Ethical Action*—the ego strength combined with the psychological and social skills necessary to carry out the selected alternative.

For Huitt (2000), moral character incorporates the underlying qualities of a person’s moral or ethical knowledge, reasoning, values, and commitments that are routinely displayed in behavior. Character is associated with the quality of one’s life, especially in terms of moral and ethical decisions and actions. As described in framework for developing the whole person, Huitt (2004) placed moral character is one of three core elements that are dynamically related to both the personal and social aspects of one’s life. That is, development in each of the ten identified domains and the other core elements of spiritual development and personal style influence the development of one’s moral character and this development, in turn, influences development in the ten domains and the other core elements.

Berkowitz (2002) identified seven psychological components of the “moral anatomy,” and urged scientists and educators to begin reconstructing the “complete moral person.”

1. Moral behavior (prosocial, sharing, donating to charity, telling the truth)
2. Moral values (believe in moral goods)
3. Moral emotion (guilt, empathy, compassion)
4. Moral reasoning (about right and wrong)
5. Moral identity (morality as an aspect self-image)
6. Moral personality (enduring tendency to act with honesty, altruism, responsibility)
7. “Metamoral” characteristics meaning they make morality possible even though they are not inherently moral.

Vessels’ (1998) divided cognition into moral knowing and moral reasoning. He addressed will or volition by examining the intersections between moral feeling and both thinking (empathy, motivation) and knowing (values, beliefs), and by defining moral behavior as intentional by definition. According to Vessels, the intersection of moral knowing, reasoning, feeling, and behaving yields conscience, which reflects one’s (a) past thoughts, feelings, and behavior, (b) one’s present thoughts and feelings, and (c) one’s view of the future in terms of

feeling compelled to act morally. He agrees with the other researchers in that moral character includes both personal and social aspects, which he describes as personal and social integrity.

There is a great deal of overlap among these psychological-component models of moral character, particularly the conceptual models of Berkowitz (1998), Damon (1988), Huit (2000), Lickona (1991), Navarez and Rest (1995), and Vessels (1998). Their conceptual models bare some resemblance to those proposed by Plato, Confucius, and Freud (Vessels). Differences are largely a matter of emphasis rather than substance. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that character is a multi-faceted psychological and behavioral phenomenon that involves the predictable co-occurrence and inter-connectedness of its many psychological and behavioral components with the level of character being determined by the consistency and strength with which these components co-occur in response to challenging life events.

Philosophical and Scientific Foundations

For centuries, philosophers have debated the proper focus of moral education and character education. Library shelves are filled with persuasive arguments about the proper focus: moral judgment, moral sensitivity, moral values, moral emotion, moral reasoning, moral intention, moral action. Each focus corresponds to a “school of thought” or cluster of psychological and philosophical explanations of morality and/or moral development. Each has a basic assumption about human nature (good, bad, neither good nor bad) and related prescriptions for social action and educating children. Reminiscent of Dewey (Gouinlock, 1994) and in keeping with Berkowitz’s (1998) call for re-constructive the complete moral person, Damon (2002) states that it is time to move beyond the endless debates and “. . . take as our target of moral instruction the whole child—habit and reflection, virtue and understanding, and every system of judgment, affect, motivation, conduct, and self-identity that contributes to a child’s present and future moral life” (p. xi). Similarly, Berkowitz said that we must ask how each theory advances our knowledge and not view them as incompatible or mutually exclusive.

The different philosophical positions led researchers to develop different hypotheses regarding moral character and its development and collect different types of data. This, in turn, has brought the field to its current state of development where it might appear to a naïve onlooker that there are an infinite variety of theoretical positions. However, from a sizeable collection of psychological, sociological, and psycho-physiological theories of morality and moral development, it is possible to extract four theory types: (1) *External/Social*, which includes *behaviorists* and *sociologists* who commonly view morality as a product of external imposition in the form of consequences and/or the intentional transmission of social rules and norms, respectively; (2) *Internal*, which includes *nativists* and *sociobiologists* who commonly focus on genetic and maturational influences; (3) *Interactional*, which is divided into subcategories of *instinctual* (psychoanalytic, psychosocial, and socio-analytic theories that view human nature as instinctual, undeveloped, and in need of control or socialization) and *maturational* (cognitive- and affective-developmental theories and social-learning theories that view human nature as good.); and (4) *Personality/Identity*, which includes theories that find virtue rooted in personality and personal identity. An overview of each of these categories is provided in the remainder of this section.

External/Social

There are two theories that view human nature as neutral (a blank slate) and subject to change by the environment. From an *operant conditioning* perspective (Skinner, 1971), all behavior, including moral behavior, is the result of the application of environmental consequences (Gerwitz & Peláez-Nogueras, 1991; Peláez-Nogueras & Gewirtz, 1995; Wynne, 1986). When parents, educators, or other social agents reward desired behavior, it increases; when they punish undesired behavior, it decreases. Strictly behavioral approaches focus on conduct rather than reasoning or other internal processes (Burton & Kuncze, 1995). Reasoning, affect, volition, and other internal processes are thought to be determined by environmental influences on behavior. Wren (1991) criticizes the behavioral view for omitting human intention and moral agency, and for assuming that good character can be cultivated without considering and understanding agency and intention.

Sociologists also view the individual as a blank slate, but see morality and character as being imbedded in society and culture. They focus more on the values, mores, norms, and moral exemplars in the environment rather than in the application of personal consequences. They emphasize the transmission of moral norms and expectations from one generation to the next (Haste, 1998) through modeling and explaining (Durkheim, 1961). An early study of moral character by Hartshorne and May (1928) confirmed the importance of the social environment and showed that the school as a whole has an impact on moral behavior through group norms. Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller (1987) provide evidence that one's culture (a) supplies specific instances of moral behavior, and (b) influences how one thinks about moral events.

Berkowitz and Grych (1998) see the family as the primary interpreter of culture, which implies that the transmission of moral values depends on parents knowing how to foster goodness in their children. Huxley (1990), Mische (2001), and Smith (1992) assert that (a) cultures transmit values and (b) that religions are a central cultural force that should be acknowledged and supported. Mische advocates a dialogue among the world's religions with the purpose of identifying humankind's deepest universal values and beliefs so that they can be effectively transmitted to children and youth around the world. She states that the world is transitioning to a more democratic nation-state system that will give way to a world "characterized by a greater sense of wholeness, interconnectedness, and mutuality in inter-human and human-Earth relations" (p. 16). Her major point is that human evolution is now more sociocultural than biological and that we can now construct cultures that will meet human needs.

Internal/Psychophysiological

There are two major theories that focus on genetic and maturational influences on character development: nativism and sociobiology. Nativist philosophers like Rousseau (1979) believe that human nature is essentially good and that unhealthy social influences should not be allowed to thwart the natural development of the child's predispositions to think, feel, and act morally. Constructivists today often present a nativistic misinterpretation of Piaget (1969; Piaget & Inhelder, 1966) by viewing heteronomy (externally imposed goodness) as an obstacle rather than an essential prerequisite to moral autonomy, as Piaget proposed (Vessels, 1998). A more accurate presentation of Piaget's views are presented later in the chapter.

Sociobiology also focuses on genetic and maturational influences on morality (Miele, 1996). Clark and Grunstein (2000) and Plomin (1990) found that up to 50% of variance in

behavior may be genetically determined. Clark and Grunstein state that “behavior (just like anatomy and physiology) is in large part inherited and...every organism acts (consciously or not) to enhance its inclusive fitness--to increase the frequency and distribution of its selfish genes in future generations” (p. 43). Wilson’s (1975, 1998) view is that our sense of right and wrong is the result of biological evolution interacting with culture and social convention. Killen and de Waal (2000) found that cooperation and conflict resolution are as much a part of our genetic heritage as competition and aggression. From a sociobiological position, human agency and intention are hardwired and difficult to modify; there is a corresponding belief that education has relatively little impact on a person’s character. Critics like Wright (1994) disagree. He states that “the uniquely malleable human mind, together with the unique force of culture, has severed our behavior from its evolutionary roots;...[and] there is no inherent human nature driving events...our essential nature is to be driven” (p. 5).

