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MORAL SELF-IDENTITY AS THE AIM OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

The ambitions that most parents have for their children naturally include the development of important moral dispositions. Most parents want to raise children to become persons of a certain kind, persons who possess traits that are desirable and praiseworthy, whose personalities are imbued with a strong ethical compass. In situations of radical choice we hope that our children do the right thing for the right reason, even when faced with strong inclinations to do otherwise. Moreover, other socialization agents and institutions share this goal. For example, the moral formation of children is one of the foundational goals of formal education (Dewey, 1909; Bryk, 1988; Goodlad, 1992; Goodman & Lesnick, 2001; McClellan, 1999) and there is increasing recognition that neighborhoods and communities play critical roles for inducting children into the moral and civic norms that govern human social life (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill & Galloway, 2007).

Yet how are we to understand the moral dimensions of personality? When our aspiration is to raise children of “a certain kind,” what does this mean? Historically, the work of developmental and educational scientists has coalesced around two options. One option draws upon Aristotelian resources to assert that moral formation is a matter of character development; it is a matter of developing those dispositions that allow one to live well the life that is good for one to live. We flourish as persons, in other words, when we are in possession of the virtues. A second option draws upon Kantian resources to assert that moral formation is a matter of cognitive development; it is a matter of developing sophisticated deliberative competence to resolve the dilemmatic features of our lives but in a way compatible with the “moral point of view.” Our behavior is distinctly moral, under this view, when it conforms to the duties required by the moral law, or, alternatively, when behavior is undertaken for explicit moral reasons.

1 The character and cognitive developmental options are associated with various educa-
2 tional strategies that are discussed in a number of chapters in this volume and elsewhere
3 (e.g., Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006; Turiel, 2006). In this chapter we describe a third option
4 that attempts to frame the moral qualities of persons in terms of the psychological lit-
5 eratures on selfhood and identity. These constructs have a long history in psychology,
6 and are variously understood by different research paradigms (e.g., Harter, 2012; Leary
7 & Tangney, 2003). Hence their application to the moral domain is by no means straight-
8 forward (Blasi, 2004). Yet, for all the peril, these constructs also hold out considerable
9 promise for understanding the dispositional and motivational bases of moral behavior
10 (Blasi, 2005; Hardy & Carlo, 2005). Moreover, an appeal to self and identity opens up
11 the study of moral development and education to the theoretical and methodological
12 resources of other domains of psychological science, thereby increasing the prospect of
13 our improving the aim of moral education with powerful integrative frameworks.

14 In the next section we attempt to frame the contemporary appeal of moral self-identity
15 by situating it within the problematic of the character and cognitive developmental
16 alternatives noted earlier. As we will see neither alternative has much use for the language
17 of selfhood or identity, at least in their traditional, unvarnished formulation, but that a
18 number of theoretical and empirical advances have converged to raise its profile. Five
19 theoretical approaches to moral self-identity will then be described, followed by an
20 account of their educational implications. We will conclude with a survey of “doubts
21 and futures”—conceptual doubts about the coherence of moral self-identity as a useful
22 construct in moral psychology, and possible futures for a moral self-identity research
23 program.

24 25 26 SITUATING MORAL SELF-IDENTITY

27 The increasing prominence of moral self-identity in developmental psychology (e.g.,
28 Blasi, 1993; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004a) is reflected also by recent trends in contemporary
29 ethics that draw a close connection between personal and moral considerations (Taylor,
30 1989). As Taylor put it, “being a self is inseparable from existing in a space of moral
31 issues” (p. 112). Of course, the recent prominence of the moral self should not imply
32 that it was ever completely absent from ethical theory (Bergman, 2005). The Aristote-
33 lian ethical tradition, for example, with its emphasis on virtues, is thought particularly
34 friendly to the moral dimensions of selfhood (Punzo, 1996). Moreover, Carr (2001) asso-
35 ciates Kant’s moral theory with the view that moral agency is crucial to what it means
36 to be a person. As Carr put it, “although there are other senses in which human agents
37 may be regarded as persons, the most *significant* sense in which they are persons is that
38 in which they are moral agents” (p. 82).

39 40 THEORIES OF SELF-IDENTITY

41 42 *Orienting Frameworks*

43 No one has done more than Augusto Blasi to elevate the importance of moral self-identity
44 for understanding moral behavior. According to Blasi (1984), moral self-identity is con-
45 structed on the basis of moral commitments. The moral person is one for whom moral
46 categories or moral notions are central, essential, and important to self-understanding.
47 Moral commitments cut deeply to the core of what and who they are as persons. But

not everyone constructs the self by reference to moral categories. For some individuals moral considerations do not penetrate their understanding of who they are as persons; nor influence their outlook on important issues; nor “come to mind” when faced with the innumerable transactions of daily life. Some have only a glancing acquaintance with morality but choose to define the self by reference to other priorities; or else incorporate morality into their personality in different degrees; or emphasize some moral considerations (“justice”) but not others (“caring”).

