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## Human Flourishing and Moral Development: Cognitive and Neurobiological Perspectives of Virtue Development

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The cognitive and neurosciences have made great strides in uncovering the nature of human psychobiology in recent years. Moral educators have yet to make much of their findings. The theories presented here capitalize on recent research that has implications for building moral personalities and cultivating morally adept citizens. The two theories presented in brief are the Integrative Ethical Education model, intended for educators of all levels, and Triune Ethics Theory, a more comprehensive theory of moral development that has implications for moral education.

Approaches to education for moral character are typically divided into two opposing views which are rooted in different philosophical paradigms (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006; Narvaez, 2006). One philosophical paradigm represents particularist claims regarding virtue with a focus on the agent and the deliberate cultivation of virtues or excellences (MacIntyre, 1981). Of primary concern is the nature of a good life and the characteristics necessary to live a good life (e.g., Anscombe, 1958; Hursthouse, 1999; McDowell, 1997). The individual takes on the responsibility for discovering the virtues and values inherent in the self, and cultivates them with the support of the community (Urmson, 1988). Moreover, nearly everything in a life has moral meaning, from friend selection to leisure activities. Traditional character education emerges from this view (Wynne & Ryan, 1993), although it seems to have misappropriated the nature of virtue cultivation (Kohn, 1997a, 1997b; Narvaez, 2006), resulting in minimal outcome success (Leming, 1997).

The contrasting view emphasizes universalist claims regarding justice and reasoning (e.g., Frankena, 1973; Kant, 1949), addressing what is *the right thing to do* in a particular moral situation (e.g., Hare, 1963; Rawls, 1971). Moral conduct is that which accords with applicable principles, derived from reasoning, for a particular situation but only in select slices of life. Few demands are made on individuals, leaving many life choices out of the moral realm. Moral obligation is reduced to that which can be formulated with respect to universal moral principles and becomes what is universally applicable (e.g., Kant's Categorical Imperative). "If what is right for

anyone must be right for everyone in relevantly similar circumstances, then what is right must be such as can be recognized and acted upon by persons who possess very little in the way of developed moral character” (Norton, 1991, p. xi). Moral obligation is reduced to what a person with little moral character can accomplish. Approaches to moral education rooted in Kohlberg’s work are typically anchored here. Not surprisingly, moral reasoning is the focus.

There has been a longstanding assumption adopted from philosophy that moral reasoning drives moral behavior (e.g., Blasi, 1980; Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1932). Most famously, Kohlberg emphasized the deliberative moral reasoning and its advancement through moral dilemma discussion (Blatt & Kohlberg, 1975), what I call rational moral education (see Narvaez, 2006). The robust findings in moral judgment research notwithstanding (e.g., Rest et al., 1999), the centrality of deliberative reasoning in moral behavior is a fading paradigm. To be sure, extensive reasoned argument has been instrumental in shutting down discriminatory practices, such as slavery, and instituting more equitable practices, such as woman’s suffrage. Despite the indisputable importance of moral reasoning, there is only a weak link between moral reasoning and moral action (Blasi, 1980; Thoma, 1994). In fact, the disparity between knowing and doing has become increasingly evident across psychological fields, instigating a paradigm shift in mainstream psychology (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

In the new paradigm based on research since the cognitive revolution in psychology, unconscious parallel processing becomes dominant whereas conscious, serial processing becomes secondary (Bargh, 1997). “Higher mental processes that have traditionally served as quintessential examples of choice and free will—such as goal pursuit, judgment, and interpersonal behavior—have been shown recently to occur in the absence of conscious choice or guidance” (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000, p. 926). The rational human agent in the classical sense, who makes choices based on deliberative reasoning, no longer exists. Most information processing is automatic (Bargh, 1999); most decisions are made without deliberation (Hammond 2000); and most activities are governed by preconscious, automatic processes (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Bargh & Ferguson, 2000). In other words, humans have two types of “minds” (e.g., Kahneman, 2003).

The deliberative mind, based on explicit memory systems, processes information serially and consciously. The intuitive mind is comprised of multiple nonconscious, parallel-processing systems that learn implicitly from environmental patterns and behave automatically, often without awareness (Hogarth, 2001). Whereas, the intuitive mind develops appropriate sensibilities and habitual responses which comprise the “habits” that are valued in traditional character education, the conscious mind cultivates the sophisticated moral reasoning valued by rational moral education.

Despite the perceived conflict between these two approaches to moral character education, they can be viewed as complementary (O’Neill, 1995). The Aristotelian emphasis on intuition development evident in traditional character education is more empirically aligned with everyday human behavior. Yet it is deliberative reasoning that has convinced us of injustice. Therefore, character education should not be approached as an either/or, as a choice between rational moral education and character education, or between deliberative reasoning and intuition development. Both systems are required for moral agency and moral personhood. The intuitive mind makes decisions and takes actions without conscious awareness most of the time. Yet the deliberative mind is vital for guiding intuition development and countering poor intuitions (Groopman, 2007; Hogarth, 2001). A person without one or the other is missing a critical tool for moral personhood.

