

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# MORAL IDENTITY, MORAL FUNCTIONING, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL CHARACTER

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### Abstract

We review how the construct of the moral self has arisen within moral development theory and discuss the search for integrative linkages with other domains of psychology, including personality. Next, we describe moral personality and then programs and approaches to developing moral identity in children. Moral schema development and moral information-processing research is outlined, including mapping expert-novice differences. Finally, we conclude with two emerging integrative theories, one on educational intervention for moral skill

1 development and the other a neurobiological model of moral functioning which 1  
2 draws on evolutionary themes in the development of a moral brain. 2  
3 3  
4 4  
5 5

## 6 **1. INTRODUCTION** 6

7 7  
8 There are few more pressing problems before psychological science 8  
9 than to account for human moral functioning. This is because moral agency 9  
10 is crucial to our conception of what it means to be a person (Carr, 2001). 10 <sup>Au1</sup>  
11 The belief in our own moral integrity is so central to our self-understanding 11  
12 that often we are tempted to shield it from refutation by recourse to 12  
13 sanitizing euphemisms and protective belts of denial, rationalization, and 13  
14 special pleading (Bandura, 1999). Indeed, as Taylor (1989) put it, “being a 14  
15 self is inseparable from existing in a space of moral issues” (p. 112). 15

16 The alignment of moral integrity with our sense of self-identity might be 16  
17 one of those facts about ourselves that is so obvious that it hardly bears 17  
18 examination — something along the lines of fish being the last to discover 18  
19 water. This might go part of the way to explain the odd fact that the moral 19  
20 self does not have a long research tradition in psychology; but there are 20  
21 other explanations as well. These explanations point to paradigmatic doubts 21  
22 about whether the self is a legitimate construct for a behavioral science, and 22  
23 doubts evident in the study of moral development about how “thick” a self 23  
24 must be to render a rationally adequate moral judgment. 24

25 It does not help that psychological research is fragmented and that 25  
26 relevant fields of study, or even research programs within fields, do not 26  
27 easily talk with one another. The relevance of findings on, say, motivation, 27  
28 social cognition, or personality is not drawn easily for understanding moral 28  
29 motivation, moral cognition, or moral personality. The literatures on 29  
30 expertise, decision making, and of cognitive science more generally provide 30  
31 few explicit guidelines for understanding moral expertise, moral decision 31  
32 making, and moral cognition. Although self-identity has attracted significant 32  
33 research attention for decades, the frameworks of developmental and 33  
34 social psychologists who study it have often bypassed each other. Similarly 34  
35 research on temperament, attachment, and other developmental processes 35  
36 is often silent on their implications for the moral domain. Research on 36  
37 moral development has availed itself rarely of the theories, constructs, and 37  
38 methods of other disciplines; and these other disciplines rarely speculate on 38  
39 the developmental trajectories that bring one to adult functioning. More- 39  
40 over, those interested in the educational implications of the self divide on 40  
41 the purpose and pedagogy of moral-character education, and on the very 41  
42 terms of reference for understanding the moral dimensions of selfhood (see 42  
43 Lapsley and Narvaez, 2006). What is virtue, for example, as a psychological 43  
44 construct? How is character to be understood as a dimension of personality? 44

1 Fortunately there are signs that the estrangement of the moral self from  
2 the main currents of contemporary psychological research is coming to an  
3 end. Although the search for integrative linkages is of longer standing (e.g.,  
4 Lapsley and Power, 1988; Lapsley and Quintana, 1985), there is a discern-  
5 ible increase in the pace and momentum of integrative research on moral  
6 cognition and moral self-identity (Narvaez and Lapsley, in press). Indeed,  
7 the ascendance of the moral self now animates integrative research at the  
8 intersection of several provinces of psychology, and, along with increasing  
9 research into the neuroscientific (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2008) and evolution-  
10 ary bases of moral behavior (Narvaez, 2008b), the appearance of handbooks  
11 on moral development (Killen and Smetana, 2005) and education (Nucci  
12 and Narvaez, 2008), it is now clear that moral psychology is enjoying a  
13 renaissance of interest in many areas of research.

14 In this chapter, we review how the construct of the moral self has arisen  
15 within developmental studies of moral judgment, and how the search for  
16 integrative linkages with other domains of psychology, particularly with  
17 social cognition and personality, took on a certain urgency after the mar-  
18 ginalization or collapse of the dominant stage-and-structure (“Piagetian”)  
19 approaches to moral development. We examine theoretical approaches to  
20 moral self-identity and moral personality, along with their developmental  
21 accounts, including a broader integrative theory that implicates evolution-  
22 ary themes in the development of a moral brain.

## 2. MORAL SELF-IDENTITY

28 In this section, we begin our exploration of moral self-identity by  
29 examining briefly how it is considered in recent ethical theory. We then  
30 trace how Augusto Blasi’s view of the moral personality has evolved out of  
31 the problematic of moral development theory. We then describe theories of  
32 moral personality that have arisen in recent decades.

### 2.1. Ethical Theory and Moral Development

36 On Frankfurt’s (1971, 1988) influential account a person (as opposed to a  
37 *wanton*) has a self-reflective capacity to examine his or her own desires and  
38 to form judgments with respect to them. A person cares about the desirabil-  
39 ity of his or her desires (“second-order desires”) and wishes to conform  
40 the will in accordance with them (“second-order volitions”). Similarly  
41 Taylor (1989) argues that a person is one who engages in *strong evaluation*,  
42 that is, makes careful ethical discriminations about what is better and worse,  
43 higher and lower, worthy and unworthy; and these discriminations are  
44 made against a “horizon of significance” that frames and constitutes our

1 self-understanding (Taylor, 1989). Hence on this view our identity is 1  
2 defined by reference to things that have significance for us. Moreover, 2  
3 according to Taylor (1989) it is a basic human aspiration to be connected 3  
4 to something of crucial importance, to something considered good, worthy, 4  
5 and of fundamental value; and this orientation to the good “is essential to 5  
6 being a functional moral agent” (Taylor, 1989, p. 42). 6

7 Hence, modern ethical theory draws a tight connection between per- 7  
8 sonhood, identity, and moral agency. Moreover, the core notions of 8  
9 second-order desires and the identity-defining commitments of strong 9  
10 evaluation have found their way into recent psychological accounts of 10  
11 moral identity (e.g., Blasi, 2005; Lapsley, 2007). How it has done so is 11  
12 best considered from an historical reconstruction of Kohlberg’s influential 12  
13 theory of moral development, for the stage-and-structure approach cham- 13  
14 pioned by Kohlberg did not always welcome self-identity constructs into its 14  
15 theoretical fold, and for a number of reasons. 15

16 First, Kohlberg’s theory appropriated the Piagetian understanding of 16  
17 stage. This entailed treating the moral stage sequence as a taxonomic 17  
18 classification of different kinds of sociomoral operations and not as a way 18  
19 of charting individual differences. Moral stages, on this account, are not 19  
20 “boxes for classifying and evaluating persons” (Colby et al., 1983, p.11). 20  
21 Instead they describe forms of thought organization of an ideal rational 21  
22 moral agent, an epistemic subject, and hence cannot be “reflections upon 22  
23 the self” (Kohlberg et al., 1983, p. 36). For this reason, it is not possible to 23  
24 use moral stages as a way of making “aretaic judgments” about the self (or of 24  
25 others), that is, of making judgments about one’s moral worthiness as a 25  
26 person. 26

27 Second, Kohlberg thought that the behavioral manifestation of character 27  
28 traits could not be empirically confirmed. After all, the Hartshorne and May 28  
29 (1928–1930) studies appeared to show that certain dispositions (“honesty”) 29  
30 did not exhibit the cross-situational consistency thought necessary for 30  
31 character traits. Third, deeply personological constructs were viewed as 31  
32 obstacles to mature moral deliberation, or as sources of bias and backsliding 32  
33 that had to be surmounted by the rational moral agent. This follows from a 33  
34 Kantian view of the person as one beset by contending forces — the force of 34  
35 reason and the force of bodily desires and passions — each slugging it out for 35  
36 the control of the will (Johnson, 1993). If one links moral judgment too 36  
37 closely to our deeper human nature — to personality, to the self and its 37  
38 desires, passions and inclinations, or to social particularities, relationships, 38  
39 and identity-defining commitments, then one risks divorcing morality from 39  
40 rationality. Self-identity and personality, on this view, are too adhesive to 40  
41 bodily passions which can only compromise the universalizing tendencies 41  
42 required of the “moral point of view” instantiated in the highest stages of 42  
43 moral development. Finally, a focus on virtues and character traits was 43  
44 thought to give aid and comfort to ethical relativism and was therefore a 44

1 poor guide to moral education. As Kohlberg and Mayer (1972, p. 479) 1  
2 famously put it: 2

3 Labeling a set of behaviors displayed by a child with positive or negative 3  
4 trait terms does not signify that they are of adaptive significance or ethical 4  
5 importance. It represents an appeal to particular community conventions, 5  
6 since one person's 'integrity' is another person's 'stubbornness, [one person's] 6  
7 'honesty in expressing your true feelings' is another person's 'insensitivity' to 7  
8 the feelings of others. 8  
9

10 Hence Kohlberg's cognitive developmental approach to moral socialization 10  
11 did not leave much room for dispositional factors, and required only a thin 11  
12 conception of the "responsible self" in order to account for how moral 12  
13 cognition gets translated into moral action. For Kohlberg the responsible 13  
14 self is aware of the prescriptive nature of moral judgments and hence acts 14  
15 upon them, though awareness of this link is most pronounced at the highest 15  
16 stages of moral reasoning. 16