Hence moral identity is a dimension of individual differences, which is to say, it is a way of talking about personality. One has a moral identity to the extent that moral notions, such as being good, being just, compassionate, or fair, is judged to be central, essential, and important to one’s self-understanding. One has a moral identity when one strives to keep faith with identity-defining moral commitments; and when moral claims stake out the very terms of reference for the sort of person one claims to be.

Blasi’s (1984) account of moral identity is not far from his Self Model of moral action. For example, if moral considerations are crucial to the essential self, then self-integrity will hinge on whether one is self-consistent in action. And failing to act in a way that is self-consistent with what is central, essential, and important to one’s moral identity is to risk self-betrayal. In more recent writings Blasi has reflected on how and why people come to care about the self and its projects and desires (Blasi, 2004). He has also proposed a psychological account of moral character, and outlined some important developmental considerations (Blasi, 2005).

Moral Character. One’s moral character presumably is comprised of *virtues*. But it is useful, on Blasi’s (2005) view, to distinguish higher- and lower-order virtues. Lower-order virtues are the many specific predispositions that show up in lists of valued traits favored by character educators including, for example, empathy, compassion, fairness, honesty, generosity, kindness, diligence, and so on. Typically these lists describe predispositions to respond in certain ways in highly specific situations. It is easy to generate these “bags of virtue” (as Kohlberg derisively called them). Indeed, as Blasi (2005) put it, “one immediately observes that the lists frequently differ from each other, are invariably long, and can be easily extended, and are largely unsystematic” (p. 70). In contrast, higher-order traits have greater generality and quite possibly apply across many situations.

Two clusters of higher-order traits are distinguished. Blasi (2005) calls one cluster “willpower” (or, alternatively, self-control). Willpower as self-control is a toolbox of skills that permit self-regulation in problem-solving. Breaking down problems, goal-setting, focusing attention, avoiding distractions, resisting temptation, staying on task, persevering with determination and self-discipline—these are the skills of willpower. The second cluster of higher-order traits are organized around the notion of “integrity,” which refers to internal self-consistency. Being a person of one’s word, being transparent to oneself, being responsible, self-accountable, sincere, resistant to self-deception—these are the dispositions of integrity. Integrity is felt as *responsibility* when we constrain the self with intentional acts of self-control in the pursuit of our moral aims. Integrity is felt as *identity* when we imbue the construction of self-meaning with moral desires. When constructed in this way living out one’s moral commitments does not feel like a choice but is felt instead as a matter of self-necessity. It is rather like Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms: “*Here I stand; I can do no other.*”

This suggests that self-control and integrity are morally neutral but take on significance for moral character only when they are attached to moral desires. Our self-control

1 and integrity are *moralized* by our desire to keep faith with morality. Here Blasi (2005)
2 appeals to Frankfurt's (1971) notion of effective will and second-order volitions. To want
3 to have certain moral desires ("second-order desires"), and to have these desires effect-
4 ively willed for the self ("second-order volitions"), is the hallmark of moral character.
5 Moral character describes *persons* but not *wantons*. But not all persons possess moral
6 character either, unless they will *moral* desires as second-order volitions.

7 Influence of Blasian Identity. Blasi's writings on moral identity, personality, and char-
8 acter established the terms of reference for a renewed examination of self and identity
9 in the moral domain. His eloquent, meditative defense of the subjective self-as-agent in
10 psychological science, his insistence on the rational, intentional nature of distinctly moral
11 functioning, and his integration of self and identity with moral rationality and respons-
12 ibility is a singular, influential achievement. Moreover, Blasi has returned long-forgotten
13 concepts to the vocabulary of modern psychology, including desire, will, and volition;
14 and added new concepts, such as self-appropriation and wholeheartedness. Although the
15 most searching of his theoretical claims have yet to be translated into sustained empirical
16 research, there are lines of research that do encourage the general thrust of his work.

17 For example, moral identity is used to explain the motivation of individuals who shel-
18 tered Jews during the Nazi Holocaust (Monroe, 2003). The study of "moral exemplars"—
19 adults whose lives are marked by extraordinary moral commitment—reveal a sense of
20 self that is aligned with moral goals, and moral action undertaken as a matter of felt
21 necessity rather than as a product of effortful deliberation (Colby & Damon, 1992).
22 Similar findings are reported in studies of youth. In one study adolescents who were
23 nominated by community organizations for their uncommon prosocial commitment
24 ("care exemplars") were more likely to include moral goals and moral traits in their self-
25 descriptions than were matched comparison adolescents (Hart & Fegley, 1995; Reimer,
26 2003). Moral exemplars show more progress in adult identity development (Matsuba &
27 Walker, 2004), and report self-conceptions that are replete with agentic themes, ideo-
28 logical depth and complexity (Matsuba & Walker, 2005). Moreover, identity integration
29 and moral reasoning appear to be strongly correlated constructs (Maclean, Walker, &
30 Matsuba, 2004).