In light of the dual nature of the human mind and the importance of both reasoning and intuition, how should we approach moral character education? An approach that melds the paradigms is moral expertise development.

## MORAL EXPERTISE AS A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING MORAL CHARACTER

The two seemingly opposed approaches to learning and becoming a moral person are brought together in expertise development, which emphasizes the development of appropriate intuitions and sophisticated reasoning. Experts-in-training are immersed in environments that “train up” their intuitions while receiving explicit guidance as to how to think about solving problems in the domain. For example, a working chef practices under the watchful eye of the master chef who models, guides, and advises.

What do we mean by expertise? Experts differ from novices in several key ways. They have more and better organized knowledge (e.g., Sternberg, 1998). They have declarative (explicit), procedural (implicit), and conditional knowledge. In short, they know what knowledge to access, which procedures to apply, how to apply them, and when. They perceive the world differently, noticing underlying patterns and discerning necessity where novices see nothing remarkable (Johnson & Mervis, 1997). Expert behavior is often automatic and effortless (Vicente & Wang, 1998). Experts function as more complex adaptive systems in their approaches to solving problems in the domain whereas novices miss the affordances for action available in the circumstance (Neisser, 1976; Hatano & Inagaki, 1996). Experts have highly developed intuitions as well as explicit knowledge. Moreover, experts’ sense of self is highly connected to their efficacy. They are motivated for excellence.

The proposal here is that we should treat moral virtue or excellence as a type of adaptive expertise (Narvaez, 2006; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2005), much like the ancients did (e.g., Aristotle, 1988; Mencius, 1970). A virtuous person is like an expert who has highly cultivated skills—sets of procedural, declarative, and conditional knowledge—that are applied appropriately in the circumstance. In other words, moral exemplars in the fullest sense demonstrate moral (knowing the good) and practical wisdom (knowing how to carry it out in the situation). Moral expertise is applying the right virtue in the right amount at the right time. “A wise (or virtuous) person is one who knows what is good and spontaneously does it.” (Varela, 1999, p. 4)

Expertise is a set of capacities that can be put into action. Moral experts demonstrate holistic orientations (sets of procedural, declarative, and conditional knowledge) in one or more of at least four processes critical to moral behavior: ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical focus, and ethical action (Narvaez & Rest, 1995; Rest, 1983). Experts in Ethical Sensitivity are better at quickly and accurately discerning the nature of a moral situation and determining the role they might play. They take on multiple perspectives in an effort to be morally responsive to others. Experts in Ethical Judgment reason about duty and consequences, and apply personal and religious codes to solve complex problems. Experts in Ethical Focus cultivate self-regulation that leads them to prioritize and deepen commitment to ethical goals. Experts in Ethical Action know how to keep their spirit focused on the moral goal and implement the task step by step. They are able to step forward and intervene courageously for the welfare of others. Experts in a particular excellence have more and better organized knowledge about it, have highly tuned perceptual skills for it, have a deep moral desire for it, and have highly automatized, effortless responses. In short, they have more *content* knowledge and more *process* knowledge, more moral wisdom and more practical wisdom.

As novices in virtually every domain including the moral, children are best taught using novice-to-expert instruction (Bransford et al., 1999). In domains of study, experts-in-training build implicit and explicit understandings about the domain, engaging both the deliberative and intuitive minds. Immersion in the domain occurs at the same time that theory is presented, cultivating both intuitions and deliberative understanding (Abernathy & Hamm, 1995). Their practice is focused, extensive, and coached through contextualized, situation-based experience. The learn-

ing environment is well-structured, providing appropriate and accurate feedback (e.g., the chef-in-training gets feedback both from the physical results of food prepared and from the coach who judges it). Through the course of expertise training, perceptions are fine tuned and developed into chronically accessed constructs; interpretive frameworks are learned, and with practice, applied automatically; action schemas are honed to high levels of automaticity (Hogarth, 2001). What is painfully rule-based for a novice becomes, with vast experience, automatic and quick for an expert (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1990).

Nevertheless, there appear to be vastly different mindsets that influence perception and orientation in moral behavior. Triune Ethics Theory seeks to name these disparate orientations and find their roots. That is the topic of the next section.