17 Of course, Kohlberg's moral stage theory no longer sets the agenda in 17  
18 moral development research despite the strength of empirical findings sup- 18  
19 porting at least neo-Kohlbergian models of development (e.g., Rest et al., 19  
20 1999). The general decline of the Piagetian paradigm is one part of the 20  
21 explanation for the marginalization of moral stage theory. Other explanations 21  
22 point to factors internal to Kohlberg's theory, such as doubts about how to 22  
23 understand fundamental concepts, such as stage and structure (Lapsley, 2005). 23  
24 Yet it also became clear that Kohlberg's theory could not help us understand 24  
25 the moral formation of children, nor provide guidance for parents about how 25  
26 to raise children *of a certain kind* — children whose personalities are imbued 26  
27 with a strong ethical compass. Although the strictures of moral stage theory 27  
28 forbid aretaic judgments, they come easier to most everyone else; and it was 28  
29 the inability of moral stage theory to engage issues of character, selfhood, and 29  
30 personality that contributed to its diminishing visibility in developmental 30  
31 science, and to increasing recognition that the field was at an important 31  
32 crossroads (Lapsley and Narvaez, 2005). 32  
33

## 34 2.2. Blasi on Moral Identity 34 35

36 The relative neglect of self, identity, and personality in accounts of moral 36  
37 development has now come to an end. Beginning with the pioneering 37  
38 work of Blasi (1984, 1985), it is now evident that moral psychology is 38  
39 catching up with ethical theory in proposing thicker conceptions of moral 39  
40 personhood so that talk of moral self-identity and moral personality are now 40  
41 commonplace (Blasi, 2005; Lapsley, 2007; Lapsley and Narvaez, 2004a; 41  
42 Narvaez and Lapsley, in press; Walker and Frimer, in press). 42

43 Blasi's contributions to moral psychology can be described usefully in 43  
44 terms of five key themes that emerged in his writings. His early writings 44

1 focused on the Self Model of moral action and moral identity. Later he took 1  
2 up the intentional self, the nature of moral character, and the development 2  
3 of the moral will. Throughout this work Blasi is influenced clearly by the 3  
4 notion of second-order desires (Frankfurt) and of the identity-defining 4  
5 commitments of strong evaluation (Taylor). 5

6 The Self Model of moral action was developed in response to the 6  
7 disappointing finding that moral judgment did not predict moral action 7  
8 very strongly (Blasi, 1983). In contrast to Kohlberg's position, Blasi argued 8  
9 that moral action did not follow directly from a deontic judgment but was 9  
10 instead filtered through a set of calculations that implicated the very integ- 10  
11 rity of the self. According to Blasi (1983) moral structures are only indirectly 11  
12 related to moral action. They serve to appraise the moral landscape, but do 12  
13 not directly generate action. Just because an agent appraises the social 13  
14 situation through the lens of sophisticated moral criteria does not guarantee 14  
15 that the agent will also see the personal relevance of the situation, or even its 15  
16 relevance for morality. 16

17 The Self Model holds that action is more likely to follow moral judg- 17  
18 ment when moral considerations are deemed essential and core to one's 18  
19 personal identity. After one makes a moral judgment one must next filter 19  
20 this judgment through a second set of calculations that speaks to the issue of 20  
21 whether the self is responsible. Responsibility judgments attempt to sort out 21  
22 the extent to which the morally good action is strictly necessary for the self. 22  
23 Moreover, the criteria for reaching responsibility judgments are a matter of 23  
24 individual differences insofar as it varies in accordance with one's self- 24  
25 definition. Is acting in this way so necessary for my self-understanding 25  
26 that not to act is to lose the self? Are moral notions so central to my identity 26  
27 that failing to act, or indulging in excusing rationalizations, is to undermine 27  
28 what is core to my personhood? Blasi suggests that the cognitive motivation 28  
29 for moral action springs from this sense of fidelity to oneself-in-action. 29  
30 It springs from a tendency toward self-consistency, which he views as a 30  
31 cognitive motive for objectivity and truth. It springs from a moral identity 31  
32 that is deeply rooted in moral commitments — commitments so deeply 32  
33 rooted, in fact, that to betray these commitments is also to betray the self. 33

34 Hence moral action, and inaction, implicates the self in important ways. 34  
35 As McFall (1987, p. 12) put it: 35

36 We all have things we think we would never do, under any imaginable 36  
37 circumstances; some part of ourselves beyond which we will never retreat, 37  
38 some weakness however prevalent in others that we will not tolerate in 38  
39 ourselves. And if we do that thing, betray that weakness, we are not the persons 39  
40 we thought: there is nothing left that we may even in spite refer to as *I*. 40  
41

42 Unconditional moral commitments that are core, deep, and essential to our 42  
43 self-understanding contributes to our sense of personal integrity-in-action. 43  
44 These are the “deepest most serious convictions we have; they define what 44



1 we would not do, what we regard as outrageous and horrible; they are the 1  
2 fundamental conditions for being ourselves, for the integrity of our char- 2  
3 acters depends upon them” (Kekes, 1989, p. 167). 3

4 But moral identity is a dimension of individual differences, that is, it is 4  
5 a way of talking about personality, but this time one’s moral personality 5  
6 is grounded by reference to moral reasons. One has a moral identity to the 6  
7 extent that moral notions, such as being good, being just, compassionate, 7  
8 or fair, is judged to be central, essential, and important to one’s self- 8  
9 understanding. One has a moral identity when one strives to keep faith 9  
10 with identity-defining moral commitments, and when moral claims stake 10  
11 out the very terms of reference for the sort of person one claims to be. 11

12 Blasi’s account of the moral personality, his elevation of the subjective 12  
13 self-as-agent as an object of inquiry, his insistence on the rational, inten- 13  
14 tional nature of distinctly moral functioning, and his integration of self and 14  
15 identity with moral rationality and responsibility is a singular achievement 15  
16 (Lapsley and Narvaez, 2004a). His theory of moral identity also has empiri- 16  
17 cal consequences. It is invoked, for example, to explain the motivation of 17  
18 individuals who sheltered Jews during the Nazi Holocaust (Monroe, 1994, 18  
19 2001, 2003); and it underwrites a line of research on the psychological 19  
20 characteristics of “moral exemplars” whose lives are marked by uncommon 20  
21 moral commitment. For example, studies of adult (Colby and Damon, 21  
22 1991) and adolescent (Hart and Fegley, 1995; Matsuba and Walker, 2004, 22  
23 2005; Reimer, 2003) moral exemplars typically reveal that exemplars align 23  
24 their self-conceptions with ideal moral goals and personality traits, and that 24  
25 their moral action is undertaken as a matter of felt self-necessity. 25

26 Blasi returned long-forgotten concepts to the vocabulary of modern 26  
27 psychology, including desire, will, and volition, and added new concepts, 27  
28 such as self-appropriation and self-mastery. To date these concepts have 28  
29 resisted straightforward translation into empirical research. Moreover there is 29  
30 no consensus on how to measure moral identity, which is a centerpiece 30  
31 of Blasian moral theory. Alternative approaches to moral identity have 31  
32 emerged that while friendly toward the general Blasian framework nonetheless 32  
33 have starting points other than the subjective self-as-agent. 33  
34 34  
35 35

### 36 2.3. Personality Theory 36 37 37

38 There is an emerging consensus that the study of moral rationality can no 38  
39 longer be studied in isolation from the broader context of personality 39  
40 (Walker and Hennig, 1998; Lapsley and Narvaez, 2004b). For too long 40  
41 the study of moral judgment was pursued at the expense of studying the 41  
42 moral agent as a whole person (Walker, 1999). As a corrective it seems 42  
43 reasonable to insist that if moral self-identity (or “character”) is a dimension 43  
44 of individual differences, and if it is the moral dimension of personality, then 44

1 our accounts of these constructs must be compatible with well-attested 1  
2 models of personality. But *which* model? 2

3 Modern personality theory provides a number of options. Cervone 3  
4 (1991) argues, for example, that personality psychology divides into two 4  
5 disciplines on the question of how best to conceptualize the basic units of 5  
6 personality. One discipline favors trait/dispositional constructs, the second 6  
7 discipline favors social-cognitive constructs. The traits/disposition approach 7  
8 (e.g., Costa and McCrae, 1992) accounts for the structure of personality 8  
9 in terms of between-person classification of interindividual variability. 9  
10 Individual differences are captured in terms of “top-down” dispositional 10  
11 constructs as might be found in latent variable taxonomies identified 11  
12 through factor analysis, such as the Big 5 taxonomy (extraversion, neuroti- 12  
13 cism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and open-to-experience). 13

14 In contrast, the social-cognitive approach understands the structure of 14  
15 personality in terms of intraindividual, cognitive-affective mechanisms, and 15  
16 attempts to account for individual differences from the “bottom-up,” that 16  
17 is, in terms of specific, within-person psychological systems that are in 17  
18 dynamic interaction with changing situational contexts (Cervone, 2005; 18  
19 Cervone and Tripathi, in press). Scripts, schemas, episodes, plans, proto- 19  
20 types, and similar constructs are the units of analysis for social-cognitive 20  
21 approaches to personality. 21

22 Cervone’s “two disciplines” of personality has been joined by the “new 22  
23 Big 5” conceptualization proposed by McAdams and Pals (2006) as an 23  
24 integrative framework for personality science. The framework begins with 24  
25 the *general evolutionary design* for human nature (Level 1) as it is expressed 25  
26 in broadband *dispositional traits* that are organized early in development 26  
27 (Level 2). Later personality comes to include *characteristic adaptations* to 27  
28 specific contextual demands (Level 3), and then self-defining *narratives* 28  
29 (Level 4) that are expressed differentially in broader *social and cultural contexts* 29  
30 (Level 5). In this framework the personality is layered, with evolutionary 30  
31 biology at the bottom and sociocultural context at the top. Of most interest 31  
32 here are the three middle layers, dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, 32  
33 and self-defining narratives. 33