Another basically physiological theory focuses on an innate human cognitive processing ability and suggests that children develop a sense of right and wrong and moral values through an analysis of competing alternatives (Primack, 1986). Rational thought, to which all human beings are predisposed, is seen as the primary factor in acting morally. Proponents contend that changing times and conditions require the thoughtful application of principles to unique situations rather than “following the prescription.” They propose teaching children to think critically about competing values and alternatives. Hard liners are now quite rare. In keeping with Aristotle (Kraut, 2001) and Havighurst (1953), and having departed from his earlier advocacy of values clarification, Kirschenbaum (1994; Simon, Howe & Kirschenbaum, 1995), advocates that children need to be taught a specific code of conduct before engaging in critical thinking and moral reasoning. Even Kohlberg (1985) took a similar position near the end of his career. The shift in the thinking of these two influential figures is noteworthy and aligns them with earlier eclectics like Dewey (1975) and contemporary eclectics like Damon (1988).

Several researchers focus on innate human emotions as the foundation for moral character development. For example, Berkowitz (1998), Eisenberg (2000), Hoffman (1991, 2000), and Kagan (1984) identify several basic emotions that play a fundamental role in morality. These include compassion, empathy, guilt, shame, and sympathy. Hoffman (1991, 2000) provides substantial evidence that empathy should be considered an essential emotion for moral motivation. He suggests that empathy can be discerned in infants and that it develops in readily identifiable stages. He views the parents’ use of guided induction of affective empathy and early perspective taking to deal with children’s misconduct as essential for moral development. A careful look at the identified emotions reveals an internal/social distinction that is a recurring theme among authors who attempt to synthesize multiple theorists (Vessels, 1998). For example, guilt and shame are more intrapersonal, while empathy, sympathy, and compassion are more interpersonal.

Interactional

There are a variety of interactional theories that give different emphases to instincts, cognitions, affections, and social interactions. From the psychoanalytic perspective, human nature is instinctually anti-social and undeveloped and must be corrected and socialized (Freud, 1990). However, human intention and agency are the result of internal forces and unconscious intention. Therefore, moral character development is a constant struggle between biological predispositions to act selfishly and aggressively and social pressures to act in a prosocial manner.

The similarity between Freud's id, ego, and superego and Plato's desire, spirit, and reason may not be coincidental. Adler (1995) suggests that in order to resolve the conflict between biology and social norms, the individual must acquire sound moral principles and direct his life according to these principles using reason. Again there seems to be a connection with the ideas of Plato and Aristotle (Vessels, 1998).

Erikson (1993), who took exception to Freud's (1990) focus on biological instincts, proposed that personality was a product of social and emotional development with social demands posing a series of crises that must be resolved. For Erikson, the task of developing conscience and morals is primarily one of middle childhood. However, prerequisites include the development of a sense of trust, autonomy, initiative, and accomplishment with the corresponding virtues of hope, will, imagining, and skill. If there is insufficient resolution of one or more of these earlier crises, then the development of conscience becomes problematic.

Hogan & Emler's (1995) socio-analytic viewpoint places even more emphasis on the social context of moral development. The moral aspect of personality involves three milestones or psychological transformations in the individual/social relationship: (1) in early childhood, the child develops identification with parents and other persons of authority; (2) in middle childhood and early adolescence, the primary identification is with social groups; and (3) in later adolescence and young adulthood, the identification is with themes that define self as a result of assuming adult roles.

The cognitive-developmental theory of moral character development that dominated during the 1970s is based on the work of Piaget (1969) and Kohlberg (1984). It proposes that all children are predisposed to engage in moral and ethical thinking, feeling, choosing, and behaving. Morality is viewed as the result of the development of moral thinking based on a concept of justice. Moral schemas, which are cognitive structures that provide a way to organize important aspects of a moral events or ideas, are thought to guide thinking about moral issues with thinking providing a guide to behavior. They acknowledge that a child's interactions with the environment are powerful influences, yet propose that thinking is the primary process that allows the child to move into the moral realm.

Piaget (1969) does a better job of accounting for emotion and will or volition by at least mentioning their importance than does Kohlberg (1984). But the attention he gives to affect falls far short of that given by Hoffman (1991), Kagan (1984), and others in the last two decades. Actually, Piaget's theory is much more elaborate than Kohlberg's in that it delineates stages or changes in children's (a) game play, (b) game rule practice, (c) dependence upon rules and authority in order to be good, (d) sense of justice, (e) ability to reason, and (f) conceptions of responsibility. Although not as thoroughly analyzed, he writes about a morality of good that emerges from mutual affection between child and parent and is initially manifest in children's sympathetic tendencies and affective reactions. Piaget says that the raw material for future moral behavior is present in these tendencies and reactions, which become moral when subjected to rules. Finally, he wrote that moral sentiments about right and wrong and moral motivation reflect the subordination of early sympathetic tendencies and affective reactions with will emerging as a permanent set of constructed values to which one is obligated to adhere. In many ways, Piaget anticipated the more elaborate moral-affective theories of Hoffman and Kagan.

Kohlberg (1984) proposed that moral thinking is based on an individual's thinking regarding justice, fairness, and equity. He stated that children's thinking about right and wrong begins with operant conditioning. As the child matures, he is able to think about right and wrong in terms of reciprocal activities and then progresses to conventional thinking where he begins to

think in terms of important group members such as parents, teachers, or friends before moving to a society-maintaining orientation of following laws and regulations. Theoretically, some people move to post-conventional thinking where they accept principles in a contract and select their own moral principles. This theory is best described as social-cognitive since reasoning and concepts of justice evolve from a sequence of perspectives on the world: egocentric, individualistic, interpersonal, organizational, societal, and universal. At the early stages, it validates behavioral theories and moves the child through stages of extrinsic motivation and intrinsic. What it lacks is any validation of affective processes other than motivation.

Gilligan (1977) asserts that Kohlberg's theory was developed using boys and men and that girls and women have a different basis for making moral decisions. She proposes that care is the central principle underlying female reasoning, not justice, and that girls and women score lower on Kohlberg's scale as a result. Hoffman (2000) synthesizes these two positions by proposing that care and equity are two different forms of justice with a person's level of empathy providing a foundation for both.