### Triune Ethics Theory

Triune Ethics theory (TET) is derived from psychological, evolutionary, and neurosciences, emphasizing the importance of the limbic system and related structures for moral information processing and behavior. Most research in moral psychology has focused on the work of the neocortex (e.g., deliberate reasoning), often neglecting the motivational structures that lie underneath. TET has four goals (for more detail, see Narvaez, in press). First, it emphasizes motivational orientations driven by unconscious emotional systems that predispose one to process information and react to events in particular ways. Second, TET seeks to explain individual differences in moral functioning. Individuals differ in early emotional experiences that influence personality formation and brain wiring and in turn affect information processing. Third, TET suggests the initial conditions for optimal human moral development. The characteristics of the “environment of evolutionary adaptedness” (Bowlby, 1988) that support optimal brain development, which differ from modern childrearing practices, influence the development of a fully functional “moral” brain. Fourth, TET offers an explanation for the power of situations in influencing moral responses. Although one’s personality might have gelled around one ethic or another, situations can also influence which ethic will be put into play.

The moral self, moral identity, or moral motivation is an area of increasing interest to researchers (e.g., Hardy & Carlo, 2005). Blasi has suggested that a person with a moral identity has moral constructs central to the self (Blasi, 1985). The perspective proffered here contrasts with Blasi’s view. Focusing on the subjective view, the central question is not whether a person has a moral identity but what moral identity he or she has. Instead of dismissing some identities as nonmoral, the perspective here is that there are different types of moral identities (we will avoid the discussion of what personality is and whether there is such a thing—see Lapsley, chapter 3 this volume). All organisms are goal-driven, including human organisms (Bogdan, 1994). Persons select goals they think are the best in the circumstances, never consciously choosing goals they think are evil or bad. Even those who behave violently are motivated to right a wrong (i.e., revenge is felt as “good” in the brain; de Quervain, Fischbacher, Treyer, Schellhammer, Schnyder, Buck, & Fehr, 2004). Those who are impulsive feel that their goals are “right” in part because they feel them so strongly. The view here is that everyone has a subjective moral identity—one oriented towards the perceived good. What varies, based on experience and situation, is the type of moral identity active at any given moment.

Triune Ethics Theory identifies three basic attractors for moral information processing within the brain (Narvaez, 2007a), inspired by theories of brain evolution (MacLean, 1990). There are likely many subtypes across these major attractors, but only the major attractors are described here as types of ethics. These three distinctive moral systems, rooted in the basic emotional systems, propel human moral action on an individual and group level. The first formation, is rooted

in the R-complex (MacLean, 1990), or the extrapyramidal action nervous system (Panksepp, 1998). Dominant in reptiles, the R-complex relates to stereotyped behavior in many animals and several forms of behavior in mammals, including territoriality, imitation, deception, struggles for power, maintenance of routine, and following precedent. The Ethic of Security is based primarily in these instincts, which revolve around physical survival and thriving in context, instincts shared with all animals and present from birth. Primitive systems related to fear, anger, and sexuality reside here. Because they are primarily hardwired into the brain, these systems are not easily damaged, unlike those of the other two systems, making these the default systems when other things go wrong.

The Ethic of Security is based primarily in instincts for survival and physical flourishing. For example, subcortically-driven instincts for seeking (autonomous exploration) and emotional circuitry for fear and rage when autonomy or safety is thwarted are systems shared with all animals (Panksepp, 1998). The security ethic is oriented to physical factors in two senses. First, it maintains physical survival through self-protection, exploration, and autonomy. This is apparent in organisms automatically exploring their environments and becoming enraged when prevented from doing so, and the quick learning from experience what is unsafe (e.g., the visual cliff, the Garcia effect). Second, the security ethic is attendant to physical flourishing through status enhancement (hierarchy or pecking order) and in-group loyalty (purity). The security ethic is in ascendance when individuals seek out uniqueness of self or group. For example, it was reported that 90% of members of an evangelical congregation left after the pastor began to preach an inclusive rather than an exclusive message, saying that the whole world would be saved not just those of their brand of faith (*National Catholic Reporter*, 2005). When a security ethic is a cultural norm, inclusivity is an unwelcome message.

Like Kohlberg's preconventional stages, the security ethic is very concerned with self-preservation and personal gain, although it operates primarily implicitly. It can easily dominate thought and behavior when the person or group is threatened (MacLean, 1990). When the security ethic is triggered, defenses go up, in-group/out-group differences are emphasized, rivalry and the pecking order are stressed, and/or superorganismic (mob) thinking and behavior is set in motion (Bloom, 1995). In order to minimize triggering the defense systems of the Security ethic, the environment must be emotionally and physically safe. Providing a safe, secure environment where basic needs are met allows individuals to minimize triggering the security ethic and allows an emphasis on the ethics systems that better represent human aspirations (engagement and imagination). Control systems such as those in the prefrontal cortex may not be fully developed until the middle 20s (Giedd, Blumenthal, & Jeffries, 1999) and can be overtaken by the hindbrain's self-protective impulsivity (Bechara, 2005) so that adults must still offer guidance until the brain is fully developed.