34 At Level 2 are dispositional traits like the Big 5 that encode those 34  
35 broadband variations in human behavior that have made a difference in 35  
36 human evolutionary history (McAdams, in press). These dispositional traits 36  
37 show cross-situational consistency and developmental continuity. But 37  
38 personality also is responsive to exigencies of specific contextual settings, 38  
39 and this pattern of responsiveness is captured by Level 3 “characteristic 39  
40 adaptations.” These include a large tool box of motivational, social- 40  
41 cognitive, and developmental constructs such as favored defense mechan- 41  
42 isms, coping strategies, schemas of various kinds, personal projects, beliefs, 42  
43 goals, values, and ideologies. Finally, atop Level 2 dispositions and Level 3 43  
44 adaptations is the construction at Level 4 of a life narrative that pulls 44



1 together the elements of one's biography into a story that yields ideally a 1  
2 sense of unity, coherence, and purpose. 2  
3

### 3 2.3.1. Personality Theory and Moral Personality 3

4  
5 Recent research in moral psychology has appealed to both the Big 5 5  
6 taxonomy (McAdams) and to social-cognitive theory (Cervone). For exam- 6  
7 ple, Walker and his colleagues have attempted to understand the personality 7  
8 of moral exemplars in terms of McAdams' Big 5 taxonomy. In one study, 8  
9 the personality of moral exemplars was found to orient toward conscien- 9  
10 tiousness and agreeableness (Walker, 1999). Agreeableness also character- 10  
11 ized young adult moral exemplars (Matsuba and Walker, 2005). In a study 11  
12 of brave, caring and just exemplars (as recognized by the Canadian honors 12  
13 system), Walker and Pitts (1998) found that brave exemplars aligned with a 13  
14 complex of traits associated with extraversion; caring exemplars aligned 14  
15 with agreeableness, and just exemplars with a mixture of conscientiousness, 15  
16 emotional stability, and openness to experience. This pattern was largely 16  
17 replicated by Walker and Hennig (2004). 17  
18

19 In contrast to McAdams' Big 5 characterizations of moral personality are 19  
20 social-cognitive theories that appeal to the availability and accessibility 20  
21 of social-cognitive knowledge structures, such as schemas, scripts, and pro- 21  
22 totypes (Aquino and Reed, 2002; Aquino and Freeman, in press; Lapsley 22  
23 and Narvaez, 2004b). From this perspective schemas (rather than traits) are 23  
24 the cognitive carriers of dispositions (Cantor, 1990; Cantor and Kihlstrom, 24  
25 1987). Schemas "demarcate regions of social life and domains of personal 25  
26 experience to which the person is especially tuned and about which he or 26  
27 she is likely to become a virtual 'expert'" (Cantor, 1990, p. 738). Schemas 27  
28 that are frequently activated should, over time, become chronically accessi- 28  
29 ble. Moreover, there should be individual differences in the accessibility of 29  
30 constructs just because of each person's unique social developmental history 30  
31 (Bargh et al., 1988). 31

32 Hence schema accessibility shows interindividual variability but also 32  
33 sustains patterns of individual differences over time, and is properly consid- 33  
34 ered a personality variable (Higgins, 1996). For example, if schemas are 34  
35 chronically accessible, then attention is directed selectively to certain fea- 35  
36 tures of experience at the expense of others. It disposes one to select 36  
37 schema-relevant life tasks, goals, or settings which, in turn, canalize and 37  
38 maintain dispositional tendencies (which illustrate the reciprocal relation- 38  
39 ship between persons and contexts). It encourages one to develop highly 39  
40 practiced behavioral routines in those areas demarcated by chronically 40  
41 accessible schemas, which provide "a ready, sometimes automatically avail- 41  
42 able plan of action in such life contexts" (Cantor, 1990, p. 738). 42

43 Lapsley and Narvaez (2004b) and others (e.g., Aquino and Freeman, in 43  
44 press) have invoked the social-cognitive framework to understand moral 44

1 personality. In this view, the moral personality is to be understood in terms 1  
2 of the accessibility of moral schemas for social information processing. 2  
3 A moral person, a person who has a moral character or identity, is one 3  
4 for whom moral constructs is chronically accessible (moral chronicity), 4  
5 where construct accessibility and availability are dimensions of individual 5  
6 differences. 6

7 A social-cognitive model of moral personality has at least five attractive 7  
8 features. First, it provides an explanation for the model of moral identity 8  
9 favored by Blasi (1984) who argues that one has a moral identity just 9  
10 when moral categories are essential, central, and important to one's self- 10  
11 understanding. A social-cognitive interpretation would add that moral 11  
12 categories that are essential, central, and important for one's self-identity 12  
13 would also be ones that are chronically accessible for interpreting the social 13  
14 landscape. These categories would be online, vigilant, easily primed, easily 14  
15 activated, for discerning the meaning of events, for noticing the moral 15  
16 dimensions of experience and, once activated, to dispose one to interpret 16  
17 events in light of one's moral commitments. 17

18 Second, this model accounts for the felt necessity of moral commitments 18  
19 experienced by moral exemplars, their experience of moral clarity or felt 19  
20 conviction that their decisions are evidently appropriate, justified, and true. 20  
21 Typically moral exemplars report that they "just knew" what was required 21  
22 of them, automatically as it were, without the experience of working 22  
23 through an elaborate decision-making calculus (Colby and Damon, 1991). 23  
24 Yet this is precisely the outcome of preconscious activation of chronically 24  
25 accessible constructs that it should induce strong feelings of certainty or 25  
26 conviction with respect to social judgments (Bargh, 1989; Narvaez and 26  
27 Lapsley, in press). 27

28 Third, the social-cognitive framework is better able to account for the 28  
29 implicit, tacit, and automatic features of moral functioning (Narvaez and 29  
30 Lapsley, 2005). There is growing recognition that much of human decision 30  
31 making is under nonconscious control (Bargh, 2005) and occurs with an 31  
32 automaticity that belies the standard notions of rational, deliberative calcu- 32  
33 lation (Bargh and Chartrand, 1999). Though this possibility offends tradi- 33  
34 tional accounts of moral development, there is no reason to think that 34  
35 automaticity is evident in every domain of decision making except the 35  
36 moral domain. However, unlike the social intuitionist model (Haidt, 36  
37 2001) which frontloads automaticity prior to judgment and reasoning as a 37  
38 result of intuitions that are constitutive of human nature (and hence prior to 38  
39 learning and enculturation) the social-cognitive approach to moral person- 39  
40 ality locates automaticity on the backend of development as the result of 40  
41 repeated experience, of instruction, intentional coaching, and socialization 41  
42 (Lapsley and Hill, in press). It is the automaticity that comes from expertise 42  
43 in life domains where we have vast experience and well-practiced behavioral 43  
44 routines (Cantor, 1990). 44

1 Fourth, a social-cognitive model of the moral personality can account 1  
2 for situational variability in the display of a virtue (Cervone and Tripathi, in 2  
3 press). The accessibility of social-cognitive schemas underwrites not only 3  
4 the discriminative facility in the selection of situationally appropriate behav- 4  
5 ior, but also the automaticity of schema activation that contributes to the 5  
6 tacit, implicit qualities often associated with the “habits” of moral character 6  
7 (Lapsley and Narvaez, 2006). 7

8 Fifth, social-cognitive theory accords with the paradigmatic assumptions 8  
9 of ecological “systems” models of development (Lerner, 2006). Both devel- 9  
10 opmental systems and social-cognitive theory affirm that a dispositional 10  
11 behavioral signature is to be found at the intersection of Person  $\times$  Context 11  
12 interactions. Consequently, a preference for social-cognitive theory as a 12  
13 way to conceptualize the moral personality reflects a strategic bet that it is 13  
14 more likely to lead to robust integrative models of moral personality 14  
15 development than are approaches driven by the Big 5. Similarly, Olson 15  
16 and Dweck (2008) argue that the field of “social-cognitive development” 16  
17 (SCD) has strong integrative possibilities as it straddles the domains of social, 17  
18 developmental, and cognitive psychology. 18

19 Recent research has attempted to document the social-cognitive dimen- 19  
20 sions of moral cognition. For example, moral chronicity (chronic activation 20  
21 of moral constructs in social information processing) appears to be a dimen- 21  
22 sion of individual differences that influences spontaneous trait inference and 22  
23 text comprehension (Narvaez et al., 2006). In two studies Narvaez et al. 23  
24 (2006) showed that moral chronics and nonchronics respond differently to 24  
25 the dispositional and moral implications of social cues. In addition, research 25  
26 shows that conceptions of good character (Lapsley and Lasky, 2002) and of 26  
27 moral, spiritual, and religious persons (Walker and Pitts, 1998) are organized 27  
28 as cognitive prototypes. 28

29 Aquino and Reed (2002) proposed a model of moral identity that is 29  
30 compatible with the tenets of social-cognitive theory. They define moral 30  
31 identity as a self-schema that is organized around specific moral trait associa- 31  
32 tions (e.g., caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hard- 32  
33 working, honest, kind) that are closely linked in memory (in the manner of 33  
34 spreading activation). They argue that moral identity has both a public and 34  
35 private aspect. Privately, moral identity is a cognitive representation of the 35  
36 moral self that reflects the degree to which moral traits are central to one’s 36  
37 self-concept. Publicly, moral identity can be projected symbolically in the 37  
38 forms of actions-in-the-world, or, alternatively, the degree to which the 38  
39 traits are reflected in one’s public actions. The private aspect of moral 39  
40 identity is labeled Internalization; the public aspect is labeled Symbolization. 40  
41 These aspects are derived as subscales on an instrument that uses the nine 41  
42 moral traits as “salience induction stimuli.” In some studies, these nine traits 42  
43 are used as an experimental manipulation to prime the accessibility of moral 43  
44 identity. 44