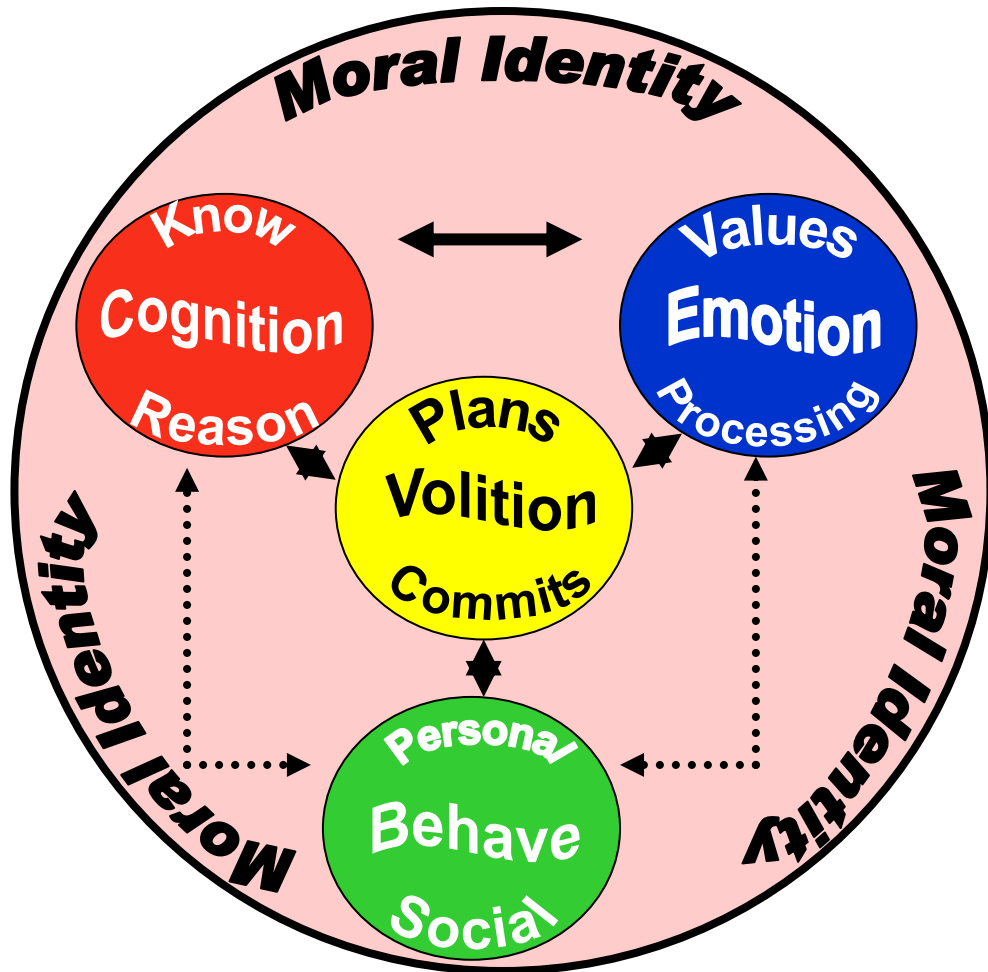
A neo-Kohlbergian view developed by Rest and his associates (Narvaez & Rest, 1995; Rest, 1986; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau & Thoma, 1999) suggests there are three levels of moral judgment: (1) personal interest, (2) maintaining norms, and (3) post-conventional. They agree that movement from a self-orientation to an other-orientation is brought about as the child develops a society-maintaining schema. They propose that post-conventional thinking might be considered society-creating rather than society-maintaining. Individuals in the norm-maintaining stage will actively seek norms that are group-wide first and then seek norms that are society-wide. They seek uniform, categorical application of these norms and are oriented to fulfilling their social obligations or duties. Individuals in the post-conventional stage are more focused on the establishment of moral criteria and appealing to an abstract ideal that may not be found in present society. They also seek ideals that can be shared across cultures and societies and seek full reciprocity among the group members who establish those ideals.

One of the most recently developed viewpoints on moral character development that can be placed in the interactional category is social cognition (Bandura, 1977, 1991). This approach combines many of the assumptions of the blank slate, information processing, and affective approaches. A major difference is that it focuses on putting thoughts and values into action. It proposes a relationship of reciprocal determinism among the environment, overt behavior, and personal factors such as reasoning skills or level of empathy (See Figure 1). For example, not only do models, consequences, and other environmental influences have an impact on behavior, but behavior also has an impact on different aspects of the environment.

Another focus of the social-cognitive view is human agency or volition. Whereas Kohlberg (1984) and cognitive-structuralists concentrate on increased levels of moral reasoning, Bandura (1977, 1991) focuses more on self-regulation and self-efficacy. He proposes that moral development occurs gradually from transactions with environment, including the application of consequences, the observation of models, and acculturation by social agents. Most importantly it is the person's reflection on both external and internal factors that provides the crucial processes related to moral development. As such, the social cognition approach is more focused on the processes of moral development than on content (Thomas, 1997). Social-cognitive theorists generally focus on personal agency and the freedom to choose (Kurtines, Berman, Ittel, & Williamson, 1995). They propose that with this freedom comes a responsibility to make good decisions and act morally.

An additional component of the psychosocial view is that development involves “the emergence of the linguistic, cognitive, communicative, *and* sociomoral competencies that define the interrelated domains of development by which the individual becomes a competent member of the social system” (Kurtines, Mayock, Pollard, Lanza & Carlo, 1991. p. 309). This linguistic component emphasizes a need to consider the individual’s language competencies because that is one way the person interacts morally with the social environment, especially in connecting thinking and intentions to behavior.

Figure 1. A Social Cognitive View of Moral Character Development



While it is agreed that children’s constructions of a sense of right and wrong are heavily influenced by social interactions and a widening view of the world, Turiel and his colleagues (1983; Helwig & Turiel, 2002) propose that morality and social convention have separate paths of development. They suggest that most social interactions do not involve moral issues and that success in these interactions involves knowledge and skills that are important on their own merit and not because they impact moral thinking. Turiel identifies four major dimensions that separate universal morals from conventional valuing: *alterability*—moral principles do not change, conventions are changeable; *contingency*—morality is not contingent on authority, social practice, or group agreement whereas social conventions are based on rules established by an

individual or group; *generality*—morality and what is considered moral behavior is universal, whereas social conventions are specific to group or society; *seriousness*—moral transgressions are seen as more serious than social convention transgressions. This is a topic that will be considered further in the chapters on family and friendship development.

Personality/Virtue

A final theoretical category is labeled the “virtues” approach. Proponents see virtues as combining (a) natural predispositions and (b) interactions with the environment that involve both reflection and commitment to moral values and behavior. As personality constructs, virtues are habitual ways of thinking, feeling, committing, and acting that reflect moral character. Erikson (1994) and Blasi (1993) suggest that virtues are the dominant aspect of moral identity.

Multiple authors have developed lists of critical virtues. Borba (2001) suggests empathy, respect, courtesy, kindness, tolerance, and fairness and confirms Hoffman’s (2000) identification of empathy as a critical emotion in that it is foundational to the others. Kavelin-Popov, Popov, and Kavelin (1997) listed 52 virtues without any distinction of some as being more critical or how the virtues might be grouped. Huitt (2001) identified 52 virtues which he categorized according to his Brilliant Star model. Seligman (2002) identified 25 positive identity traits, which he labeled “signature strengths”, and grouped them in five categories: wisdom and knowledge, courage, love and humanity, justice, temperance, and spirituality and transcendence. Even state departments of education have developed lists of values, virtues, and character traits that should be addressed in public schools (e.g., Georgia Department of Education, 1997). Vessels (1998) divides his concept of personal integrity into four primary virtues, and his concept of social integrity into three. Additional virtues elaborate each of the seven and are incorporated into curricular objectives. With respect to personal integrity, Vessels states that people with moral character are predisposed to: (1) show kindness and compassion with empathetic understanding; (2) show the courage to be honest and principled irrespective of circumstances; (3) acquire a wide range of abilities that enable them to independently resolve problems, analyze situations where moral values and principles may be in conflict, and adapt to change in a personally and socially constructive manner; and (4) display a high level of effort in their daily work, and a high level of commitment to individual and group goals and standards. With respect to social integrity, he states that people with moral character are predisposed to (1) show an interest-in and concern-for others in the spirit of friendship and brotherhood and to act on these concerns routinely, (2) perform as responsible and other-directed team members within families and other groups, and (3) view the preservation of social institutions and improvement of both self and community as civic duties.

Walker (2002b) also identified clusters of attributes or themes that contribute to people’s understanding of morality. The “principled-idealistic” theme concerns notions of justice, acting according to principle, and rationality; the “dependable-loyal” theme involves the development of interpersonal relations; the “caring-trustworthy” theme addresses interpersonal warmth; the “confidence” theme concerns the extent to which one demonstrates personal agency. This last theme is similar to that proposed by Bandura (1991) in his focus on self-efficacy and self-regulation. Walker identifies a relatively small set of moral attributes. The first cluster includes honesty, truthfulness, and trustworthiness; a second includes care, compassion, thoughtfulness, and considerateness. Finally, he suggested that integrity, or the connection of thought to action, should be emphasized.