31 There are, of course, other approaches to moral self-identity. Indeed, the moral exem-
32 plar studies trade mostly on Blasi's insight that a self constructed on moral ideals will
33 show a distinctive behavioral profile. Although there is often broad compatibility with
34 Blasi's framework, alternative approaches to moral identity have starting points other
35 than the subjective self-as-agent, and invoke processes that are more social-cognitive
36 (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004b), personological (Walker, 1999), com-
37 munitarian (Power, 2004), and contextual (Hart, 2005; Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1998). A
38 brief summary of these approaches is in order.

39 *Alternative Approaches to Moral Identity*

40 Moral Self in Community. The construction of the moral self should not be thought of as
41 an individual achievement, but may have strong communitarian features. For example,
42 in a recent study Pratt, Hunsberger, Pancer, and Alistat (2003), showed that community
43 involvement was a strong predictor of young adults' abilities to construct the moral self
44 ideal. In this study, the authors constructed a moral self-ideal index that was based on
45 participants' endorsement of a set of six personal qualities (trustworthy, honest, fair,
46 just, care, shows integrity, good citizen). At age 19, participants who endorsed a high
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moral self-ideal were also more likely to endorse the “self-transcendent” values of “universalism” and “benevolence.” Moreover, endorsement of each of the six moral qualities predicted an index of involvement in community activities.

Yet longitudinal analysis revealed that community involvement led to subsequent endorsement of a moral self-ideal rather than the other way round. Moral self-ideal did not lead to community engagement but was its result. Moral self-ideal is a precipitate of good works and not its cause. It is a dependent variable. If true this suggests that the best way to influence attitudes and values is to *first change behavior*—in this case in the direction of greater community involvement (Pancer & Pratt, 1999). According to Pratt and colleagues (2003) adolescents’ community involvement leads to the development of a sense of identity characterized by a greater emphasis on moral and prosocial values.

Power (2004) also argues that the community dimension is essential for understanding the moral self. In his view, “The self does not experience a sense of obligation or responsibility to act in isolation but with others within a cultural setting” (p. 52). Hence moral self-identity is a matter of group identification and shared commitment to its value-laden norms. The moral self identifies with the community by speaking on behalf of its shared norms and by taking on its obligations as binding on the self.

Power (2004) uses Blasi’s (1988) account of identity types (*identity observed*, *identity managed*, *identity constructed*) as a template for understanding how a person might identify with a community by speaking on behalf of its norms. In an early phase, one simply acknowledges that one is a member of a group and is bound thereby to group norms (*identity observed*). Then, one speaks up more actively in defense of a group norm, and in urging the community to abide by its commitments (*identity managed*). Finally, one takes “legislative responsibility for constructing group norms” (p. 55; *identity constructed*). Power (2004) argues that the democratic process challenges members to “appropriate” community group membership into one’s personal identity.

A “Systems” Model. According to Hart (2005) identity is a crucial construct for at least two reasons. First, it helps us understand not only moral exemplars, but also instances of moral calamity, such as the Rwandan genocide that saw identity used as a lever for the destruction of Tutsis by Hutus (see also Moshman, 2004). Second, it is a bridge construct between philosophical conceptions of the moral life and certain empirical findings of psychological research. For example, it is a commonplace in ethical theory to assert that moral freedom is grounded by our rational capacity to discern options, make decision, and justify actions. On this account a behavior has no particular moral status unless it is motivated by an explicit moral judgment, one that is reached by means of an effortful, deliberative decision-making calculus.

Yet this image of moral agency collides with empirical research that shows that much of human decision-making is not like this at all; and that, indeed, much social behavior is under “nonconscious control” (Bargh, 2005). Hart (2005) asserts that moral psychology cannot evade findings like these, yet the deliberative quality of moral life also cannot be dispensed with. In his view the identity construct is one “in which occasional conscious moral deliberations can be integrated with action plans, emotions and the structures of life” (Hart, 2005, p. 172), which we take to mean are largely outside of consciousness.

According to Hart (2005), identity includes the ability to take oneself as an object of reflection, and to make an emotional investment in some aspects of the self. Identity is also the felt experience of continuity and sameness over time and place; and a sense of integration of self attributes. Identity requires the participation of others. It is forged in

1 the heat of relational commitments, within *webs of interlocution* (Taylor, 1989), where
2 social expectations influence which aspects of the self become important, essential, and
3 central to one's identity. Finally, identity is a moment of *strong evaluation* (Taylor, 1989)
4 that helps us discern answers to the traditional questions of ethics ("What should I do?"
5 "What should of person should I become?").

6 But Hart's model is distinctive for its account of the factors that influence moral iden-
7 tity formation. Five factors are noted, arrayed into two groups of influence. The first
8 group is composed of 1) enduring dispositional and 2) social (including family, culture,
9 social class) characteristics that change slowly and are probably beyond the volitional
10 control of the developing child. As Hart (2005, p. 179) put it, "Enduring personality
11 characteristics, one's family, one's culture and location in a social structure, all shape
12 moral life." But these things are beyond the control of the child. Children do not select
13 their personality traits; they do not select their home environments or neighborhood,
14 though these settings will influence the contour of their moral formation. As a result,
15 there is a certain *moral luck* (Nagel, 1979; Williams, 1982) involved in the way one's
16 moral life goes, and a certain *fragility of goodness* (Nussbaum, 1986), too, depending on
17 the favorability of one's ecological circumstances—including the *goodness of fit* between
18 one's enduring personality dispositions and the contextual settings of development.