1 Aquino and Reed (2002) showed that both dimensions predicted self- 1  
2 reported good deeds such as volunteering at a homeless shelter, organizing a 2  
3 food drive, mentoring troubled youth, or visiting patients at a nursing home 3  
4 “in the past two years.” The self-importance of moral identity (“Internaliza- 4  
5 tion”) was also a strong predictor of donating behavior in this study. 5  
6 A strong sense of internalized moral identity predicts whether one will share 6  
7 resources with outgroups or come to their aid (Reed and Aquino, 2003), 7  
8 donate personal time for a charitable cause (Reed et al., 2007) or lie in a 8  
9 business negotiation (Aquino and Freeman, in press). When individuals 9  
10 with internalized moral identity do lie in a business negotiation, they are 10  
11 strongly motivated to reduce its implication for the self by attempting 11  
12 various strategies that serve to neutralize the sting of hypocrisy, such as 12  
13 denial, denigrating the target, or minimizing the lie (Aquino and Becker, 13  
14 2005). That said, when the self-importance of moral identity is high, it 14  
15 undermines the effectiveness of moral disengagement mechanisms that 15  
16 rationalize doing harm to others (Aquino et al., 2007). 16  
17  
18  
19

### 3. DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL SELF-IDENTITY

20  
21  
22 The literature on moral self-identity and the moral personality seems 22  
23 largely preoccupied with sketching out what it looks like in its mature form 23  
24 in adulthood. This is not inappropriate. Often it is useful, if not essential, to 24  
25 get a handle on the *telos* of development before one can investigate the 25  
26 possible developmental trajectories that gets one there (Kitchener, 1983). 26  
27 Still, the relative paucity of work on the development of the moral self is 27  
28 striking. This is due partly to the lack of interest in developmental ante- 28  
29 cedents among personality, cognitive, and social psychologists, something 29  
30 that an emergent field of SCD might remedy (Olson and Dweck, 2008). 30

31 But it is also due partly to a tendency among some development theorists 31  
32 to treat moral acquisitions as a philosophical competency that must await 32  
33 later stages of development. Or else to insist on such stringent and philoso- 33  
34 phized conceptions of what counts as “moral” that extant and possibly 34  
35 relevant developmental literatures are deemed unavailing and dismissed. 35  
36 The moral self is isolated from other developmental processes and is treated 36  
37 as some occult achievement that has a presumptive developmental history 37  
38 but of which little can be said. Perhaps this is the negative side-effect of 38  
39 starting with philosophical conceptions about what is “moral” about adult 39  
40 moral personality and then trying to push this conception back in develop- 40  
41 mental time in the search for antecedents. The result is a view we find 41  
42 untenable, namely, that development brings a child to a tipping point at 42  
43 which time he or she then becomes *moralized*. On this view attachment 43  
44 processes, for example, or the organization of temperament or the child’s 44

1 expanding socio-emotional and cognitive competencies are not themselves 1  
2 markers of the developing moral self — nothing to see here — but rather are 2  
3 developmental achievements that are in need of something else (“moraliza- 3  
4 tion”) before the moral domain takes notice. 4

5 Yet many extant literatures shed light on the foundation, emergence, 5  
6 and trajectory of moral self development, although often they are not 6  
7 unpacked to reveal their implications for moral development. Nonetheless 7  
8 these literatures are forcing a reconsideration of certain views about young 8  
9 children that have become calcified in the stage development literatures, for 9  
10 example, the notion that infants lack an appreciation of subjectivity (cf., 10  
11 Repacholi, 1998), that toddlers are egocentric (cf., Gelman, 1979; Light, 11  
12 1983), incapable of discerning intentions (cf., Nunez and Harris, 1998) or of 12  
13 engaging in prosocial behavior (cf., Bar-Tal et al., 1982; Denham, 1986; 13  
14 Dunn, 2006; Warneken and Tomasello, 2007), or of describing the self in 14  
15 anything other than physicalistic or demographic terms (cf., Marsh et al., 15  
16 2002), and so on. “It was not long ago,” Thompson (2006, p. 25) remarked, 16  
17 “that characterizations of young children as egocentric, concrete, precon- 17  
18 ventional, and preconceptual made this developmental period seem discon- 18  
19 tinuous with the conceptual achievements of middle childhood and later.” 19  
20 This now discredited view of early childhood seemed to discourage 20  
21 attempts to locate the early roots of moral self, personality and character 21  
22 in the infancy, toddler, and early childhood years. 22

23 Take the stance of the Kohlberg paradigm on what constitutes a moral 23  
24 action. A moral action, on this view, is an action undertaken for explicit 24  
25 moral reasons. Moral action, under this definition, is most likely when one 25  
26 discerns the moral norm and understands its prescriptive quality, and this is 26  
27 most evident to individuals who are at the postconventional stages of moral 27  
28 reasoning. Kohlberg’s team never studied toddlers or children. The age 28  
29 range of their influential moral stage sequence begins much later in early 29  
30 adolescence and extends to adulthood. So it is silent on what early child- 30  
31 hood contributes to moral development (other than to assume a blanket 31  
32 moral egocentrism), but leaves the impression that toddlers do not engage in 32  
33 moral action thus defined or do not feel the prescriptive weight of the moral 33  
34 law. The Kohlberg moral development sequence, then, is discontinuous 34  
35 with the early child development processes, mechanisms, and acquisitions 35  
36 that bring a child to its first Kohlbergian stage in late childhood or early 36  
37 adolescence. 37

### 38 39 40 **3.1. Early Development of Moral Personality**

41 We now know, of course, that an intuitive morality is an early develop- 41  
42 mental achievement. Soon after 18 months of age toddlers display an 42  
43 awareness and responsiveness to normative standards across a wide range 43  
44 of situations that includes, for example, their reacting with self-conscious 44

1 emotions and mark-directed behavior to a spot of rouge on their face when 1  
2 looking in a mirror (Lewis and Brooks-Gunn, 1979); their expectations 2  
3 about daily routines and events (Fivush et al., 1992), or for how persons 3  
4 should act; or their negative reaction and concern to objects that are 4  
5 disfigured, broken or marred in some way (Kagan, 2005). 5  
6 What's more toddlers have an early grasp of the different standards 6  
7 of obligation that obtain in moral and conventional violations (Smetana, 7  
8 1997) and for how prescriptive rules apply to different situations (Harris 8  
9 and Nunez, 1996). They are aware of how things ought to be. They are 9  
10 cognizant of adult standards and the notions of responsibility and account- 10  
11 ability (Dunn, 1988). Clearly toddlers seem to be aware of a wide range of 11  
12 conventional norms, and these serve as the foundation of an emerging 12  
13 intuitive morality that belies a greater moral capacity than has been credited 13  
14 to them (Thompson, in press). Indeed, the "relationships and other influ- 14  
15 ences experienced in the early years set the context for the growth of an 15  
16 empathic humanistic conception toward others, balanced self-concept, 16  
17 capacities for relational intimacy, social sensitivity, and other capacities 17  
18 conventionally viewed as achievements of middle childhood and adoles- 18  
19 cence" (Thompson, 2006, p. 25). 19  
20 The development of moral self-identity, of moral personality, and char- 20  
21 acter, then, is a banal developmental achievement in the sense that it results 21  
22 from ordinary developmental processes and mechanisms. The moral self 22  
23 emerges in the dynamic transaction between the inductive capacities and 23  
24 other personal qualities of the child and the familial and relational interac- 24  
25 tions that provide the context for development. As a result theoretical 25  
26 accounts of the developing moral self must take into account various person 26  
27 variables, including temperament, self-regulation skills, theory of mind, and 27  
28 conscience, but also contextual-relational variables, including attachment 28  
29 security and the parental interactions that support it. 29  
30 Kochanska and her colleagues (Kochanska, 2002a; Kochanska and 30  
31 Aksan, 2004; Kochanska et al., 2004; Kochanska et al., 1995) have shown 31  
32 how the moral self might emerge at the intersection of Person  $\times$  Context 32  
33 interactions. They proposed a two-step model of emerging morality that 33  
34 begins with the quality of parent-child attachment. A strong, mutually 34  
35 responsive relationship with caregivers orients the child to be receptive to 35  
36 parental influence (Kochanska, 1997a, 2002b). 36  
37 This "mutually responsive orientation" (MRO) is characterized by 37  
38 shared positive affect, mutually coordinated enjoyable routines ("good 38  
39 times"), and a "cooperative interpersonal set" that describes the joint 39  
40 willingness of parent and child to initiate and reciprocate relational over- 40  
41 tures. It is from within the context of the MRO, and the secure attachment 41  
42 that it denotes, that the child is eager to comply with parental expectations 42  
43 and standards. There is "committed compliance" on the part of the child 43  
44 to the norms and values of caregivers which, in turn, motivates moral 44



1 internalization and the work of “conscience.” This was documented in a 1  
2 recent longitudinal study. Children who had experienced a highly respon- 2  
3 sive relationship with mothers over the first 24 months of life strongly 3  
4 embraced maternal prohibitions and gave evidence of strong self-regulation 4  
5 skills at preschool age (Kochanska et al., 2008). 5

6 Kochanska’s model moves, then, from security of attachment (MRO) to 6  
7 committed compliance to moral internalization. This movement is also 7  
8 expected to influence the child’s emerging internal representation of the 8  
9 self. As Kochanska et al. (2002a) put it: 9

10 Children with a strong history of committed compliance with the parent 10  
11 are likely gradually to come to view themselves as embracing the parent’s 11  
12 values and rules. Such a moral self, in turn, comes to serve as the regulator of 12  
13 future moral conduct and, more generally, of early morality (p. 340). 13  
14