Stilwell and her team (Stillwell, 1998; Stilwell, Galvin, Kopta & Padgett, 1996; Stillwell, Galvin, Kopta, Padgett & Holt, 1997) provide another multi-modal view. She focuses on moral motivation and proposes that children develop it within four domains of human experience:

1. attachment bond with parents—children learn about compliance and respect;
2. moral-emotional responsiveness—children learn about the ways in which emotions regulate moral life, including reparation and healing responses after wrongdoing;
3. moral valuation—children learn about the developmental processes of deriving and justifying moral rules in behalf of values; and
4. moral volition—children learn about the ways in which autonomy and will become associated with what should be done.

Like Vessels (1998), she suggests that development within these domains is synthesized into a supra-domain, labeled conscience. Reminiscent of Berkowitz (1998), she states that this is a person's composite understanding of the moral system within the self, a moral identity that functions through the operation of the subdomains.

Others examine moral exemplars as an alternative to virtues as a curricular centerpiece (Colby & Damon, 1992). They contend that exemplars provide an adequate guide for how to think, feel, commit, and act morally. They identify several shared characteristics (which could be considered virtues) among moral exemplars:

1. a long-term commitment to moral ideals, including a general love of humanity;
2. a willingness to be socially influenced and to change;
3. the conscientious use of morally justifiable means to pursue their moral goals;
4. a willingness to risk their self-interest for the sake of their moral goals;
5. a clear image of themselves and their ideals, including humility, optimism, faith, and a sense of spirituality.

Walker (2002a, 2002b) proposes that people's thinking about the attributes of exemplars can be classified on two domains. The first he describes as a self—other dimension. He proposes that moral people are thought to have a sense of personal agency (they are responsible for their own actions) and are considered to have a sense of responsibility for the care of others. The second is labeled internal—external. In this domain moral people are thought to be governed by their own conscience. However, they are also cognizant of shared norms. Walker suggests that the internal aspect requires autonomy, experience, and reflection; the external aspect requires sensitivity to expectations of others.

The variety of virtues or values or important attributes of moral individuals can be somewhat daunting to those interested in implementing a character development program. It is especially important to have agreement among critical stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and the community. To assist in this identification, Huitt (in preparation) developed a survey of 152 terms used by a variety of authors. Educators can have different constituencies complete the survey and then identify common qualities that will be the focus of their school program.

Summary

Any summary of extant theoretical positions requires a multi-modal or multi-dimensional perspective if one is attempting to convey the diversity of thought and research related to moral character development. The importance of thinking, both in terms of a knowledge base and reasoning or processing of information must be included, along with emotions, will or volition, and overt behavior. Moral identity, conscience, and virtues must also be considered as well as

how biological and the social environment influence each component. Suffice it to say that if the radical sociobiological position is correct, there is no need for a discussion of educational programs as morality from that perspective is impervious to social influences. All of the other positions propose some sort of environmental influence, although there is enormous disagreement about exactly what that ought to be. The next section will make suggestions that we believe incorporates major findings of the different positions.

Applications of Moral Character Development Theories

As one might expect, there are numerous approaches to implementing the diverse theories and research related to moral character development. However, there are a number of conclusions that can be drawn from previous work. One is that character education needs to be reflected in school- and community-wide programs. Another is that there are a variety of sound instructional methods that can be used by classroom teachers to engage students in character development.

Programs

The planning of programs should be guided by developmental characteristics of children and youth. It should yield a spiraling, developmentally-appropriate set of objectives and strategies for each age or age range. Program planners need to be cognizant of the fact that characteristic reasoning skills, values and empathy, volition and commitment to act, and skills at each age level influence each other in a reciprocal manner within a social context that can be constructed to promote growth. Therefore, they will likely need to consult other chapters in this volume that separately discuss cognitive, affective, conative, and social development as they prepare their approach to character development. We have prepared an overview of some of the major developmental milestones that are discussed in more detail in these following chapters (see Table 1).

Some general guidelines for program development may be in order. In order to promote optimum character growth, adults need to be aware of and responsive to children's needs, and must develop authoritative relationships with them that combine love with much communication, guidance, structure, and firm yet fair discipline (Berkowitz, 2002). They should socially reward examples of appropriate behavior and provide developmentally appropriate explanations of why the behavior is appropriate. The emphasis on explanation should gradually shift from minimal during infancy through preschool to extensive from about age twelve since, as Piaget (1969) has so effectively explained, there needs to be a shift from expiatory or punitive sanctions (heteronomy) to reciprocity sanctions that focus on the impact on others and on relationships of inappropriate behavior, thereby fostering internalization, moral autonomy, and intrinsic motivation. Adults should have high expectations for moral maturity that are age-appropriate and should model the characteristics they want their children to develop (Bandura, 1991; Baumrind, 1989; Damon, 1988).

Advocates of character education recognize that parents are critically important in the development of moral character (Berkowitz, 2002). Unfortunately, many parents have abandoned their responsibilities for moral and values education to the schools and the larger society through popular cultural outlets such as television and movies. Even those interested may not possess the training and experience necessary to follow the general guidelines listed above;

therefore, school personnel will likely need to provide parent education programs that assist parents in developing the appropriate knowledge, dispositions, and skills to assist educators in this important work.

Table 1. Moral Development Milestones

Stage	Age	Domain	Developmental Standard
Infancy	Birth to 18/24 months	Cognitive -- Knowledge	Knowledge limited to interactions with immediate environment; organized and stored in sensory perceptions (i.e., without language)
		Cognitive -- Reasoning	Object permanence—see people as separate
		Affective	Empathy—becomes upset when others are upset; later becomes aware and attempts to console
		Conative	Early display of will, use of “no”
		Social	Attachment—strong bond with at least one adult, generally primary caretaker
Toddler & Early Childhood	18/24 months to 7 years	Cognitive -- Knowledge	Beginning to form ideas about how the world works; begins to use language to organize knowledge
		Cognitive -- Reasoning	Egocentric to seeing other’s perspective; beginning to use imagination
		Affective	Empathy—begins to use language to express connections of one’s own feelings to those of others
			Shame—recognition of misbehavior; sense of regret and sorrow for inappropriate use of self-control
			Guilt—sorrow, remorse for behavior
		Conation	Self-control, Self-regulation—becomes increasingly able to direct and control ideas, emotions, behaviors, etc.; ability to delay gratification
Social	Parallel play, role playing		
Middle Childhood	7-12 years	Cognitive -- Knowledge	Begins to develop knowledge in academic disciplines: Language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, etc.
		Cognitive -- Reasoning	Concrete operations, reversibility, rule-governed thinking; concrete examples of right and wrong govern thinking, first in self-orientation, then to other-orientation
		Affective	Empathy—develops capacity to feel empathy for another’s life condition or experience
		Conative	Self-efficacy—develops ideas about what is possible and realistic to perform; self-regulation—more capable of developing weekly and longer goals and plans
		Social	Focus on group identity
Adolescence	13-18 years	Cognitive -- Knowledge	Potential to develop competency as disciplined thinker; ab
		Cognitive -- Reasoning	Potential for developing abstract symbolic thinking; abstract principles govern thinking of right and wrong
		Affective	Has the potential to show mature levels of empathy, emotional behavior, and emotional self-regulation
		Conative	Has the frontal lobe maturity to begin making complex decisions
		Social	Development of moral identity, first in relation to others, then self-defined

In addition to parents and schools, religious organizations and other youth-serving agencies in the community also have an important impact on children’s character development (Epstein, 1995; Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders & Simon, 1997). As communitarians such as

Benson (1997) have so eloquently explained, everyone in the community bears some of the responsibility for raising good children who can responsibly assume the roles of student, parent, neighbor, friend, employee, supervisor, worker, service provider, citizen, spouse, and family member.