A Security moral self is oriented to physical flourishing through wealth, status, and power. In the mind of the security ethic, it is "right" to be dominant and maintain inequality. Moral systems are hierarchical and ordered. Self-control, particularly of soft emotion or perceived weakness, is fundamental. It is moral to hold in contempt outgroup members or those who violate the moral rules. The virtues of the security ethic are self-protective loyalty and obedience, depicted so well in Hester at the end of *The Scarlet Letter* when she returns voluntarily to the colony to live out her life wearing the scarlet letter.

The Ethic of Engagement involves the emotional systems that drive us towards intimacy. These systems were identified as the locus of human moral sense by Darwin (1871/1981; Loye, 2002) because they are the root of our social and sexual instincts and affectionate parental care. Although evolution has prepared the human brain for sociality and moral agency, proper care during development is required for normal formation of brain circuitries necessary for success-

ful social engagement and cultural membership (Greenspan & Shanker 2004; Panksepp 1998; Schore, 2003a). Human brains are reward-seeking structures, evolved to obtain rewards primarily from social relationships (Nelson & Panksepp, 1998). With adequate care, the Engagement Ethic develops fully and leads to values of compassion, openness, and tolerance (Eisler & Levine, 2002). Care-deprived infants develop aberrant brain structures and brain-behavioral disorders which lead to greater hostility and aggression towards others (Kruesi, Hibbs, Zahn, Keysor, Hamburger, Bartko, & Rapoport, 1992). Inadequate care leads to deficiencies in the brain wiring, hormonal regulation, and system integration that lead to sociality (Weaver, Szyf, & Meaney, 2002). The self in the present, in relationship, in emotional context, drives our relational moral orientation towards trust, love, and reciprocity (engagement) or towards mistrust, uncertainty, and shame (security; see Schore 1994).

An Engagement moral self has a greater capacity for meaningful relationships and a deeper sense of connection to others, along with a sense of responsibility for the welfare of others (Oliner & Oliner, 1988). In fact when the security ethic runs amok, the more humane engagement ethic may provide a counter pressure if awakened by particular events, as in *Herzog* when the titular hero is about to avenge himself on his ex-wife and her lover. Seeing his wife bathing their daughter, his humanity is touched and his heart melts.

The third ethic is the Ethic of Imagination, which links primarily to these recently evolved parts of the brain, the neocortex, particularly the prefrontal cortex. In one way the Imagination Ethic has been studied extensively in moral psychology, at least in terms of deliberative reasoning. Deliberative reasoning, which resides in explicit memory and develops slowly through experience and training, was Kohlberg's focus of study and that of the cognitive developmental tradition more generally. However, as noted above, many researchers in cognitive science have come to the conclusion that most human decisions and actions are carried out automatically and without conscious control (e.g., Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). Most of what is learned is learned implicitly, resides in tacit memory, and is not available to explicit description (Keil & Wilson, 1999). So a distinction has been made between the deliberative, conscious mind and the "adaptive unconscious" (Wilson, 2002) or intuitive mind. Triune Ethics Theory suggests that the real work of moral judgment and decision making has to do with the coordination of these two "minds." That coordination is handled by the Imagination Ethic.

In the parlance of Triune Ethics Theory, the Imagination Ethic responds to and coordinates the intuitions and instincts of the Engagement Ethic and the Security Ethic. The Imagination Ethic sorts out the multiple elements that are involved in moral decision making in a particular situation. The Imagination Ethic has two powerful tools. One is the ability to countermand instincts and intuitions with "free won't" (Cotterill, 1998), the ability that allows humans through learning and willpower to choose which stimuli are allowed to trigger emotional arousal (Panksepp, 1998). Humans appear to be the only animals with this capability. For example, an enraged parent can counter the instinct to beat up a disobedient child. The other powerful tool is the ability to explain behavior. The deliberative mind, largely through the brain's "interpreter" (Gazzaniga, 1985), is facile in explaining any behavior, sometimes unaware that it is "making things up." Typically, the interpreter adopts the narratives of a cultural, familial, or affiliative group. The social narrative is further refined into a personal narrative, both of which also drive behavior (Grusec, 2002). Krebs (2005) reinterprets Kohlberg's stages through the lens of evolutionary psychology, viewing the stages as social strategies reflecting the evolution of respect for authority, altruism, cheating, justice, and care.

Like the brain areas related to the Engagement Ethic, the development of brain areas related to the Ethic of Imagination requires a nurturing environment. The prefrontal cortex and its specialized units take decades to fully develop and are subject to damage from environmental

factors, both early (Anderson, Bechara, Damasio, Tranel, & Damasio, 1999) and late in development (Newman, Holden, & Delville, 2005).