15 But children bring something to the interaction, too, namely, their temper- 15  
16 ament. Kochanska (1991, 1993) argues that there are multiple pathways to 16  
17 conscience and that one parenting style is not uniformly more effective 17  
18 regardless of the temperamental dispositions of the child. In particular, she 18  
19 suggests that children who are highly prone to fearful reactions would profit 19  
20 from gentle, low power-assertive discipline. This “silken glove” approach 20  
21 capitalizes on the child’s own discomfort to produce the optimal level of 21  
22 anxiety that facilitates the processing and retention of parents’ socialization 22  
23 messages. But for “fearless” children another approach is called for, not the 23  
24 “iron hand,” which would only make the fearless child angry, highly 24  
25 reactive, and resistant to socialization messages (Kochanska et al., 2007), 25  
26 but rather one that capitalizes on positive emotions (rather than on anxiety). 26

27 Hence there are at least two pathways to the internalization of conscie- 27  
28 nce. For fearful children, it leads through the soft touch of gentle 28  
29 discipline; for fearless children, it leads through the reciprocal positive 29  
30 parent-child relationship. This has now been documented in a number of 30  
31 studies (Kochanska, 1997b; Kochanska et al., 2005). 31

32 How does Kochanska’s model of the emergent moral self relate to 32  
33 characterizations of adult moral self-identity reviewed earlier? Recall that 33  
34 Blasian moral identity requires the moralization of self-regulation (“will- 34  
35 power”) and integrity by moral desires. The moral personality, at its highest 35  
36 articulation, is driven by a sense of “wholeheartedness,” by which Blasi 36  
37 (2005) means that “a general moral desire becomes the basic concern around 37  
38 which the will is structured” (p. 82). Wholehearted commitment to a moral 38  
39 desire, to the moral good, becomes an aspect of identity to the extent that not 39  
40 to act in accordance with the moral will is unthinkable. 40

41 But how do children develop wholehearted commitment to moral 41  
42 integrity? What is the source of moral desires? How do children develop 42  
43 the proper moral desires as second-order volitions? What are the develop- 43  
44 mental pathways that bring us to the moral personality envisioned by Blasi’s 44

1 theory? We suggest that Kochanska's model is a good place to start. The 1  
2 developmental source of the moral personality lies in the shared, positive 2  
3 affective relationship with caregivers. It emerges as a precipitate of the 3  
4 "cooperative interpersonal set" — the mutual responsiveness and 4  
5 shared "good times" — that characterize the interpersonal foundation of 5  
6 conscience. 6

7 This linkage is likely be resisted by Blasian moral theory because of the 7  
8 presumption that Kochanska's moral self only brings one to *mere* compliance 8  
9 or *mere* internalization and therefore misses the subjective, agentic qualities 9  
10 of the mature moral will. But the compliance of the emergent moral self is 10  
11 not submission but rather a perceptual bias, an act of commitment that is 11  
12 motivated by strongly charged, mutually shared, positive affective interper- 12  
13 sonal relationships with caregivers. The desire to be moral, in other words, 13  
14 is deeply social and therefore deeply emotional. There must be a develop- 14  
15 mental source for the moral desires of the subjective self-as-agent, and these 15  
16 arise from interpersonal relationships of a certain kind that are sustained over 16  
17 time by social institutions — by families, classrooms, schools, and neighbor- 17  
18 hoods, characterized by affective bonds of attachment and community. 18  
19 Indeed, there is strong evidence that caring classroom environments char- 19  
20 acterized by strong bonding to teachers and school, and an abiding sense of 20  
21 community, is associated with prosocial behavior and many positive devel- 21  
22 opmental outcomes (Lapsley and Narvaez, 2006, for a review). 22  
23 23  
24 24  
25 25

### 26 3.2. Community and Context Models of Moral Identity 26

27 One limitation of Blasi's framework is that it does not give much attention 27  
28 to the social dimensions of self-identity. Kochanska helps us understand that 28  
29 the source of self-control, integrity, and of moral desires is deeply relational; 29  
30 moral self-identity emerges within a history of secure attachment. If 30  
31 true, such a model underscores the importance of attachment to teachers 31  
32 (Watson, 2008), school bonding (Catalano et al., 2004; Libby, 2004), and 32  
33 caring school communities (e.g., Payne et al., 2003; Solomon et al., 1992) as 33  
34 bases for continued prosocial and moral development. For example, Payne 34  
35 et al. (2003) showed that when a school is organized and experienced as a 35  
36 caring community its students report higher levels of bonding to school and 36  
37 greater internalization of community goals and norms which are related to 37  
38 less delinquency. Elementary school children's sense of community leads 38  
39 them to adhere to the values that are most salient in the classroom (Solomon 39  
40 et al., 1996). At the same time, when high school students perceive a moral 40  
41 atmosphere they report more prosocial and less norms-transgressive behav- 41  
42 ior (Brugman et al., 2003). These findings show that secure attachments 42  
43 promote committed compliance and lead to internalization of norms and 43  
44 standards at every age. 44

### 3.2.1. Just Community

We examine two research programs to show the importance of community beyond the family for moral identity development. First, Power (2004) and Power and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2008) argue that the community is critical for understanding the moral dimensions of the self insofar as the self “does not experience a sense of obligation or responsibility to act in isolation but with others within a cultural setting” (p. 52). Power brings to the problem of self-identity a long interest in how classrooms and schools can be transformed into “just communities” (Power et al., 1989). In a just community there is a commitment to participatory, deliberative democracy but in the service of becoming a moral community. Members of a community — a classroom or school — commit to a common life that is regulated by norms that reflect moral ideals. These shared norms emerge as a product of democratic deliberation in community meetings. Here, the benefits and burdens of shared lived experience are sorted out in a way that encourages group solidarity and identification. One’s identification with the group and its communal norms generate a moral atmosphere that conduces to moral formation. 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.

Group identification is not simply awareness that one is a member of a group, but rather that one is responsible for the group. The responsible self is a communal self that takes on obligations and duties as result of shared commitment to group norms. In order to illustrate a possible trajectory in the development of the moral communal self, Power (2004) adapted Blasi’s (1988) typology of identity (identity as *observed*, *managed*, and *constructed*) as understood from the perspective of the subjective self-as-agent. 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 urges 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. He writes:

This appropriation is rational and critical and is not a passive internalization of group norms and values. Moreover, the appropriation of membership in the community is to be based on the ideals of the community. In this sense the identification with the community not only allows for but encourages a critical stance toward its practices and commitment to change it (p. 55).

Class meetings are now a well-entrenched element of instructional best practice, particularly at the elementary school level. Giving students

1 “voice-and-choice” about classroom practices, giving them an opportunity 1  
2 to share, to cooperate, to discuss, to take joint responsibility, are recognized 2  
3 as important elements of character education (Lapsley and Narvaez, 2006). 3  
4 But these salutary practices are still some distance from the goal of partici- 4  
5 patory democratic decision making. Indeed most schools and classrooms 5  
6 who endorse caring classroom communities as a moral educational goal 6  
7 could not fairly be called “just communities” in the sense envisioned by 7  
8 Power and his colleagues. 8

9 One problem is that the demands of academic accountability and the 9  
10 pressure to make adequate yearly progress on mandated state examinations 10  
11 tends to squeeze intentional, deliberate approaches to moral character 11  
12 education out of the curriculum. Teachers find it difficult even to reserve 12  
13 the “homeroom period” for building moral community. For this reason, 13  
14 Power and his colleagues have targeted youth sports programs as an alterna- 14  
15 tive location for moral character intervention. Here children and adoles- 15  
16 cents might experience teams as a moral community, and coaching as a form 16  
17 of moral education. Their program, called “Play Like a Champion” (2008), 17  
18 teaches coaches to build an engaging team climate that emphasizes moral 18  
19 principles (justice, tolerance, respect, and cooperation) using child-centered 19  
20 strategies to advance the full personal development of the child. 20  
21

### 22 3.2.2. Moral Development in Poor Neighborhoods 22

23 We turn to a second research program that underscores the importance of 23  
24 community for moral identity development. Hart and Matsuba (in press) are 24  
25 concerned mostly with how the larger contextual settings, such as poor 25  
26 urban neighborhoods, influence enduring personality characteristics, and 26  
27 the suite of mediating factors. The influence is not encouraging. Poor urban 27  
28 neighborhoods generally provide a context that works against the formation 28  
29 of moral identity or the commitment to moral projects. For example, living 29  
30 in high-poverty neighborhoods tends to undermine moral attitudes and 30  
31 values such as tolerance for divergent viewpoints (Hart et al., 2004). It 31  
32 undermines personality resilience, and is associated with family dysfunction, 32  
33 stress, and increases in problem behavior (Hart et al., 2003). 33

34 Moreover, very poor neighborhoods — particularly those marked by 34  
35 high levels of child saturation — are less able to provide opportunities for 35  
36 productive engagement in the community. This is because poor neighbor- 36  
37 hoods are relatively lacking in the rich network of organizations that 37  
38 support projects with moral goals. Indeed, adolescents in poor communities 38  
39 form fewer connections with these institutions than do children in affluent 39  
40 communities. They report fewer affiliations with clubs, teams, and youth 40  
41 organizations (Hart and Matsuba, in press), and fewer opportunities for 41  
42 volunteering. Institutional density, then, is a critical factor that influences 42  
43 the availability of identity-defining options for adolescents. Opportunities 43  
44 to engage in projects that facilitate the formation of moral identity are not 44

1 evenly distributed across communities, neighborhoods, and social strata, 1  
2 which suggests that when it comes to the possibilities for structuring 2  
3 moral identity there is an element of *moral luck* (Nagel, 1979; Williams, 3  
4 1971) in the way one's moral life goes (Hart, 2005). 4  
5