19 The second group of influence includes 3) moral judgment and attitudes, 4) the sense
20 of self (including commitment to ideals), and 5) opportunities for moral action. These
21 factors are closer to the volitional control of the agent, and introduce more malleability
22 and plasticity in moral identity formation. Moreover, they are thought to mediate the
23 link between the first group (personality and social) and moral identity formation and
24 other adaptive outcomes.

25 Hart and his colleagues have reported a number of studies that document key fea-
26 tures of the model. One study (Hart, Atkins, & Fegley, 2003) showed that moral identity
27 (as reflected in voluntary community activity) has deep roots in childhood person-
28 ality. In this study adolescents whose personality profile was judged "resilient" as chil-
29 dren were more likely to be engaged in the voluntary community than were teens who
30 had under-controlled or over-controlled personality types as children. Social structure
31 also influences children's and adolescents' voluntary community service. For example,
32 neighborhoods characterized by poverty and child-saturated environments (a large pro-
33 portion of the population composed of children and adolescents) are associated with
34 depressed levels of volunteering (Hart, Atkins, Markey, & Youniss, 2004).

35 More recently Hart and Matsuba (2009) documented a relationship between the
36 degree of child saturation in a community and the tendency of young adolescents to
37 participate in volunteer activities. In child-saturated communities with high poverty
38 adolescents are less likely to volunteer, but in communities with less poverty child satura-
39 tion is associated with greater volunteer activities. Thus, level of poverty moderates the
40 relationship between child saturation in a community and volunteer activities.

41 Hart et al. (2003) have also shown how social opportunities are associated with
42 increased youth participation in community service. In a recent study the presence of
43 social institutional structures (church, community meetings), along with a "helping
44 identity," predicted voluntary community service in a nationally representative sample
45 of adults (Matsuba, Hart, & Atkins, 2007). Indeed, attachment to institutional groups
46 seems to be a powerful way of facilitating youth involvement in community service (Hart
47 et al., 1998), particularly attachment to school (Atkins, Hart, & Donnelly, 2004).

Hart's (2005) model is the closest thing we have to a developmental systems perspective on moral identity formation; and one implication of an ecological systems perspective is the expectation of relative plasticity in development (Lerner, 2006). Not surprisingly, then, Hart's model suggests that there is plasticity in moral identity development. Moral identity is open to revision across the lifecourse, particularly when one is given opportunities for moral action. This underscores the importance of providing youth with opportunities for service learning and community service (Hart, 2005).

Self-Importance of Moral Identity. Aquino and Reed's (2002) account of moral identity shares some features in common with Blasi's model. They assume, for example, that moral identity is a dimension of individual differences. Moral identity may be just one of several social identities that one might value, and there are individual differences in the centrality of morality in people's self-definition. Moreover, they assume that moral identity is a key mechanism by which moral judgments and ideals are translated into action.

But Aquino and Reed (2002) also diverge from Blasi's model in significant ways. For one thing, they avail themselves of the theoretical resources (and experimental methodologies) of social cognitive approaches to personality, an option that Blasi disfavors. Social cognitive theory assumes, for example, that the activation of mental representations of the self is critical for social information-processing. Hence, they define moral identity in terms of the availability and accessibility of moral schemes (following Lapsley and Lasky, 2002). On this view a person with a moral identity is one for whom moral schemas are chronically accessible, readily primed, and easily activated for appraising the social landscape (Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freeman, 2007).

Aquino and Reed (2002) also adopt a trait-specific approach to moral identity. They define moral identity as a self-conception that is organized around specific moral traits (e.g., caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, kind). These traits then serve as "salience induction stimuli" (in the manner of spreading activation effects) to activate a person's moral identity when rating the self-importance of these traits on a moral identity instrument. Factor analysis of this instrument revealed two factors: a Symbolization factor (the degree to which the traits are reflected in one's public actions); and an Internalization factor (the degree to which these moral traits are central to one's self-concept). In some studies these nine traits are used in an experimental manipulation to prime the accessibility of moral identity.

Research in this paradigm has yielded highly interesting results. For example, Aquino and Reed (2002) showed that both dimensions were significant predictors of spontaneous moral self-concept and self-reported volunteering, but that internalization showed the stronger relation to actual donating behavior and moral reasoning. In subsequent research individuals with a strong internalized moral identity reported a stronger moral obligation to help and share resources with outgroups; to perceive the worthiness of coming to their aid; and to prefer outgroups in actual donating behavior (Reed & Aquino, 2003). Similarly, Reed, Aquino, and Levy (2007) showed that individuals for whom moral identity is very important prefer to donate their personal time for charitable causes rather than donate money. They also showed that while individuals with high organizational status may prefer to donate money to charity than time, this tendency was considerably weaker among individuals with strongly-important moral identity.