Acknowledging that parents and the community play important roles in the moral character development of children does not absolve educators of responsibility to be powerful advocates. Educators need to develop an atmosphere in the classroom and school that encourages character development (Dewey, 1975; Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989; Schaps, 2002; Vessels, 1998; Wynne & Ryan, 1997). This should be done with an explicit curriculum that focuses on the social skills, virtues, and moral principles that are also taught within homes and communities (excluding only the religious contents, contexts, and methodologies specific to a particular religion though including ecumenical concepts and principles such as the Golden Rule).

The most effective school-based character education programs promote the development of moral virtues, moral reasoning abilities, and other assets and qualities that make the will and ability to do what is right and good probable. They explicitly address issues of moral thinking, valuing, choosing, committing, and planning that indirectly impact moral behavior and character development while simultaneously focusing on moral behavior and responding appropriately to both moral and immoral behavior (Kirshenbaum, 1994; Narvaez, 2002; Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989; Primack, 1986). These eclectic programs do this by combining direct instruction, modeling, reinforcement, and various community-building strategies such as class meetings, service learning, cooperative learning, intercultural exchange, social skills training, and caring interpersonal support (Huit & Vessels, 2002). While maintaining active teaching and learning, students are encouraged to adhere to group norms and rules that are taught directly (Kirschenbaum, 1994; Ryan & Wynne, 1996). As Aristotle (Kraut, 2001) and many since him have explained, bringing behavior in line with adult expectations at an early age provides a foundation for building the internal processes necessary for autonomous selection of sound moral and ethical behavior.

Benninga et al. (1991) provide support for this eclectic approach. Their research showed that a traditional program emphasizing specific virtues and relying heavily on direct instruction and reinforcement successfully improved students' self-esteem while a more progressive program that promoted virtue through in-school service learning and other active community building strategies without teaching virtues directly successfully improved students' fairness, consideration, helpfulness, and social responsibility. Most experts in the field now believe that a blend of the two approaches is best at all levels but with an emphasis on the former with younger children, and an emphasis on the latter with students aged ten or eleven and above.

An eclectic approach is also implicit in the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education prepared by Lickona, Schaps and Lewis (2000):

1. Promote core ethical values as the basis of good character.
2. Define character comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.
3. Promote core values intentionally and proactively through all parts of school life.
4. Are caring communities.
5. Give students opportunities for moral action.
6. Have meaningful and challenging academic curriculums that respect learners.
7. Develop students' intrinsic motivation.
8. Have professionals who exemplify core values and maintain a moral community.

9. Require moral leadership from educators and students.
10. Recruit parents and community members as full partners.
11. Evaluate school character, student character, and adults as character educators.

Many theorists previously mentioned have substantiated the necessity of building a foundation through external influences before developing a child's sense of moral autonomy. Constructivists erroneously claim that Piaget saw heteronomy, or a morality of constraint, as an obstacle rather than a foundation (Vessels, 1998). However, the research and related theories of Hoffman (1991; 2000) and Kagan (1984), as well as others, indicate that this foundation is not only the product of external imposition but also the product of genetics and psychophysiology in the form of natural moral emotions that are evident in rudimentary forms at birth such as affective empathy.

Berkowitz (2002) and Bandura (1991) emphasize the importance of adult modeling of the internal processing and behavior they desire in children and youth. The maxim "Your actions speak so loudly I can't hear what you say" is more true for teaching virtues and other character qualities than it is for other types of behavior. Adults should verbally express their expectations of good behavior and provide many opportunities to practice good behavior and to be acknowledged for doing so. They need to provide age-appropriate opportunities for students to reason about, debate, and reflect on moral issues. This can and should be done in the course of academic instruction through (a) unit planning, (b) the use of teachable moments, and (c) taking time to discuss student interactions that occur as a normal part of life in the classroom. Such efforts at school can be extended to the family (1) by making sure that parents know that school personnel want students to become both good and smart, and (2) by including character themes and issues into (a) homework, (b) student performances that parents attend, (c) newsletters from the school and classroom, and (d) and conferences during home visits and parent-teacher conferences at the school.

From the perspective of cognitive development and moral thinking, parents and educators should be aware-of and build-on students' changing conceptions of fairness, human welfare, human rights, and the application of these moral understandings to issues of everyday life (Damon, 1988; Nucci, 1989; Selman, 1971). Children and youth should be provided age-appropriate opportunities for participation, discussion, collaboration, and reflection on moral and ethical issues (Solomon, Watson, and Battistich, 2001). In order to achieve this outcome, educators and parents need to *gradually transition away from* (1) insisting that children learn and follow rules *through*: (a) direct instruction, (b) consequences, (c) authoritative relationships, and (d) disciplinary "inductions" (which foster the development of internal standards by taking advantage of children's natural capacity for affective empathy) *toward* (2) giving youth the opportunity to recognize or figure out what is right and to choose what is right (as a result of understanding, internalized standards, and mature empathy) *by*: (a) increasing the level of reciprocity in their dealings with youth and (b) the frequency with which they provide opportunities to discuss moral dilemmas and to challenge and replace the status quo within their relationships, groups, and communities (Berkowitz, 1998; Hoffman, 1991; Piaget, 1969; Vessels, 1998). This instructional transition neither precludes efforts to promote the moral autonomy and intrinsic motivation of young children nor requires abandoning efforts to teach right and wrong directly to older youth or to hold them accountable for immoral action through logical consequences. Rather, the transition involves a shift in emphasis. Vessels (1998) developed a character development curriculum that is developmentally-based and addresses both the content

and processes that have been discussed. Curricular scope is achieved by addressing both content (virtues) and developmental processes related to conscience and moral reasoning (See Table 2).

Table 2. Vessel's Core Curriculum

Developmental Level (GRADES)	Main Primary-Virtue Focus for Level	Other Targeted Primary and Elaborative Virtues	Targeted Psychological Processes
Pre-K & K	Kindness	Kindness: Nice, Loving, Gentle, Cheerful, Thankful, Friendly Courage: Honest, Exploring Ability: Attentive, Creative Effort: Hard-Working Friendship: Helpful, Sharing Teamwork: On-Task	Affective Empathy Initiative / Just Do Things Conformity to Rules Non-selectively Sociable
First Second	Friendship	Friendship: Fair, Forgiving, Patient, Considerate Kindness: Comforting, Courteous Courage: Brave, Sorry Ability: Prepared, Skillful Effort: Energetic, Determined, Competitive Teamwork: Respectful Citizenship: Rule-Following	Authoritarian Conscience Fairness as Equality Competence / Do Things Well Unevenhanded Reciprocity in Friendships
Third Fourth Fifth	Teamwork	Teamwork: Cooperative, Positive, Productive, Responsible, Mediating, Punctual/Prompt Kindness: Sensitive, Interested Courage: Remorseful Ability: Knowledgeable, Organized, Realistic Effort: Self-Disciplined, Studious Friendship: Supportive Citizenship: Drug-Free, Health-Conscious, Law-Abiding	Beginning Rational Conscience Fairness as Equity/ Context-Dependent Justice True Perspective Taking/ Cognitive Part of Empathy
Sixth Seventh Eighth	Courage	Courage: Independent, Decisive Risk-Taking, Assertive, Self-Disclosing, Self-Evaluating Kindness: Compassionate Ability: Flexible, Objective Effort: Ambitious, Dedicated Friendship: Understanding, Trustworthy, Devoted/Loyal Teamwork: Humble/modest, Genuine/sincere Citizenship: Health-conscious	Full Rational Conscience Early Autonomous Moral Reasoning Social Consciousness or Sense of Duty to Others Besides Peers & Friends Mutual Trust and Sharing in Personal Friendships
Ninth Tenth Eleventh Twelfth	Citizenship	Citizenship: Rights Respecting, Educated/Employed, Patriotic/ Voting, Historically Literate, Culturally Literate Family Valuing Kindness: Empathetic Courage: Persevering, Principled Ability: Deliberate, Prudent, Resourceful Effort: Optimistic, Idealistic, Persistent, Conscientious Friendship: Charitable, Altruistic Teamwork: Compromising, Temperate	Self-Directed, Principled and Self-Governing Autonomy Autonomous Critical Thinking About Moral Issues, Laws, and Social Conventions Integration of Roles, Values, Behaviors, and Attributes into Prosocial and Ethical Identity