### 6 3.2.3. Community Service and Social Capital 6

7 Of course the association between thin networks of community organiza- 7  
8 tions and depressed rates of volunteering in very poor, child saturated 8  
9 neighborhoods does suggest a possible intervention strategy. There is 9  
10 mounting interest, for example, in providing service learning and commu- 10  
11 nity service opportunities for youngsters in poor urban neighborhoods as a 11  
12 way of changing moral and civic attitudes and the sense of self-identity. 12  
13 These forms of community service are associated with positive develop- 13  
14 mental outcomes (Hart et al., 2008). In one study, social opportunities to 14  
15 interact frequently with others in the community through social institu- 15  
16 tional structures (church, community meetings) predicted voluntary com- 16  
17 munity service in a nationally representative sample of adults (Matsuba et al., 17  
18 2007). 18

19 Community service may be both a catalyst for moral development but 19  
20 also a signal of moral identity. In a longitudinal study, Pratt et al. (2003) 20  
21 constructed a moral self-ideal index that was based on participants' endorse- 21  
22 ment of a set of six personal qualities (trustworthy, honest, fair, just, shows 22  
23 integrity, and good citizen). At age 19 participants who had endorsed a high 23  
24 moral self-ideal were more likely to participate in community activities. But 24  
25 it was the community involvement that led to subsequent endorsement of 25  
26 moral self-ideals. A strong moral self-ideal did not lead to community 26  
27 involvement but was its result. This suggests that the best way to influence 27  
28 attitudes and values is to *first change behavior* — in this case in the direction of 28  
29 greater community involvement (Pancer and Pratt, 1999). As Pratt et al. 29  
30 (2003) put it, “community involvement by adolescents leads to the devel- 30  
31 opment of some sort of sense of identity that is characterized by a greater 31  
32 prominence of moral, prosocial values” (p. 579). And it does not seem to 32  
33 matter whether youth involvement is one of service learning or simple 33  
34 volunteering, or whether the service is voluntary or mandated (Hart et al., 34  
35 2008). In sum, service learning and volunteering increases social capital and 35  
36 community participation, thereby deepening the connection of adolescents 36  
37 to social institutions that provide a context for the construction of prosocial 37  
38 commitments and moral self-identity. And this implicates institutional 38  
39 density as a critical mediating variable. 39

40 Power's work with youth sports underscores the importance of com- 40  
41 munity and neighborhood effects on moral identity. This theme is pro- 41  
42 nounced in Hart's (2005) and Hart and Matsuba (in press) model of moral 42  
43 identity. Hart's model is the closest thing we have to a developmental 43  
44 systems theory, one that articulates the multiple layers of influence on 44

1 moral identity that includes the endogenous, dispositional factors of the 1  
2 developing child, the family dynamics in which he or she is raised, and the 2  
3 neighborhood in which the family resides. For Hart (2005) the constituents 3  
4 of moral identity fall under two broad headings. Under the heading of 4  
5 “enduring characteristics” are personality and family constituents that are 5  
6 relatively stable and hard to change. Under the heading of “characteristic 6  
7 adaptations” are factors that mediate the relationship between enduring 7  
8 characteristics and moral identity. One such factor, “moral orientation,” 8  
9 includes attitudes, values, and the capacity for moral deliberative compe- 9  
10 tence and reflection, particularly the tendency to appreciate the prescriptive 10  
11 quality of moral judgments. 11

12 We have seen that in Blasi’s theory moral identity requires that self- 12  
13 regulation and integrity be infused with moral desires. How moral desires are 13  
14 structured depends importantly on experience with caregivers (Kochanska), 14  
15 the practice of community (Power), and on neighborhood characteristics 15  
16 that influence the resources required for identity exploration (Hart). What is 16  
17 clear from these research programs is that a moral self takes time and experi- 17  
18 ence to develop, and requires cultivation from those with more social 18  
19 experience. 19

20 Particular experiences appear to make the difference in the development 20  
21 of a child’s moral identity and moral understanding. What is the mechanism 21  
22 for change? How does experience influence moral decisions and choices? 22  
23 Schema theory provides an answer. 23  
24  
25

#### 26 **4. SCHEMAS AND MORAL INFORMATION PROCESSING** 26 27 28

29 According to schema theories of development and understanding, 29  
30 schemas are the key structures that reflect ongoing changes in under- 30  
31 standing. Schemas (generalized knowledge structures) develop first from 31  
32 sensorimotor experience, forming embodied knowledge that underlies 32  
33 thought and language (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). The individual inter- 33  
34 prets subsequent experience according to existing schemas (assimilation) 34  
35 and modifies them in kind and number in response to new information 35  
36 (accommodation) in a continuous process of growth, change, and equili- 36  
37 bration (Piaget, 1970). For example, children with warm responsive parents 37  
38 build positive, prosocial schemas about relating to others that they apply to 38  
39 future relationships; children with community service experience build 39  
40 schemas of self-efficacy in helping others, leading them to continue the 40  
41 practice as adults. 41

42 Essentially, a schema is a cognitive mechanism that operates in one or 42  
43 more brain systems (Neisser, 1976), including memory systems, such as 43  
44 procedural or declarative knowledge (Hogarth, 2001; Kesner, 1986), and 44



1 types of reasoning, such as analogical and/or intuitive reasoning (Ericsson 1  
2 and Smith, 1991; Hogarth, 2001). Schemas organize an individual's opera- 2  
3 tional activities, processing current experience according to concurrent 3  
4 goals (Piaget, 1970; Rummelhart, 1980; Taylor and Crocker, 1981), influ- 4  
5 encing perception, as well as decision making and reasoning (Girgenrize 5  
6 et al., 1999). 6

7 Schemas develop from experience, and different types of experience 7  
8 cultivate different types of schemas. This holds true for moral schemas 8  
9 as well. 9

#### 11 4.1. Moral Schemas 11

12 Life experiences transform moral schemas of all kinds, including schemas for 13  
14 moral perspective taking, moral self-efficacy, and schemas for moral action 14  
15 (Narvaez, 2006). Moral judgment development involves transformations in 15  
16 how an individual construes obligations to others, reorganizing moral 16  
17 schemas about how it is possible to organize cooperation (Rest et al., 17  
18 1999). With greater social experience (especially experiences that increase 18  
19 perspective taking), an individual's sense of moral obligation expands, 19  
20 moving from concern for self, to concern for known others, to concern 20  
21 for the welfare of strangers. Research with the Defining Issues Test (DIT) 21  
22 (Rest, 1979; requires a 12-year-old reading level) has compiled results from 22  
23 tens of thousands of respondents showing that there is progression from a 23  
24 preference for the Personal Interest Schema in junior high (Kohlberg's 24  
25 stages 2 and 3), to a preference for the Maintaining Norms Schema in 25  
26 high school (similar to Kohlberg stage 4), to a preference for Postconven- 26  
27 tional Schema in graduate school (similar to Kohlberg's stages 5 and 6; Rest 27  
28 et al., 1999). (For more on schemas and moral judgment see Narvaez and 28  
29 Bock, 2002.) Moral judgment development is stimulated by particular 29  
30 experiences, such as intense diverse social experience (Rest, 1986) and 30  
31 interventions that use moral dilemma discussion (Rest and Narvaez, 31  
32 1994). Some experiences can depress scores on moral judgment measures, 32  
33 such as fundamentalist ideology (Narvaez et al., 1999a). 33  
34 34

##### 35 4.1.1. Measuring Effects of Moral Schemas on Information 35 36 Processing: Development and Expertise 36

37 Everyday discourse processing requires domain-specific schema activation 37  
38 for comprehension to take place (e.g., Alexander et al., 1989). Lack of 38  
39 appropriate background knowledge when processing information in texts 39  
40 leads to poor understanding (Bransford and Johnson, 1972), misrecall and 40  
41 even distortion to fit with preexisting schemas (Bartlett, 1932; Reynolds 41  
42 et al., 1982; Steffensen et al., 1979). Low-knowledge readers form inade- 42  
43 quate mental models of the text, which leads to erroneous elaborations and 43  
44 inferences during recall (Moravcsik and Kintsch, 1993). 44

1 Moral discourse processing is also influenced by differences in schema 1  
2 development. In research examining the influence of moral judgment 2  
3 schemas on moral information processing, Narvaez (1998) found that 3  
4 moral judgment sophistication among adolescents over and above age 4  
5 influenced what was accurately and inaccurately recalled when remembering 5  
6 ing narratives about moral situations. Similarly, when tested for theme 6  
7 comprehension in children's moral stories, children did not grasp messages 7  
8 as intended by the author or understood by adult readers, taking away more 8  
9 simplistic, concrete messages based on limited schema development; even at 9  
10 age 11 less than half of participants understood the intended theme (Narvaez 10  
11 et al., 1998; Narvaez et al., 1999b). Before adulthood, life experience as 11  
12 measured by age, plays a large role in moral discourse comprehension. 12

13 Among adults, life experience also matters. Extensive, coached immer- 13  
14 sion in a domain increases the sophistication and organization of schemas, 14  
15 usually termed "expertise" (Sternberg, 1998). Experts and novices have 15  
16 been compared using reading tasks, distinguishing novices from experts in 16  
17 multiple domains (e.g., Singer et al., 1997; Spilich et al., 1979). Schema 17  
18 effects can be studied between novices and experts in moral judgment using 18  
19 discourse-processing tasks, distinguishing the effects of general development 19  
20 from studied expertise (Narvaez and Gleason, 2007). As an ill-structured 20  
21 domain<sup>1</sup> (King and Kitchener, 1994), the complexity of moral functioning 21  
22 may be better studied with discourse processing because of the variety of 22  
23 schemas that can be brought to the task. 23

24 Knowledge in virtually every domain can be characterized as that in 24  
25 which expertise can be developed, including domains of study in school 25  
26 (Bransford et al., 1999). In the domain of morality, there are many sub- 26  
27 domains beyond moral judgment; these can also be viewed as domains in 27  
28 which expertise can be fostered. 28  
29  
30  
31

## 32 **5. MORAL DEVELOPMENT AS ETHICAL** 32 33 **EXPERTISE DEVELOPMENT** 33 34

35 Taking the view of the mind sciences today and looking back, one can 35  
36 see that the ancients (e.g., Aristotle, 1988; Mencius, 1970) considered virtue 36  
37 as a form of expertise. The virtuous person is like an expert who has a set 37  
38 of highly cultivated skills, perceptual sensibilities, chronically accessible 38  
39 schemas for moral interpretation, and rehearsed sequences for moral action. 39  
40 Moral exemplars display moral wisdom (knowing the good) and practical 40  
41

42  
43 <sup>1</sup> Domains can be parsed as "ill-structured" domains, characterized by uncertainty about the problem, 43  
44 feasibility of actions and goodness of solution, or "well-structured" domains, like baseball, which are 44  
completely specified in terms of possible actions and outcomes (Chase and Simon, 1973).