In addition, research shows that moral identity appears to neutralize the effectiveness of moral disengagement strategies (mechanisms that allow us to support or perpetrate

1 doing harm to others while protecting our self-image and self-esteem). When the moral
2 self is highly important to one's identity, it undermines the effectiveness of cognitive
3 rationalizations that otherwise allow one to inflict harm on others (Aquino et al., 2007).
4 Similarly, a person with a strong moral identity tends to include more people within his
5 or her circle of moral regard, and is less likely to have a social dominance orientation
6 (Hardy, Bhattacharjee, Reed, & Aquino, 2010). Individuals with moral identity are more
7 empathic (Detert, Trevino, & Sweitzer, 2008), show greater moral attentiveness (Reynolds,
8 2008), and are less aggressive (Barriga, Morrison, Liao, & Gibbs, 2001).

9 Moral Identity and Personality. There are now insistent calls to study moral ration-
10 ality within the broader context of personality (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004b; Walker &
11 Hennig, 1998). To this end Hill and Roberts (2010) argue that moral personality is a
12 plural construct, that is, there are many ways of being a moral person. In addition, they
13 argue that models of moral personality are not incompatible with models of moral reason-
14 ing or with identity theory, and are not limited to trait conceptions of personality.
15 Moreover, the formation and maintenance of moral personality is a lifespan develop-
16 mental concern, although much of the extant research has focused on adolescence and
17 emerging adulthood.

18 Walker and his colleagues have attempted to understand the personality of moral
19 exemplars in terms of the Big 5 taxonomy. One study showed, for example, that the
20 personality of moral exemplars was oriented towards conscientiousness and agreea-
21 bleness (Walker, 1999). Agreeableness also characterized young adult moral exemplars
22 (Matsuba & Walker, 2005). In a study of brave, caring, and just Canadians, Walker and
23 Pitts (1998) found that brave exemplars aligned with a complex of traits associated with
24 extraversion; caring exemplars aligned with agreeableness; and just exemplars with a
25 mixture of conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. This
26 pattern was largely replicated by Walker and Hennig (2004).

27 More recently, Frimer and Walker (2009) argued that moral centrality is “reflected
28 by narratives that are rich in themes of communion and have agentic and communal
29 themes interwoven into the same thought” (p. 1672). In this study life story narratives
30 were elicited from Canadian university students using an interview protocol. Transcripts
31 of the interviews were analyzed for the presence of 10 values derived from the Schwartz
32 Value Survey (1992) using a narrative coding paradigm called VEINs (Values EMBEDDED
33 In Narratives). A *moral centrality index* was constructed to describe the extent to which
34 agentic and communal values were predominant in a single narrative unit. In their view,
35 moral centrality reflects strong communal themes that are interwoven with agency. The
36 results showed that moral centrality predicted a composite measure of morally relevant
37 behaviors. On this basis the authors suggest that what drives the behavior of moral exem-
38 plars is the recognition that moral concerns and self-interest can be reconciled, and that
39 the flexible coordination of agency and communion is undoubtedly a developmental
40 achievement.

41 Whereas Frimer and Walker (2009) examine the centrality of values in life story nar-
42 ratives to describe moral functioning, Lapsley and Narvaez (2004b) appeal to social cog-
43 nitive theory in their account of the moral personality. Social cognitive theory draws
44 attention to cognitive-affective mechanisms that influence social perception, and serve
45 to create and sustain patterns of individual differences. If schemas are easily primed
46 and readily activated (“chronically accessible”), then they direct our attention selec-
47 tively to certain features of our experience. This selective framing disposes one to select

schema-compatible tasks, goals, and settings that canalize and maintain our dispositional tendencies (Cantor, 1990). We choose environments, in other words, that support or reinforce our schema-relevant interests, which illustrates the reciprocal nature of person-context interactions. Moreover, we tend to develop highly practiced behavioral routines in those areas of our experience that are regulated by chronically accessible schemes. In these areas of our social experience we become “virtual experts,” and in these life contexts social cognitive schemas function as “a ready, sometimes automatically available plan of action” (Cantor, 1990, p. 738). In this way chronically accessible schemas function as the cognitive carriers of dispositions.

Social cognitive theory asserts, then, that schema accessibility and conditions of activation are critical for understanding how patterns of individual differences are channeled and maintained. From this perspective Lapsley and Narvaez (2004b) claim that a moral person, or a person who has a moral identity or character, is one for whom moral categories are chronically accessible. If having a moral identity is just when moral notions are central, important, and essential for one’s self-understanding, then notions that are central, important, and essential are also those that are chronically accessible for appraising the social landscape. Chronically accessible moral schemas provide a dispositional readiness to discern the moral dimensions of experience, as well as to underwrite the discriminative facility in selecting situationally appropriate behavior.