In addition to authoritative relationships with children and the use of induction in disciplinary encounters with children, perhaps the best means of promoting the internalization of moral standards, the formation of conscience, and the emergence of moral autonomy is service learning (Hinck & Brandell, 1999; Howard, 1993; Muscott, 2001). Service learning may be the most effective instructional method at all age levels. Younger children can simply become involved in ongoing service projects initiated by adults or older students. Older students can take more initiative in creating and implementing a service learning project. In any case, students should be involved in deciding what to do and how to make the program work. This should include a discussion of values, alternative forms of service, potential impact, and how to measure success. Students should develop a plan of action, commit to it, carry it out as independently as possible, and reflect on the results. There is a wealth of good service learning materials for teachers to use, but none are better than those provided by the Giraffe Project (see <http://www.giraffe.org/>). This program defines Giraffes as those who show courage and caring by sticking out their necks to help others. They first learn about Giraffes, then look for Giraffes in their communities, and then plan a service project that enables them to be Giraffes.

Instructional Methods

As discussed previously, promising character education programs (a) focus on developing the internal processes of thinking, feeling, and committing, (b) teach the social skills needed for appropriate behavior, and (c) focus on developing a moral identity as a virtuous person. Each of the theories of moral development that have been described, compared, and contrasted provides something of value for those endeavoring to build character and/or plan effective programs in schools that extend into and connect with parallel efforts in homes and communities. Each corresponds to a set of instructional or facilitative strategies as revealed in the Vessels' chart below (see Table 3), and some provide useful specifics about the developmental characteristics of children at various age levels. It is our position that all theories and their related strategies are valid and valuable since these theories have been derived from extensive research and observation. We see no single correct theory or set of corresponding instructional strategies. All should be viewed by practitioners as complementary, and when drawn from freely, practitioners are very likely to access all avenues to learning.

Vessels' (1998) refers to these theory-supported and strategically rich avenues to learning as learning modes, and, like Ryan and Bohlin (1999) identified about a half dozen. He refers to these as the five E's: experience, expectations, ethos, example, explanation. Vessels includes in his list developmentally-appropriate discipline and reinforcement, direct instruction, modeling and observation, unstructured peer-group interaction and play, interpersonal/environmental support, active experiential participation in class and school communities, and real-world experiences within the larger community. Although nearly every instructional strategy uses more than one learning mode, most use one more than the others. In Table 3, he aligned each learning mode with strategies that correspond.

Another way to think about instructional strategies is to organize them in terms a combination of a focus on autonomy and heteronomy and a focus on the individual or community (Vessels, 1998; see Figure 2). Vessels' categories are produced by the intersection of two dichotomies: a primary focus on the individual versus a primary focus on the community; an emphasis on individual autonomy versus an emphasis on heteronomy, that is, internally versus

externally imposed goodness. This intersection produces four quadrants: (1) individual and autonomy, (2) individual and heteronomy, (3) community and autonomy, and (4) community and

Table 3. Instructional Strategies Organized by Theory Category and Learning Mode

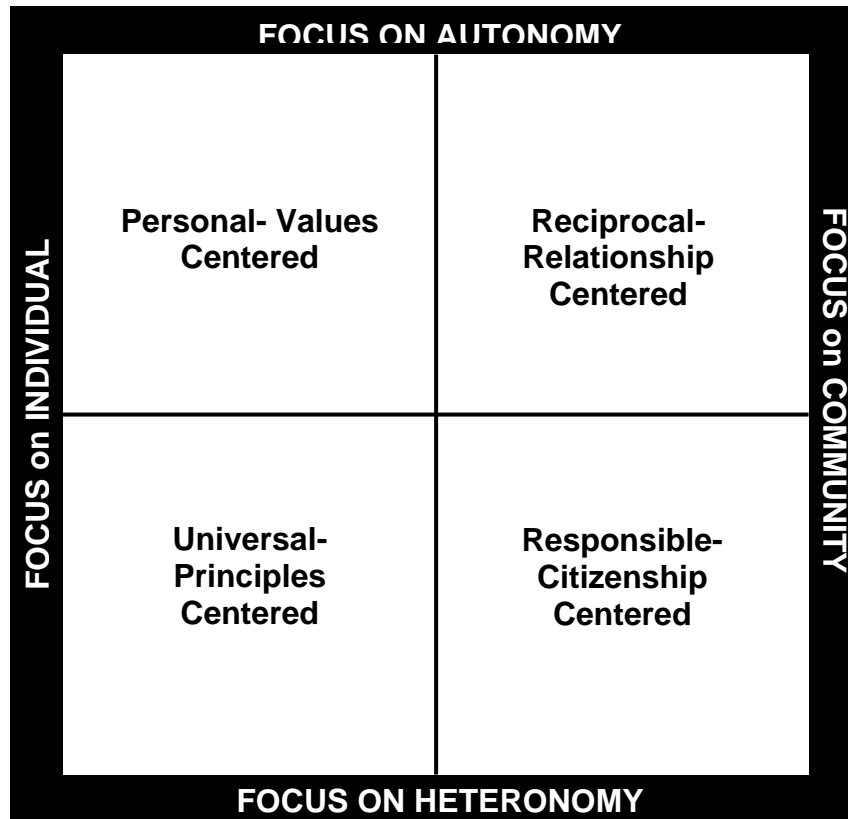
Theory Category	Learning Mode	Instructional Strategies	
External/ Social	Developmentally Appropriate Discipline and Reinforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing positive interactions with students • a new type of grading system • “critical contracts” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-improvement projects; awards for model citizenship • classroom management based on mutual respect & building intrinsic motivation
	Direct Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visual displays • literature; storytelling • social skills instruction • multicultural teaching • virtue of the week or month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching parenting K-12 • high-school ethics courses • school behavior codes and pledges • character infusion across the curriculum
	Observation and Modeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching artists • adult mentoring • cross-grade tutors and buddies • direct and indirect exposure to “giraffes” or heroes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “family heritage museums” and “grandparents gatherings” • teachers and parents modeling virtues and doing volunteer work
Internal/ Psycho- physiological	Unstructured Peer-group Interaction and Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • camps • recess at school • parties with friends • overnight visits with friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • center time in K-2 classrooms • socializing during school lunchtime • free play with siblings, neighborhood children, and others at recreational sites
Interactional	Interpersonal- Environmental Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new-student welcoming committee • community support for parents to be • caring and democratic classrooms and schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caring and “authoritative” principals, teachers, and parents • school restructuring ideas that build community like looping
	Active Experiential Participation in Class and School Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sociodrama • rule making • class captains • class meetings • student government • cooperative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creative arts activities • extracurricular activities • student discipline panels • interpersonal problem solving class-to-class intercultural exchanges
Personality/ Virtue	Real-World Experiences in the Larger Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vacations • scouting • free reading • teen court work • cultural festivals • organized sports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • movies and plays • visiting museums • Internet exploration • teacher and parent initiated service learning • church attendance, including cross-cultural church attendance

heteronomy (See Figure 2). While he found that some theories do not fit comfortably within a single quadrant, nearly all are more identifiable with one than the other three.

From this perspective there are orientations by which to develop a moral character education program. If the focus is on developing an autonomous individual, then the program would concentrate on a personal-values centered approach. If the focus is on the individual within society, then the program would concentrate on a universal-principles centered approach. Correspondingly, if the focus is on an autonomous person’s relationship with the community, the program would concentrate on a reciprocal-relationship centered approach. Finally, if the focus

is on the person's role within the community, the program would focus on a responsible-citizenship centered approach. An eclectic program would have elements of all approaches, although it is likely that each school's implementation would have one of the viewpoints as its primary interest.