1 wisdom (knowing how to carry it out in the situation). In contemporary 1  
2 terms, the expert has sets of procedural, declarative, and conditional knowl- 2  
3 edge that are applied in the right way at the right time. Expertise is being 3  
4 used to characterize knowledge in every domain, including the moral 4  
5 domain (see Narvaez, 2005, 2006, for more details and references). 5

6 Experts and novices differ from one another in several fundamental ways. 6  
7 Experts have more and better organized knowledge (Sternberg, 1998) that 7  
8 consists of declarative (explicit), procedural (implicit) and conditional 8  
9 knowledge, much of which operates automatically. In brief, experts know 9  
10 what knowledge to access, which procedures to apply, how to apply them, 10  
11 and when. Expert perception picks up underlying patterns novices miss, 11  
12 including affordances for action (Neisser, 1976). Adaptive experts use intui- 12  
13 tion as well as explicit knowledge to come up with innovative solutions to 13  
14 problems in their domain (Hatano and Inagaki, 1986). 14

15 In the realm of morality, expertise can take different forms. Using Rest's 15  
16 four-component model of moral behavior, we can map expert behavior in 16  
17 the four processes required for moral action to take place: ethical sensitivity, 17  
18 ethical judgment, ethical focus, and ethical action or implementation 18  
19 (Narvaez and Rest, 1995; Rest, 1983). Experts in Ethical Sensitivity can 19  
20 speedily and precisely discern the elements of a moral situation, to take the 20  
21 perspectives of others and determine what role they might play. Experts in 21  
22 Ethical Judgment access multiple tools for solving complex moral problems. 22  
23 They can reason about duty and consequences, and draw up rationale for 23  
24 one course of action or another. Experts in Ethical Focus cultivate ethical 24  
25 identity that leads them to prioritize ethical goals. Experts in Ethical Action 25  
26 know how to maintain focus and take the steps to complete the ethical 26  
27 action. Experts in a particular virtue have highly tuned perceptual skills for 27  
28 it, more complex and multiply organized knowledge about it, have highly 28  
29 automatized responses. Expertise is a set of capacities that can be put into 29  
30 effective action as skilled coping in the situation. 30

31 Expertise in moral reasoning and virtue can be cultivated like other 31  
32 skills. Experts have explicit, conscious understanding of the domain as well 32  
33 as intuitive, implicit knowledge. Experts in training receive instruction that 33  
34 builds skills and theoretical understanding simultaneously. They are 34  
35 immersed in situated practice while being coached by someone with 35  
36 more expertise. They are immersed in well-functioning environments 36  
37 that provide corrective feedback so that appropriate intuitions are formed. 37  
38 In other words, expert-education in a particular domain cultivates delibera- 38  
39 tive understanding and intuitions simultaneously (Abernathy and Hamm, 39  
40 1995). During expert training, interpretive and action frameworks are 40  
41 learned to automaticity, perception is honed to chronically accessed con- 41  
42 structs (Hogarth, 2001). 42

43 Children are virtual novices in nearly every domain (Bransford et al., 1999). 43  
44 In many aspects of morality, children are novices too. Novice-to-expert 44

1 instruction for ethical development brings together virtue development, 1  
2 reasoning and emotion, intuition, and deliberation. 2  
3

### 4 5.1. An Integrative Framework for Moral Character Education 4

5 A framework that attempts to bring together all the elements of ethical 5  
6 character development for educators, parents, and community members is 6  
7 the Integrative Ethical Education model (full references and explanation in 7  
8 Narvaez, 2006, 2008a).<sup>2</sup> It proposes five empirically derived steps for ethical 8  
9 character development. These have been applied in school settings (Narvaez 9  
10 et al., 2004) but may be applied in any setting and with any age. 10  
11

12 First, adults establish caring relationships with the child. Human brains 12  
13 are wired for emotional signaling and emotional motivation (Greenspan and 13  
14 Shanker 2004; Lewis et al., 2000; Panksepp, 1998). Caring relationships 14  
15 drive school and life success (Masten, 2003; Watson, 2008). Moral exem- 15  
16 plars indicate an early history with supportive caregivers (Walker and 16  
17 Frimer, in press). 17

18 Second, adults establish a climate supportive of excellence in achieve- 18  
19 ment and in ethical character. Social climates and cultures influence percep- 19  
20 tions and behavior (Power et al., 1989). Caring schools and classrooms are 20  
21 associated with multiple positive outcomes for students related to achieve- 21  
22 ment and prosocial development (e.g., Catalano et al., 2004; Solomon et al., 22  
23 2002). 23

24 Third, adults foster ethical skills across activities (e.g., curriculum and 24  
25 extracurriculum) based on skills in ethical sensitivity, judgment, focus, and 25  
26 action, as mentioned above (see Narvaez, 2006 or Narvaez et al., 2004, for 26  
27 skills lists). Educators use a novice-to-expert pedagogy in which intuitions 27  
28 are developed through imitation of role models and timely and appropriate 28  
29 feedback, immersion in activity with mentor guidance, and the practice of 29  
30 skills and procedures across multiple contexts (Narvaez et al., 2003). 30  
31 Through theoretical explanation and dialogue, adults coach the child (the 31  
32 deliberative mind) in selecting activities and environments that foster good 32  
33 intuitions (the intuitive mind). Adults guide the child in developing a 33  
34 prosocial self-narrative of positive purpose and community responsibility 34  
35 (Stipek et al., 1992). 35

36 Fourth, adults encourage student self-authorship and self-regulation, the 36  
37 type of self-monitoring skills experts demonstrate (Zimmerman, 1998). 37  
38

39  
40 <sup>2</sup> The expertise development approach was initially developed in the Minnesota Community Voices and 40  
41 Character Education project, 1998–2002, a collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Education 41  
42 (formerly the Department of Children, Families, and Learning) and the University of Minnesota with funds 42  
43 from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE OERI Grant # R215V980001). Using materials provided by 43  
44 the project designers and teacher-designed lessons, the skills approach had a significant effect on students in 44  
schools that implemented broadly over 1 year time in contrast to a comparison group and to low implementing 44  
schools (see Narvaez et al., 2004). Project materials may be obtained from the first author.

1 Adults help children understand that they themselves have to answer the 1  
2 central life question, who should I be? The final responsibility for character 2  
3 development lies with them. In an enriched moral environment, students 3  
4 are provided with tools for self-regulation in character formation. When 4  
5 solving problems, successful students learn to monitor the effectiveness of 5  
6 their strategies and when necessary to alter their strategies to meet their goals 6  
7 (Anderson, 1989). Aristotle believed that mentors are required for character 7  
8 cultivation until the individual is able to self monitor, subsequently main- 8  
9 taining virtue through the wise selection of friends and activities. 9

10 Fifth, adults work together to build communities that coordinate sup- 10  
11 port and relationships across institutions to foster resiliency. Truly demo- 11  
12 cratic ethical education empowers all involved — educators, community 12  
13 members, and students — as they ally to learn and live together. It is in 13  
14 community living that persons develop ethical skills and self-regulation for 14  
15 both individual and community actualization (Rogoff et al., 2001). It is a 15  
16 community who establishes and nourishes the individual’s moral voice, 16  
17 providing a moral anchor, and offering moral guidance as virtues are 17  
18 cultivated. When the connections among children’s life spaces of home, 18  
19 school, and community are strengthened, children are adaptationally 19  
20 advantaged (Benson et al., 1998). 20

21 An increasing number of scientists are realizing that adaptational advan- 21  
22 tage arises early in life, at least from birth if not from conception (Gluckman 22  
23 and Hanson, 2004). There appear to be epigenetically sensitive periods for 23  
24 particular brain system development in which environments switch genes 24  
25 on or off for life (e.g., Champagne and Meaney, 2006). The wiring of 25  
26 neurobiological systems appears to matter for moral functioning as well. 26  
27

## ▶ 6. NEW DIRECTIONS: NEUROSCIENCE AND MORAL PERSONALITY

33 As knowledge about human development increases, so too has interest 33  
34 in the *neurobiology* of human behavior. For example, the neurobiology of 34  
35 infant attachment is far more important than previously realized for lifetime 35  
36 brain development and emotion regulation (Gross, 2007). There appear to 36  
37 be critical periods for fostering the systems that lead to sociality (Karr-Morse 37  
38 and Wiley, 1997). Developmental psychology finds that emotion regulation 38  
39 development begins neonatally and crucially depends on the caregiver to 39  
40 coregulate the infant’s emotions while the brain establishes its systems 40  
41 (Lewis et al., 2000; Schore, 1994). The caregiver acts as an “external 41  
42 psychobiological regulator” (Schore, 2001, p. 202) socially constructing 42  
43 the brain (Eisenberg, 1995). The mammalian brain and nervous system 43  
44 depend for their neurophysiologic stability “on a system of interactive 44

1 coordination, wherein steadiness comes from synchronization with nearby  
2 attachment figures” (Lewis et al., p. 84). Otherwise mammals can develop  
3 erratic systems that are easily thrown off kilter in reaction to everyday  
4 stressors (Hofer, 1994).