Recent research has attempted to document the social cognitive dimensions of moral cognition. For example, research shows that conceptions of good character (Lapsley & Lasky, 2001) and of moral, spiritual, and religious persons (Walker & Pitts, 1998) are organized as cognitive prototypes. Moreover, moral chronicity appears to be a dimension of individual differences that influences spontaneous trait inference and text comprehension (Narvaez, Lapsley, Hagele & Lasky, 2006). In two studies Narvaez et al. (2006) showed that moral chronics and non-chronics respond differently to the dispositional and moral implications of social cues.

Educational Implications

The recent enthusiasm for theoretical and empirical analysis of moral self-identity has not yet produced well-articulated plans for making it the aim of education. One impediment is that moral self-identity is often conceptualized from the perspective of adult functioning, and it has proven difficult to work out possible developmental trajectories with enough specificity to yield testable empirical outcomes. This is particularly true for social cognitive accounts of moral self-identity. In the absence of strong developmental models it is often difficult to work out appropriate educational strategies. Without more precise knowledge of developmental mechanisms it is difficult to know just where, when, and how to intervene.

Yet we are not completely helpless, either. Indeed, each of the perspectives on moral self-identity reviewed here yield clues on how to educate the moral self. For example, one implication of Blasi’s approach is that children should develop the proper moral desires as second-order volitions; and to master the virtues of self-control and integrity. But how do children develop wholehearted commitment to moral integrity? Blasi (2005) helpfully describes some possible steps towards the development of the moral will. Yet there are additional clues about possible pathways from research on the development of “conscience” in early childhood.

1 Kochanska (2002) proposed a two-step model of emerging morality that begins with
2 the quality of parent–child attachment. A strong, mutually responsive relationship with
3 caregivers orients the child to be receptive to parental influence. Within the bonds of a
4 secure attachment the child is eager to comply with parental expectations and standards.
5 There is “committed compliance” on the part of the child to the norms and values of
6 caregivers which, in turn, motivates moral internalization and the work of “conscience.”
7 Kochanska’s model moves, then, from security of attachment to committed compliance
8 to moral internalization. This movement is also expected to influence the child’s emerg-
9 ing internal representation of the self. As Kochanska (2002) put it:

10
11 Children with a strong history of committed compliance with the parent are likely
12 gradually to come to view themselves as embracing the parent’s values and rules.
13 Such a moral self, in turn, comes to serve as the regulator of future moral conduct
14 and, more generally, of early morality.

(p. 340)

15
16
17 This model would suggest that the source of wholehearted commitment to morality
18 that is characteristic of Blasian moral personality might lie in the mutual, positive affec-
19 tive relationship with caregivers—assuming that Kochanska’s “committed compliance”
20 is a developmental precursor to Blasi’s “wholehearted commitment.”

21 A recent longitudinal study by Kochanska and colleagues (Kochanska, Koenig, Barry,
22 Kim, & Yoon, 2010) tracked the interplay of conscience development, moral self, and
23 psychosocial competence over the course of the toddler years to early school age. Two
24 dimensions of conscience were assessed at 25, 38, and 52 months of age. One dimension
25 was “out-of-sight” compliance, that is, the extent to which toddlers internalized their
26 mother’s and father’s rules when the child was left alone. The second dimension was
27 empathic concern toward each parent, as assessed in a simulated distress paradigm. At 67
28 months the moral self was assessed using a puppet interview; and at 80 months parents
29 and teachers rated the children on various assessments of psychosocial competence that
30 tapped, for example, peer relations, school engagement, problem and prosocial behavior,
31 oppositional or defiant behavior, the absence of guilt or empathy, and disregard for rules
32 and standards.

33 Of particular interest was the puppet interview of the moral self. It works this way:
34 Two puppets are anchored on opposite ends of 31 items. The items pertained to dimen-
35 sions of early conscience (e.g., internalization of rules, empathy, apology). Each item is
36 presented with a brief scenario, with one puppet endorsing one option and the other
37 puppet endorsing a contrary option. For example, in one scenario Puppet 1 would say:
38 “*When I break something, I try to hide it so no one finds out.*” Puppet 2 would declare
39 “*When I break something, I tell someone right away.*” Then the child is asked “*What about*
40 *you? Do you try to hide something that you broke or do you tell someone right away?*”

41 The results showed that children who as toddlers and preschoolers had a strong
42 history of internalized out-of-sight compliance with parents’ rules were also competent,
43 engaged, and prosocial at early school age, with few antisocial behavioral problems. Sim-
44 ilarly, toddlers and preschoolers with a strong history of empathic responding showed a
45 robust profile of psychosocial competence at early school age. Moreover, children’s moral
46 self was a strong predictor of future competent behavior as well. Children at 67 months
47 who were “highly moral” were rated at 80 months to be prosocial, highly competent, and

well-socialized. What's more, the child's moral self was shown to mediate the relationship between out-of-sight compliance with maternal rules and later psychological competence at 80 months.