The Imagination Ethic provides for a greater moral sense than the other ethics. Although humans have evolved to favor face-to-face relationships and have difficulty imagining those not present (such as future generations), the work of the Imagination Ethic provides a means for a sense of community that extends beyond immediate relations. Indeed, a self grounded in the Imagination Ethic is broadly aware of human possibilities, including the power of relational co-creation in the moment. Such a self is broadly reflective, demonstrating exquisite self-command for envisioned goals. The Imagination Self has unpinning itself to particular security, it is not caught in local particularities, but rather finds meaning in an autopoietic self-expansion (Varela, 1992). Humans are at their most moral, following Darwin's moral evolution (Loye, 2002), when the Ethic of Engagement is linked with the Ethic of Imagination.

As noted, the Security Ethic is the default system when all else goes wrong. The other two ethics must be developed through proper nurturing and environmental support. Although parenting provides the most important context for early brain wiring for engagement and imagination, educators can have an influence on which ethic dominates the classroom and school, and which orientation is nurtured in the classroom. The Integrative Ethical Education model seeks to provide stepwise guidance to cultivating ethical expertise in the engagement and imagination ethics.

### Step-By-Step Integrative Ethical Education

The Integrative Ethical Education model (IEE; Narvaez, 2006, 2007a) provides an intentional, holistic, comprehensive, empirically derived approach to moral character development. It is informed deeply by both ancient philosophy and current science about what contributes to cultivate human flourishing. As Aristotle pointed out, human flourishing necessarily includes individuals and communities, a perspective corroborated by the biological and social sciences. No one survives or flourishes alone. In fact, humans are biologically wired for sociality and love (Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 1996). With the proper care and environment humans can be deeply empathic, with ethics of high engagement and imagination (e.g., Dentan, 1968; Wolff, 1994).

The IEE model is presented in a step-by-step format. Ideally the steps take place simultaneously. It is recommended that new teachers plan to start at the beginning and add each step as they feel comfortable (for more details, see Narvaez, 2006, 2007a).

#### *Step 1: Establish a Caring Relationship with Each Student*

Establishing a caring connection is fundamental to any mentoring relationship; that is, the type of relationship that allows mutual influence for mutual benefit. Greenspan and Shanker (2002) describe how parental interaction with infants establishes the cognitive propensities that a child has for learning and being. A pleasurable relationship allows for open communication and for mutual enhancement. Ideally, the family home provides deep emotional nourishment for the child, but this rarely happens in a typical U.S. household these days, due in part to both parents working and a variety of distracting activities. In a day when children are emotionally malnourished, much rides on the adults they see every day—educators. In fact the most important protective factors against poor outcomes for a child are caring relationships with adults, first, with an adult in the family, and second, with an adult outside the family (Masten, 2003). Why is caring so vital? As mammals, we are primarily social-emotional creatures; we are evolutionarily prepared for the rewards of caring, emotionally engaged relationships. The cool logic of a nonemotional Dr. Spock is a sign of pathology, not health (Damasio, 1999). It is through caring relationships and supportive climates that we nurture an engagement ethic.

When students have good relationships with their teachers, they are more likely to feel welcome in the classroom and have a greater sense of belonging, which is related to higher motivation and achievement (Klem & Connell, 2004; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996). Teacher caring and support are related to increased student engagement in learning (Libbey, 2004), especially among at-risk students (Connell, Halpern-Felsher, Clifford, Crichlow, & Usinger, 1995; Croninger & Lee, 2001). Teachers can individualize their care for students, like a good parent. Of course, this means getting to know the child, respectfully, as much as possible. Watson (2003; chapter 10 this volume) richly portrays an elementary school teacher's establishment of caring relationships with her students, students with all types of emotional backgrounds, pointing out generally effective approaches such as guiding students in their self-development through supporting autonomy, building competence, and fostering a sense of belonging. It must be said that establishing a caring relationship is easier with some children than others, and it is easier for elementary school teachers than for high school teachers who see many students for relatively brief periods of time. Nevertheless, as long as teachers maintain a humane classroom, students will be more likely to feel safe and engaged in learning, including moral learning (see Noddings, chapter 9 this volume).

Human minds and hearts are wired for emotional signaling and emotional motivation (Greenspan & Shanker, 2004; Lewis, Amini, & Lannon, 2000; Panksepp, 1998). If these are ignored or mishandled by the educator, then the security ethic will predominate. The students may spend much of their energy in self-protection, leaving little energy for openness to learning. The educator needs to establish healthy emotional signaling with each student in order to influence his or her emotional drive. An emotional connection provides the bridge for communication and influence. Without it, academic motivation is reliant on the residue of family motivation—which may be enough for many Asian Americans, for example, but is not sufficient for other students in American classrooms (Steinberg, 1996; Li, 2005).