Figure 2. The Intersection of Autonomy/Heteronomy and Individual/Community



The types of program and instructional strategies most likely to be used in each of the orientations is shown in Table 4.

Children and youth are never too old to be encouraged to learn about, adopt, and display a set of specific virtues (Kavelin-Popov et al., 1997; Lickona, 1992; Seligman, 2002; Vessels, 1998). When selecting virtues to teach about and promote, it is important to include a variety, perhaps using the categories of theories discussed above, the two types of virtues (personal and social) discussed by Vessels (1998), or the domains of the Brilliant Star (Huitt, 2001). One way to practice this is to provide specific activities involving role playing with immediate encouragement and feedback. Another is to use narratives and personally-developed stories (Tappan & Brown, 1989) that are discussed in terms of the internal processes and overt behavior. Additionally, Kavelin-Popov et al, suggest that each virtue should be considered in terms of four questions: (1) What is it (knowledge); (2) Why practice it (valuing); (3) How do you practice it (volition and behavior); and (4) What are signs of success (reflection on behavior). This implies teaching the virtues as concepts, not as definitions. The dual focus on (a) the internal processes of understanding, valuing, and desiring, and (b) external behavior makes student learning deeper and better predictor of future behavior.

Table 4. Types of Programs and Orientations Used in Different Orientations

<p>Focus on Individual Beliefs & Autonomy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic and Creative Potential of Students • Fostered in a Competitive School & Classroom Climate • Non-Curricular/Incidental Moral Education and Socialization • Value and Responsibilities of Liberty and Individual Rights Discovered • Radical Constructivist, Student-Centered Instruction 	<p>Focus on Community, Service & Autonomy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Development • Cooperative Learning • Daily Class Meetings • Experiential Learning • Looping • Mentoring • Interpersonal Support • Classroom Communities • Unstructured Social Play • Extracurricular Activities • Shared Decision Making • Guided Reflection
<p>Focus on Individual Beliefs & Heteronomy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maxims, Proverbs, Codes of Conduct, and Pledges • Great Moral Exemplars • Great Stories and Literature • Teaching Specific Virtues • Developing Good Habits • Teaching About Religions • Emotional Commitment • Discipline & Reinforcement • Morally and Ethically Rich Academic Content 	<p>Focus on Community, Service & Heteronomy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Duties, Obligations, Social Roles, and Responsibilities • Village Child Rearing • Service Learning • Intercultural Exchange • Student Government • Parenting Education K-12 • Rules and Consequences • Community Youth Programs

Assessment

Assessing or evaluating individual moral character, one or more of its components, or an entire school program is a challenge. Few research design and statistics specialists have been trained in program evaluation methods and exposed to the limited number of measurement instruments now available to educators who are seeking to build character. Their natural inclination is to minimize the value of qualitative methods that are especially valuable for evaluating process and implementation. But it makes little sense to evaluate outcomes such as moral thinking, moral feeling, moral behavior, moral intention, or school climate if there is no clear evidence that the program was implemented as planned, and no way of knowing where it was strong or weak and why. This situation led researchers to begin constructing instruments and studying and using qualitative evaluation methods. Qualitative methods are not limited to investigating hypotheses and outcomes, but are open-ended and information rich; traditional quantitative methods are more likely tied to program hypotheses and the program plan, so they may not reflect unintended outcomes, both positive and negative.

Ideally, evaluation plans for character education programs should allow for (1) on-going monitoring which will detect immediate benefits and/or a breakdown in implementation, (2) the documentation of benefits that may emerge after a year or two as more and more students have multiple-year exposure to the program, and (3) an analysis of social indicators that may reflect long-term benefits such as dropout rates and rates of divorce and crime in your community. All

evaluation plans (1) should be designed before program implementation, (2) should be consistent with the goals and objectives of your program, (3) should include a variety of measures (triangulation of instruments), (4) should include both quantitative and qualitative components, and (5) should use all possible informants including students, teachers, parents, and trained “third-person” observers from outside the school or school system if available (triangulation of data sources). Of course, teacher evaluations of attempts to impact moral character in the classroom may not involve such an extensive evaluation program. However, research suggests that such individual implementations are much less promising than school-wide programs involving educators, parents, and members of the community.

Since “moral” or “virtuous” behavior does not always indicate that moral feeling and thinking led to the behavior, or that the person had the necessary knowledge and social skills to behave similarly and independently in appropriate future situations without special incentives or prompting, one cannot always draw reliable inferences about “internal” moral states from observable behavior. Even when these internal states appear to be reliably reflected in such observable behaviors as crying, a gentle touch, a smile, a considerate statement, or a complex sequence of helpful actions, an undetectable lack of genuineness or a significant amount of imitation may preclude reliable and valid inferences with respect to the presence of relatively internal moral states and competencies. Conversely, moral feeling, reasoning, intent, and competence do not always lead to moral action as demonstrated by the Hartshorne and May (1928) studies decades ago. People sometimes engage in “right” behavior for purely selfish reasons, and they sometimes imitate such behavior without feeling or understanding. They also fail to do what they know and feel to be right and either suffer guilt or engage in bizarre rationalizations to protect their self-esteem as a result.

It seems reasonable to assume that in most cases, spontaneous “moral” behaviors justify the inference that moral affect, cognition, and competence preceded the behavior or co-occurred. This is more likely to be the case for upper elementary, middle, and high school students; younger children tend to imitate more and are primarily driven by anticipated consequences. Therefore, the assessment of spontaneous behaviors through systematic recording by trained observers should probably be the nucleus of all program evaluation plans, particularly for elementary school children who are not skilled at communicating feelings and thoughts through language. The evaluation plan could also include elicited or contrived behaviors. Both can be verbal (oral or written expression), nonverbal, or a combination of both. For older children, adolescents, and adults, the best way to get at moral affect, cognition, and knowledge (not social skill) is indirectly through questioning, although some surveys and questionnaires are available. It also seems reasonable to assume that the best way to measure the social skills necessary for moral behavior is directly through the observation of spontaneous behaviors and/or behaviors in contrived situations designed to elicit the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that occur naturally in social situations.

Ideally, therefore, an evaluation plan should include a combination of (1) direct observations of behaviors with a primary emphasis on naturally occurring or spontaneous behaviors, and (2) indirect observations of internal states (feeling, thoughts, knowledge) through questioning or elicited verbal responses, supplemented with data collected with valid and reliable instruments where available. Results from the latter will be invalid if the instruments or questions used are poor or the person fails to communicate the truth due to a lack of skill or will; therefore, one should use tested instruments if available and should take care to adapt to the limitations of the various age groups you are evaluating. Results from direct measures will be

invalid if the behavior observed is not representative, if the recording devices are faulty, or if the observers are incompetent due to a lack of ability or training. Results from indirect measures or asking students about internal feelings, thoughts, and intentions will be invalid if students do not respond honestly each time questioned.

Time Sampling/Event Recording/Pre-Coded Observation Forms. Observing and recording specific behaviors can be done as they occur or later via (a) tape recording (video and/or audio), (b) the review of anecdotal notes, or (c) the recall of past experiences and observations. The most structured and reliable approach uses pre-coded observation forms. Pre-coded observation forms limit the amount of writing by using various combinations of letters, numbers, pluses, and minuses in place of words. For some low-frequency behaviors such as interpersonal conflicts, it may be possible to record every instance of the behavior during specified time periods. A partial-interval time-sampling system requires only a single occurrence of the behavior during the designated time interval (e.g. five minute or one-half hour intervals). Other time-sampling options include “whole-interval,” in which the behavior or type of behavior is recorded if it occurs throughout the chosen time interval (e.g. social harmony in the classroom), and “momentary” in which the behavior or type of behavior is recorded if it is occurring at the end of each time interval (e.g. at least one student in the room voluntarily assisting another). Vessels’ (1998) Classroom Observation Form uses a combination of event recording (32 types of interpersonal interactions), quality ratings, and whole-interval time sampling for observable aspects of instruction.