Indeed, Kochanska et al. (2010) argued that the moral self is the mechanism that at least partly accounts for the relationship between early conscience and later evidence of psychosocial competence. A number of possibilities are suggested: Perhaps the moral self is motivated to avoid cognitive dissonance or is better able to anticipate guilty feelings; or perhaps the moral self exercises automatic regulation due to the high accessibility of moral schemas, an explanation that accords with social cognitive approaches to the moral self (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004b).

Kochanska's model would be scarce comfort to Blasi to the extent that it yields only a morality of internalization or of compliance. Yet, if there is something to it in broad stroke, that is, if the moral self is congealed within a context of positive, secure attachment relations (Reimer, 2003)—and a relational context is unspecified in Blasi's model but could use one—then this underscores the importance of school bonding, caring school communities, and attachment to teachers as a basis for prosocial and moral development (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006).

For example, the Seattle Longitudinal Project shows that there is a press toward behavior consistent with standards when standards are clear and when students have feelings of commitment and attachment to school (Hawkins, Guo, Hill, Battin-Pearson, & Abbott, 2001). The Child Development Project showed the elementary schoolchildren's sense of community leads them to adhere to the values that are most salient in the classroom (Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, & Delucchi, 1996). These findings align with Kochanska's model of early conscience development: Secure attachment promotes committed compliance which leads to internalization of norms, values, and standards, suggesting some continuity in the mechanisms by which children appropriate the moral values of their family or classroom community (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006).

Power's (2004; Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989) model of the moral self also underscores the importance of school community for inducing commitment to moral ideals and norms. There are specific guidelines on how this should work: classrooms and schools should be just communities that use participatory democratic practices and frequent class meetings. It is attested by a significant literature that documents the efficacy of moral atmosphere for promoting responsibility (Higgins-D'Alessandro & Power, 2005) and for reducing transgressive behavior in schools (e.g., Brugman et al., 2003).

The moral exemplar (e.g., Colby & Damon, 1992) and systems (Hart, 2005) approach to moral self-identity lead to similar educational recommendations. For example, moral exemplar research holds out as a goal the prosocial commitment exhibited by care exemplars. Colby and Damon (1992) nominate social influence as a decisive mechanism. For example, that a friend's prosocial behavior can influence one's own pursuit of moral goals (e.g., to be helpful or cooperative) when the affective relationship is strong and interactions are frequent (Barry & Wentzel, 2006).

Similarly, Hart's (2005) research illustrates the importance of cultivating attachment to organizations that provide social opportunities for young people to engage their communities in prosocial service. Indeed, we have seen how community involvement predicts moral self-ideal in late adolescence (Pratt et al., 2003). There is a significant literature that documents that salutary effect of participation in voluntary organizations

1 and service learning opportunities more generally on prosocial behavior and moral civic
2 identity (C. Flanagan, 2004; Youniss & Yates, 1997, 1999).

3 One challenge for a social cognitive theory of moral self-identity is to specify the
4 developmental sources of moral chronicity. Lapsley & Narvaez (2004b) suggest that
5 moral chronicity is built on the foundation of generalized event representations that
6 characterize early socio-personality development (Thompson, 1998). These representa-
7 tions have been called the “basic building blocks of cognitive development” (Nelson &
8 Gruendel, 1981, p. 131). They are working models of how social routines unfold and of
9 what one can expect of social experience.

10 But the key characterological turn of significance for moral psychology is how these
11 early social-cognitive units are transformed from episodic into autobiographical memory.
12 Autobiographical memory is also a social construction elaborated by means of dialogue
13 within a web of interlocution. Parental interrogatives help children organize events into
14 personally relevant autobiographical memories which provide, as part of the self-nar-
15 rative, action-guiding scripts that become frequently practiced, over-learned, routine,
16 habitual, and automatic. Hence parental interrogatives might also include reference to
17 norms, standards, and values so that the moral ideal-self becomes part of the child’s
18 autobiographical narrative. In this way parents help children identify morally relevant
19 features of their experience and encourage the formation of social cognitive schemas
20 that are chronically accessible (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004b). This suggests, though, that
21 the education of moral self-ideal is not always a matter of pedagogy or curriculum and
22 does not take place primarily in schools.

23 *Doubts and Futures*

24 As we have seen, moral self-identity is an attractive concept and a promising one. It
25 seems to capture something important about the link between personal agency and the
26 construction of moral ideals. It opens up possibilities for engaging other psychological
27 literatures, particularly those regarding personality and cognition, with the goal of deriv-
28 ing robust integrative models of moral functioning. Moreover, implications for educating
29 the moral self seem broadly compatible with developmental insights about qualities of
30 attachment and affective interpersonal experiences at home, school, and neighborhood;
31 and compatible, too, with instructional best practice with respect to the importance of
32 caring classrooms, just communities, service learning, and participation in voluntary
33 organizations at school and in the wider community.