### *Step 2: Establish a Climate Supportive of Achievement and Ethical Character*

In simpler times, children learned morality through observation and direct contact with adults during the basic chores and activities of life at home and in the local community. Divorced from the everyday life of most adults and placed in the artificial learning setting of the school, children's social life today revolves around the classroom and school. It is here they learn how to get along with peers, how to participate in group work and decision making, how to be a citizen, and many other skills they take with them into adulthood: "The only way to prepare for social life is to engage in social life" (Dewey, 1909/1975, p.14). As Dewey argues, the school should be constructed as a social institution that integrates both intellectual and moral training.

Organizational climates and cultures shape perceptions and behavior (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989; Power & Higgins-D'Alessandro, chapter 12 this volume). In the broad sense the climate includes the structures of the social environment, the overt and hidden systems of rewards and punishment, the goals and aspirations of the social group, and the general discourse about goals. In the specific sense, climate has to do with how people treat one another, how they work together, how they make decisions together, what feelings are encouraged, and what expectations are nurtured.

Considerable research points to the importance of a caring climate for critical student outcomes. Students in classrooms perceived as poorly managed have a decreased sense of belonging (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002) whereas a positive climate that meets the needs of the individual fosters a sense of belonging to the larger group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). When classrooms have climates of mutual respect and caring, students feel greater physical and



psychological safety, leading to a greater sense of belonging (Anderman, 2003; Ma, 2003). Bonding to school not only increases school engagement and commitment to learning among students (Goodenow, 1993), but growth in achievement (Libbey, 2004) and healthy development generally (Catalano et al., 2004, chapter 23 this volume). A caring classroom (and school) climate with high expectations for achievement and behavior is related both to high achievement and to moral behavior (Battistich, chapter 17 this volume; Zins et al., 2004).

Climates and cultures shape intuitions about what “works” for attaining personal goals and what is valuable (Hogarth, 2001). Moral character educators should ensure that the school and classroom environments are teaching the right intuitions that promote prosocial behavior, virtue, and moral identity development. Prosocial behavior is nurtured in climates that foster flourishing and the “developmental assets” that support resiliency (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 1998; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1998). In fact, caring schools and classrooms have specific features that are associated with multiple positive outcomes for students. According to Solomon et al. (2002), caring school and classroom communities have the following characteristics: Students are able to demonstrate autonomy, self-direction, and influence teacher decisions. Students interact positively with one another, collaborating and discussing course content and classroom policies. Students are coached on social skills. Teachers exhibit warmth towards and acceptance of students, providing support and positive modeling. The teacher provides multiple opportunities for students to help one another. A well-structured environment for teaching character has these characteristics.

In a caring classroom, discipline is not punishment but is coached character development. Educators can use the Ethic of Imagination (Who should I be?) to promote and emphasize the Ethic of Engagement (e.g., How can we show respect for one another? How can we help one another feel cared for in the classroom?). Educators can foster awareness of the heart intelligence that leads to prosocial behavior and happiness (HeartMath, 2001). Schools can establish programs that take up part of the burden for developing empathy and fostering compassion that stressed families are unable to address (e.g., Roots of Empathy; Schonert-Reichl, Smith, & Zaidman-Zait, 2005).

Steps 1 and 2 are integral to best practice teaching, yet in an era where children have few positive role models in popular culture these are no longer enough to help students develop fully functioning moral character. The next three steps identify the deliberative practices that educators can employ for moral character cultivation in students.

*Step 3: Teach Ethical Skills across the Curriculum and Extra-Curriculum  
Using a Novice-to-Expert Pedagogy.*

As mentioned above, training for ethical expertise includes developing appropriate intuitions and sophisticated deliberations in at least four areas: Ethical Sensitivity, Ethical Judgment, Ethical Focus, and Ethical Action. But what competencies can or should be emphasized in school? The Integrative Ethical Education model suggests skills and subskills for each of the four processes.<sup>1</sup> These are skills critical for social and emotional intelligence and living a good life generally (see Elias et al., chapter 13 this volume). These skills are also important for active global citizenship. The policy experts in the Citizenship Education Policy Study Project (Cogan, 1999) identified the public virtues and values that a global citizen should have in the 21st century. All these characteristics reside in the Engagement Ethic, the Imagination Ethic, or a combination of the two. These characteristics are needed by all citizens in order to maintain peace among nations and peoples. In a multipolar world, educators can help students minimize the Security Ethic and develop engagement and imagination. See Table 16.1 for the suggested skills for each of the four processes.