School-Climax and Classroom-Climax Measures. School climate and classroom climate can be defined as the readily perceptible personality or atmosphere within a classroom or school. Measures of school and classroom climate can help to determine if your program is producing enough responsible, respectful, and caring behavior on the part of students, teachers, and administrators to change the total atmosphere. James Comer’s School Development Program, Matthew Davidson, the Developmental Studies Center, and Gordon Vessels all have climate measures that are reliable and valid (Vessels, 1998). Vessels’ school climate survey is specifically designed to assess the social-environmental effects of character education programs and whether or not critical elements of a character-building community are present. There is an emphasis on leadership and relationships among members of the school community. He also has created classroom-climate instruments for the elementary level.

Behavioral Observations During Contrived Small Group Tasks. One way of judging whether students will behave prosocially in real world situations is to involve them with one another in contrived small-group tasks which seek to elicit the same array of interpersonal behaviors that occur naturally as they play and work with one another. Obviously, teachers use small-group tasks within their classrooms as an instructional method and/or a way of informally assessing whether students will behave prosocially as they have been taught to do. The created tasks must be interesting to students, sufficiently unique to do more than elicit well rehearsed behaviors, and sufficiently open or ambiguous in terms of instructions (semi-structured rather than structured) that behaviors other than prosocial behaviors and various forms and degrees of prosocial behavior can occur (Tauber, Rosenberg, Battistich & Stone, 1989). As with questionnaires and direct observation forms and procedures, the Developmental Studies Center (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, Solomon & Schaps, 1989) has led the way in developing small-group tasks that can be used to evaluate the internalized or conditioned effects of character education programs (K-6).

Teacher Anecdotal, Journals, Diaries. Teachers' anecdotal notes can be used to help evaluate the effectiveness of a character education program if they are done consistently, and if they routinely include detailed descriptions of relevant interpersonal events. Guidelines such as asking teachers to record the three most significant interpersonal events each day, positive and/or negative, and to avoid referring to any one child more than once each week might make these notes a more reliable and valid indicator of program effectiveness.

Student Diaries and Journals: By the third or fourth grade, most students have developed writing skills to the point where they can convey their thoughts and feelings to others fairly well. Additionally, journal writing has become a rather common practice in elementary schools. Journals and diaries, therefore, provide a convenient and valuable source of information about moral affect, cognition, and knowledge, particularly if students are encouraged to recount and reflect upon interpersonal and moral problems they have encountered incidentally or by instructional design each day. Most elementary children will need considerable prompting in order to fully convey their feelings and thoughts.

Portfolios with Follow-Up Visits by Outside Evaluation Teams. The traditional "Values and Character Recognition Program" in the Fresno area initiated a voluntary evaluation program in 1988 which required each school to complete an application (Vessels, 1998). This application included five categories of questions about the school's character education program: school planning; instructional activities; school goals, standards, and procedures; opportunities for student involvement; and student recognition. A select committee from outside the participating schools and school systems evaluated the responses to these questions along with supportive documents including handbooks, school newspapers, and announcements for special activities, i.e. a portfolio of information.

Hypothetical Problem Situations Presented by Interview or Essay. Constructed statements of hypothetical conflict situations and dilemmas have been used extensively. With this technique, students are presented with a hypothetical problem and asked what they would and/or should do if they were near or involved, and/or what others who are directly involved in the situation should do. These hypothetical situations have been presented orally through interviews and in writing through essays. The advantage of this technique is that students can convey their inner thoughts, feelings, needs, knowledge, opinions, beliefs, etc. freely and honestly provided they see no need to hide what they really think, feel, need, and know.

In the Measure of Moral Values (Hogan and Dickstein, 1972), students are presented with fifteen brief statements they hear in everyday conversation and are asked to write one-line reactions to each. These reactions are scored for (1) concern for the sanctity of the individual, (2) judgments based on the spirit rather than the letter of the law, (3) concern for the welfare of society as a whole, and (4) the capacity to see both sides of an issue. The Moral Judgment Interview (Kohlberg, 1979) presents dilemmas followed by a series of open-ended questions. Hoffman's (1970) approach presents students with story beginnings and asks them to write endings. Battistich et al. (1989) used an interview approach and pictures to present three conflict situations to kindergarten, second grade, and fourth grade children. These conflicts involved a focal child whose use of an object was interfered with by another child. The oral presentation was followed by a set of open-ended questions. The responses were scored for eight variables including (1) the interviewee's understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the conflict participants, (2) his or her belief that their actions will solve the problem, (3) means-ends thinking (planning, considering alternatives, anticipating obstacles and consequences), (4) the type of strategies suggested, and (5) the proportion of prosocial and antisocial strategies offered.

Presented Statements: Choosing from Ready-Made Responses. This technique involves the presentation of questions that have ready-made responses from which to choose. Students can be asked to choose the response that reflects their views, or they can be asked to rank the responses from most to least desirable. It is difficult to construct such instruments in a way that prevents students from choosing the alternative they feel their teachers and parents want them to choose. The temptation to choose an obviously “right” or “good” alternative, and the natural inclination for students to deceive themselves into thinking that they would act prosocially rather than selfishly in a given situation may pose insurmountable threats to validity. Several instruments have been developed using presented statements including the Kohlbergian Defining Issues Test (Rest, 1979).

Introspective Questionnaires. Questionnaires that use students as respondents often include questions about classroom and school environments and questions that try to get at the various internal aspects of morality. They may provide the best tool for determining the existence and degree of moral feeling, thinking, and knowing. These “internal predictors” of moral behavior can only be determined indirectly through observational inferences or indirectly by asking students questions about what is going on “inside.” The student questionnaires developed by the Developmental Studies Center (1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1995) include questions that concern individual character traits and related social skills. Vessels’ early elementary (VSCQ-EE), late elementary (VSCQ-LE), and high school (VSCQ-HS) student character questionnaires (see Appendices in Vessels, 1998) attempt to assess all aspects of individual moral functioning including moral feeling, moral thinking, moral skills, moral behavior.

Unstructured/Semi-Structured Interviews and Related Rating Scales: Interviews were previously discussed as one of two ways to present hypothetical problems to students, but interviews can also be used in a less structured way to indirectly assess the degree of moral emotion that students experience (e.g. empathy, guilt, obligation to share), the extent of their sociomoral knowledge (e.g. what is considered morally right in a given situation), and the moral reasoning or thinking they engage in (e.g. their conceptions of fairness) as they deal with everyday situations that have moral implications. Interviews can be semi-structured, which means that questioning is conversational but intended to elicit information that will allow for answering a few basic questions following the interview.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this paper has been to be suggestive and open-ended rather than definitive and conclusive. It is not our intention to describe in detail all aspects of theories of moral and character development or suggest a best approach to its maturation. However, we do believe there are some broad guidelines that can be followed and specific programs that can be emulated.

We share the conclusion drawn by other researchers such as Graham (1990) and Benson (1997) that experiential learning opportunities for moral action must be available to youth of all ages within schools and communities where all adults provide moral guidance. At a minimum we believe that character education programs should focus on the internal processes of knowing, thinking, and judging; feeling and expressing empathy and valuing; planning and committing to a set of ethical values or moral decisions; and explicitly putting knowledge, values, and commitments into action. We also suggest that encouraging a sense of moral identity, especially seeing oneself as a virtuous person, is important.

A values education program, or a moral judgment program, or a values analysis program isolated by itself is likely to be a disappointment to project developers. Merely incorporating a word of the week activity into a curriculum exclusively focused on raising test scores is to unlikely to have an impact unless the virtue is considered, valued, intentioned, and practiced. Working diligently on modifying student's behavior without considering the operation of the student's interaction with the adult world of the family, school, religious organization, and community is both naïve and counterproductive. Children and youth imitate and want to be a part of the adult world and that culture must consider that young people are watching and learning.

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