34 Nucci (2004) raises several objections. First, he generally doubts that anyone would
35 deny the importance of morality for the self. Virtually everyone thinks that morality
36 is important. Although it is possible for people to disagree about how morality might
37 be displayed for given situations and contexts, he notes that “people generally attend
38 to moral social interactions and have common views of prima facie moral obligations”
39 (p. 119). Second, there is ambiguity about just when and where a moral self-identity is
40 evinced. Indeed, current theory on the moral self does not, in his view, come to grips
41 sufficiently with the heterogeneity of the self system. Our self-concepts are highly differ-
42 entiated and domain specific; and our self-evaluations are similarly specific, flexible, and
43 subject to discounting. Mindful of such complexity, when are we confident in ascribing
44 moral self-identity to an agent?

45 Current research ascribes a moral self to individuals who volunteer in the community—
46 they are “care exemplars.” But what about the leaders of the Weathermen underground
47

who took up action against an immoral war by engaging in violent protest? Was John Brown exercising the prerogatives of moral self-identity at Harpers Ferry? What is the true measure of a man's moral character, when he leads the nation in a heroic struggle for civil rights, or when he has serial extramarital affairs along the way? Most biographical studies of individuals whose lives are marked by extraordinary moral accomplishment also reveal instances of appalling moral failure. This observation is made banal by the uneven manifestation of moral qualities in our own lives let alone the lives of heroic exemplars. Yet the language of moral self-identity seems inadequate to capture this complexity. The construct seems insensate to the demand of situations, underestimates contextual influence, and otherwise neglects the social contexts that interact dynamically with dispositional tendencies (Doris, 2002). Nucci (2004) asks: "Does our moral identity shift with each context? Is it the case that as the self-same person it is the salience of morality that shifts with the context?" (p. 127). As a corrective Nucci (2004) calls for a "contextualist structural theory" of moral cognition to account for when individuals prioritize morality and when they do not.

Four additional problems are noted by Nucci (2004). First, it is reductionist to argue that the motivation for moral action is the desire to maintain consistency between action and moral identity. To do so reduces the contextual complexity of moral situations to the simple judgment of whether to take a certain action is consistent with one's sense of self. Second, self-consistency is not only reductionism but a species of ethical egoism. It reduces questions about fairness, justice, and human welfare to questions about whether actions accord with desires or make one feel good about the self. Following Frankena (1963), Nucci (2004) argues that self-consistency is not a motive for moral action, but rather judgment that it was "the right thing to do." Third, there is very little specification of the developmental features of moral self-identity. Fourth, in some instances, a moral identity is utterly dysfunctional if our identification with a moral framework is so total that we are frozen into moral rigidity or else burn with the crazed indignation of the moral zealot. Moral saints make life unbearable for the rest of us, and you couldn't be friends with one (Wolf, 1982; also, Sorensen, 2004).

There are also compelling criticisms of the orienting philosophical framework(s) that stands behind current work on moral self-identity (e.g., Keba, 2004). For example, the language of "centrality" is used to describe when moral traits are core to self-identity. Yet, as Rorty and Wong (1990) point out, there are at least seven ways for a trait to be central to identity, and there is no necessary connection among them. In addition O. Flanagan (1990) believes it a mistake to align moral identity too closely with strong evaluation and second-order desires because to do so overstates the degree to which effective identity requires reflectiveness, articulacy, and self-comprehension. One can recognize and acknowledge standards and conform behavior to them, "without ever having linguistically formulated the standard and without even possessing the ability to do so when pressed" (p. 53).

Flanagan's (1990) critique does push extant psychological theory in interesting ways. It holds open the possibility that self-comprehension of the second-order type might proceed unreflectively, perhaps automatically and outside of consciousness. It holds out the possibility that psychological theories that require conscious, intentional, and volitional self-appropriation and self-mastery might overestimate the intellectual resources necessary for the development of the moral will; and overestimate the need for articulate reflective judgment of the sort that is envisioned for moral self-identity.

1 Future research on moral self-identity could surely take up these and other matters
 2 with profit. It might ask, for example: What is the nature of second-order desires, and
 3 how transparent must they be to articulate self-comprehension? How and where do
 4 automaticity and “non-conscious” control intersect with the development of the moral
 5 will? What does self-appropriation look like in early development? In addition, future
 6 research must specify more precise developmental models. Although it is useful to
 7 explore adult forms of the moral self, particularly as these are regarded as endpoints of
 8 a developmental process, we must now work back to discern the proper trajectories that
 9 yield these adult forms as outcomes.

10 By far the most glaring deficiency in moral self-identity research is the relative absence
 11 of well-attested assessments of the construct. There is no consensus on how best to
 12 measure moral self-identity in adulthood; and we are not aware of any systematic attempt
 13 to measure it in children, a fact that explains the paucity of developmental research.
 14 Nothing will stop the momentum of scholarly interest in moral self-identity more surely
 15 than the failure to develop suitable assessments. Indeed, most of the advances in moral
 16 psychology research over the last 50 years were made possible by the availability of well-
 17 regarded (interview and questionnaire) assessments of moral development and prin-
 18 ciple reasoning. Clearly the development of such assessments for moral self-identity
 19 should be a high priority.

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