**TABLE 16.1**  
**Ethical Skills**

<i>Ethical sensitivity</i>	<i>Ethical judgment</i>
Understanding emotional expression	Understanding ethical problems
Taking the perspectives of others	Using codes & identifying judgment criteria
Connecting to others	Reasoning critically
Responding to diversity	Reasoning ethically
Controlling social bias	Understanding consequences
Interpreting situations	Reflecting on process and outcome
Communicating well	Coping and resiliency
<i>Ethical focus</i>	<i>Ethical action</i>
Respecting others	Resolving conflicts and problems
Cultivating conscience	Asserting respectfully
Helping others	Taking initiative as a leader
Being a community member	Planning to implement decisions
Finding meaning in life	Cultivating courage
Valuing traditions & institutions	Persevering
Developing ethical identity & integrity	Working hard

How should moral character education be structured? As in training for expertise, educators instruct both the deliberative mind and the intuitive mind. The intuitive mind is cultivated through imitation of role models and the appropriate feedback from the environment. The deliberative mind can be coached in fine tuning action and in how to select good environments for intuition development. By providing theoretical explanation and chance for dialogue, the deliberative mind builds understanding. By providing a grand prosocial narrative, the child internalizes a personal narrative and the deliberative mind's imagination is engaged in activities that bring it about.

Learning involves an active and interactive process of transforming one's conceptual structures through selective attention and by relating new information to prior knowledge (Anderson, 1989). Best practice instruction provides opportunities for students to develop more accurate and better organized representations and the procedural skills required to use them (ibid). In order to do this, children must experience an *expert-in-training pedagogy* for each skill that they learn. Teachers can set up instruction to help students develop appropriate knowledge by designing lessons according to the following four levels of activities (Narvaez et al., 2004; Narvaez, 2005a):

*Level 1: Immersion in examples and opportunities.* Teachers provide models and modeling of the goal, draw student attention to the "big picture" in the subject area, and help the students learn to recognize basic patterns.

*Level 2: Attention to facts and skills.* As students practice subskills, teachers focus student attention on the elemental concepts in the domain in order to build more elaborate concepts.

*Level 3: Practice procedures.* The teacher allows the student to try out many skills and ideas throughout the domain to build an understanding of how skills relate and how best to solve problems in the domain.

*Level 4: Integrate knowledge and procedures.* The student finds numerous mentors or seeks out information to continue building concepts and skills. There is a gradual systematic integration and application of skills and knowledge across many situations.

The expertise development approach was developed in the Minnesota Community Voices and Character Education project. In the final evaluation year, after being familiarized with the framework of skills and pedagogical approach, teacher teams determined which skills their students needed and which academic courses would integrate which skills. Using materials provided by the project designers and teacher-designed lessons, the skills approach had a significant effect on students in schools that implemented them broadly over a one-year period in contrast to a comparison group and to low implementing schools (Narvaez et al., 2004).

#### *Step 4: Foster Student Self-Authorship and Self-Regulation*

Plato understood human existence to be a problem to the self, “the problem of deciding what to become and endeavoring to become it” (Urmson, 1988, p. 2). In other words, the final responsibility for character development lies with the individual. In their choices and actions, orientations and time allocations, individuals address the question: Who should I be? Who are my role models and how do I get there? In an enriched moral environment, students are provided with tools for self-regulation in character formation. Aristotle believed that mentors are required for character cultivation until the individual is able to self-monitor, maintaining virtue through the wise selection of friends and activities.

Individuals can be coached not only in skills and expertise but in domain-specific self-efficacy and self-regulation (Zimmerman, Bonner, & Kovach, 2002). The most successful students learn to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies they use to solve problems and, when necessary, alter their strategies for success (Anderson, 1989). Coaching for self-regulation requires enlisting the deliberative mind to help the intuitive mind. Armed with theoretical knowledge, the deliberative mind, for example, plays a critical role in learning by selecting the environments from which the intuitive mind learns effective behaviors, thereby accelerating implicit learning (Hogarth, 2001). For example, different intuitions are developed when reading a good book than when playing violent video games. Students can learn the metacognitive skills that moral experts have, such as guiding one’s attention away from temptations, self-cheerleading when energy flags, and selecting or redesigning an environment to maximize goal completion (Zimmerman, 1998).

Self-regulation (equilibration) has been a central, driving force of evolution and development within organisms (Darwin, 1871/1981). Self-authorship (autopoiesis) is what living systems do (Varela, Maturana, & Uribe, 1974). Theorists across disciplines have identified self-actualization as the driving force in evolution, particularly human evolution (e.g., Bergson, 1910/1983; Maslow, 1954; Whitehead, 1928). Self-authorship requires a coordinated partnership between the different minds (intuition and deliberation) in a type of reflective abstraction (Piaget’s *prise de conscience*; Gruber & Voneche 1995), and among the different ethics (Security, Engagement, Imagination).

#### *Step 5: Restore the Village: Asset-Building Communities and Coordinated Developmental Systems*

It bears emphasizing that the good life is not lived in isolation. One does not flourish alone. IEE is implemented in and with a community. It is the community that establishes and nourishes the individual’s unique moral voice, providing a moral anchor, and offering guidance as virtues are cultivated. Indeed, both Plato and Aristotle agreed that a good person is above all a good citizen. Hunter (2000) suggests that we find the answers to our existential questions in the particularities that we bring to a civic dialogue: “Character outside of a lived community, the

entanglements of complex social relationships, and their shared story, is impossible” (p. 227). It is in the community that students apply and hone their ethical competencies.

Truly democratic ethical education empowers all involved—educators, community members, and students—as they form a learning community together, developing ethical skills and self-regulation for both individual and community actualization (Rogoff, Turkonis, & Bartlett, 2001). The purpose of ethical behavior is to live a good life *in the community*. Together community members work out basic questions such as: How should we get along in our community? How do we build up our community? How do we help one another flourish? Each individual lives within an active ecological context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) in which, ideally, the entire community builds ethical skills together.

Overall, we can strengthen the connections among children’s life spaces: home, school, and community at various levels. Children who live with coordinated systems are adaptationally advantaged (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 1998). The type of person a child becomes is determined in large part by the dynamic interaction among community, family, and culture. Caring communities with high expectations and involved adults are more likely to raise morally engaged citizens.

### TUNING MORAL PERCEPTIONS

*Who tells the stories of a culture really governs human behavior. It used to be the parent, the school, the church, the community. Now it’s a handful of global conglomerates that have nothing to tell, but a great deal to sell.* ( Gerbner, 1994)

At no time in U.S. history have children’s minds been more shaped by advertisers and purveyors of popular culture. Brain research shows the effects of popular media on growing brains, and much of it is worrisome (Quart, 2003; Kasser, 2002). For example, playing violent videogames may thwart normal brain development, negatively influencing areas of the brain critical for moral and social behavior (Mathews, Kronenberger, Wang, Lurito, Lowe, & Dunn, 2005).

The effects can be seen in the manifestation of ethics today. The ethic of security is activated by media from which we develop a “mean world syndrome,” desensitization towards violence (it’s fun and rewarding) and towards victims of violence, culminating in a general lack of trust in others (Cultivation Theory; Gerbner, 1994). The ethic of security is aggravated when we see what others have that we do not (“affluenza”; Hamilton & Denniss, 2005), promoting addictive status seeking. The ethic of imagination is hijacked by artificially manufactured desires so that virtue is converted into being a good consumer (e.g., “being a good citizen” means going shopping, as President Bush recommended to U.S. citizens as a response to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001). The ethic of engagement is twisted into interaction with electronic media, leaving individuals spending more time interacting with media than with their families or neighbors (Vandewater, Bickham, & Lee, 2006).

Children’s goals, dreams, motivations, perceptions, sensibilities are significantly shaped by forces beyond the family and local community. Educators and parents can step in to offer a human counterinfluence to encourage aspirations that go beyond looks, fame, celebrity, and materialism. Educators can “market morality” in the same way that advertisers market products—by fostering a teacher discourse that draws attention to moral issues and by providing satisfying social experiences. Social-cognitive moral personality theory suggests that a moral personality is built from social and practical experiences that foster automatized moral schemas (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2005). In fact, making automatic the use of moral filters for

social information processing is what moral “chronics” do (Narvaez et al., 2006).

Hutto (2007) contends that children learn cultural narrative structures and when to use them through direct experience with stories that provide reasons for action (Narrative Practice Hypothesis). Competency with one’s cultural narratives helps one understand self and others. The narratives in popular culture emphasize self-interest and ruthlessness to “have it your way.” These narratives teach children to view themselves and others as selfish beings who compete with their own interests for status and pleasure. Teachers can foster narratives to counter the hedonism and status-enhancing messages of popular media.

Teachers are, first and foremost, role models. They can model a moral orientation to life by thinking aloud about their own moral decisions, telling stories about striving for moral goals, reading stories that develop students’ moral imaginations. Teachers can encourage students to construct their own moral goals and moral life story (e.g., how are you going to make the world a better place for everyone? What skills do you need for it? How will you develop them?). Individuals operate according to the narratives they tell themselves (McAdams, 1993; Schank, 1999). Adults help structure personal narratives by the types of questions they ask (e.g., how did you help someone in school today? What positive actions did you take over vacation? What positive goals do you have for today?) (Nelson & Gruendel, 1981). Adults influence children’s narratives by what they emphasize, expect, and encourage in the environments they design for children. Adults can fill children’s memories with positive concrete experiences in which they helped others and adults can remind them of these times.

## CONCLUSION

Moral character development has perhaps never been more challenging in the United States. In the electronic-media culture that pervades children’s lives, what were considered vices for millennia are touted as virtues. Extended families are often spread far and wide; overworked parents are as distracted as children by the barrage of information and tempting distractions. In light of the current context, educators play a large role in the moral character development of their students. The Integrative Ethical Education model encourages educators to take on an intentional, conscientious approach to cultivating moral character. IEE provides an empirically derived framework for considering how best to approach such an important responsibility.

## NOTE

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