5 The field of affective neuroscience is demonstrating the centrality of  
6 well-wired emotions for optimal brain functioning. “Emotive circuits  
7 change sensory, perceptual, and cognitive processing, and initiate a host of  
8 physiological changes that are naturally synchronized with the aroused  
9 behavioral tendencies characteristic of emotional experience” (Panksepp,  
10 1998, p. 49). Evidence for the importance of infancy and early childhood to  
11 establish a mammalian brain’s emotional circuitry has been accumulating  
12 since Harlow’s (1986) experiments. In fact, recent research documents the  
13 critical importance of early caregiving on cognition (Greenspan and  
14 Shanker, 2004), personality formation (Schoore, 2003a,b), as well as gene  
15 expression in emotional circuitry (e.g., Weaver et al., 2002).

## 18 **6.1. Triune Ethics Theory: A Neurobiological Theory** 19 **of Moral Development**

20  
21 Indications are that early experience has a bearing on moral development as  
22 well, in particular, the propensities for compassion and appreciation of  
23 others. Fundamental to the shaping of emotion for a moral life is the  
24 caregiving received in early life. Triune Ethics Theory (Narvaez, 2008b)  
25 draws on evidence from neuroscience, anthropology, and other human  
26 sciences to postulate that three general ethical motivations arise from the  
27 neurobiological substrates of human evolution and influenced by early  
28 experience: Security, Engagement, and Imagination. The “environment  
29 of evolutionary adaptedness” (EEA) (Bowlby, 1988), as anthropologists  
30 have recently spelled out (Hewlett and Lamb, 2005), plays a large role in  
31 framing the emerging evidence on the effects of early experience on lifelong  
32 propensities, including moral functioning.

33 The Security Ethic is rooted in the oldest parts of the brain, involving  
34 the R-complex or the extrapyramidal action nervous system (Panksepp,  
35 1998), structures of the brain that focus on survival through safety, domi-  
36 nance, and status (MacLean, 1990). These systems are mostly hardwired and  
37 become the default when systems underlying the other ethics are underde-  
38 veloped or damaged. Situationally, when a person is threatened this ethic is  
39 likely to be activated, marshaling defense and offense (fight or flight),  
40 suppressing capacity for empathy (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2005), and exhi-  
41 biting less flexible thinking (Stout, 2007). Long-term dispositional effects on  
42 personality occur as well; extensive stress, abuse or neglect in the early years  
43 can bring about a personality dominated by the Security Ethic (Henry and  
44 Wang, 1998; Karr-Morse and Wiley, 1997). On the positive side, the

2 **Au2**



1 Security Ethic, worthwhile for occasional crises, engenders the values of 1  
2 loyalty, hierarchy, self-control of softer emotions, and following precedent. 2

3 The second ethic, the Engagement Ethic, is rooted in the neurobiological 3  
4 systems that Darwin (1871/1981) identified as the source for humans' "moral 4  
5 sense" — the visceral-emotional nervous system on the hypothalamic-limbic 5  
6 axis which underlie mammalian parental care and social bonding (Panksepp, 6  
7 1998). These systems rely on warm, responsive caregiving for their develop- 7  
8 ment (e.g., Schore, 1994). Involving multiple limbic and subcortical struc- 8  
9 tures and neurotransmitters (see Moll et al., in press), these structures underlie 9  
10 values of compassion, social harmony, and togetherness. Children develop a 10  
11 sense of security through intersubjectively safe and close nurturing (Field and 11  
12 Reite, 1985; Schore, 1994) that allows the systems related to the Engagement 12  
13 Ethic to develop properly. For example, the oxytocin that accompanies 13  
14 breastfeeding and snuggling is a pacifying and bonding agent (Carter, 1998; 14  
15 Perry et al., 1995; Young et al., 2001). Through a secure attachment and from 15  
16 extensive experiences of reciprocity and social exchange (Kochanska and 16  
17 Thompson, 1997; Laible and Thompson, 2000), children develop a sense 17  
18 of engaged enactive participation in social life, rooted in sensorimotor 18  
19 sensibilities for justice (Lerner, 2002). Physiologically, the Security Ethic 19  
20 and the Engagement Ethic are incompatible; the former is related to increased 20  
21 stress hormones (norepinephrine/adrenaline) while the latter is related to 21  
22 calming hormones (e.g., oxytocin). 22

23 The Imagination Ethic, controlled primarily by the more recent com- 23  
24 ponents of the brain (neocortex, especially prefrontal cortex) collaborates 24  
25 with and coordinates the other two ethics. It has the capacity (when 25  
26 cultivated appropriately with responsive caregiving) for valuing universality, 26  
27 concern for outsiders, and conceptualizing alternative sophisticated resolu- 27  
28 tions of moral problems. Although more detached from the basic emotional 28  
29 drives of the other ethics, the Imagination ethic generally is motivated 29  
30 implicitly by one of the other ethics. Whereas the open-heartedness of the 30  
31 Engagement ethic feeds an imagination of helpfulness and altruism, the self- 31  
32 protective rigidity of the Security Ethic fosters an imagination toward 32  
33 defense and perhaps offense. Children develop an ethical imagination 33  
34 when caregivers provide *in situ* modeled and guided training of prosocial 34  
35 perception and action (*enactive* learning) in their actions and words. 35

36 In brief, TET points to what is fundamental for optimal moral develop- 36  
37 ment: neonatal and early childhood experiences, similar to those of the 37  
38 environment of evolutionary adaptedness (Bowlby, 1988; Hewlett and 38  
39 Lamb, 2005), that shape brain structures and brain wiring for general and 39  
40 for moral functioning. Moral learning involves developing unconscious 40  
41 "somatic markers" (Damasio, 1994) for what are good and not-so-good 41  
42 actions: "embodied (sensorimotor) structures are the *substance of experience*" 42  
43 which "motivate conceptual understanding and rational thought" (Varela, 43  
44 1992/1999, p. 16). From recurrent patterns of sensory motor activity, 44

36 Au3

1 general cognitive structures, including moral cognitive structures, emerge. 1  
2 In emphasizing the importance of early experience, TET advocates social 2  
3 policies and practices that support children, families and communities, and 3  
4 which build moral brains. 4  
5

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

6  
7  
8  
9  
10 The field of moral development has traveled beyond a narrow focus 10  
11 on moral judgment to include the moral self across the lifespan. No longer 11  
12 relegated to an individual's conscious moral reasoning, the scope has moved 12  
13 beyond the individual and her decision making or his virtue. Moral devel- 13  
14 opment and moral action are embedded in community contexts. Moral 14  
15 functioning is assumed to involve the whole brain and multiple systems 15  
16 inside and outside the individual. As moral psychology and the study of 16  
17 moral persons expands across domains of psychology and human sciences, 17  
18 the field will generate more intricate theories that offer more specific 18  
19 guideposts for fostering moral persons and communities. We draw three 19  
20 conclusions that bear on research into moral functioning generally. 20  
21

### 7.1. Experience Shapes Brain Biases

22  
23  
24 First, brains are differentially shaped by experience. The processing of any 24  
25 type of morally relevant information is mediated by the schemas that 25  
26 individuals have developed through social experience from early life and 26  
27 onward. When individuals have been immersed in social environments that 27  
28 promote self-concern, especially during sensitive periods, it is likely that 28  
29 their schemas for processing moral information differ from those in loving, 29  
30 responsive environments. The latter build personalities that are agreeable 30  
31 and conscientious. So, for example, Amish cultures who emphasize submis- 31  
32 sion, solidarity and kindness (Kraybill, 1989) will also foster brains that view 32  
33 the world differently from cultures that emphasize competition, dominance, 33  
34 and individuality. Particular environments promote particular brain func- 34  
35 tioning and biases. It is likely that most psychological studies in the United 35  
36 States examine biases cultivated by the particular individualistic society in 36  
37 which the participants were raised and that therefore do not represent the 37  
38 full evolved palette of moral capacities. 38  
39

### 7.2. Moral Functioning is Multivariate

40  
41  
42 Second, moral judgments comprise only one element of moral functioning 42  
43 (which also includes moral perception, sensitivity, motivation/focus, and 43  
44 implementation), an element that weakly predicts moral action (and what is 44

1 morality if it is not evident in action?). Studying moral judgments in the 1  
2 laboratory tap into an aspect of moral functioning that represents declarative 2  
3 or semantic knowledge that is not necessarily tied to self-concept or self- 3  
4 responsibility or behavior. Moral identity may provide the greatest predic- 4  
5 tive power to moral behavior because it has its roots in lived relationships. 5  
6 Studying moral functioning in more ecologically valid ways, such as with 6  
7 moral discourse processing (Narvaez, 1999), may allow for a greater under- 7  
8 standing of the range of moral performance. 8  
9

### 11 7.3. Moral Experts are Different from Novices 11

12 Third, examining differences in expertise offers a promising area of research. 12  
13 From long immersion in the domain (10 years or 10,000 h; Simon and 13  
14 Chase, 1973), experts build schemas that become automatically accessed and 14  
15 applied. Chronic schema use is linked to automatic or chronic accessibility of 15  
16 a construct, as true for morality as for any domain. Community-nominated 16  
17 moral exemplars demonstrate a chronic merging of personal and moral goals 17  
18 (Colby and Damon, 1991). Building chronicity through immersion and 18  
19 guided experience such as democratic participation (Power) or community 19  
20 service (Hart) are promising paths to building moral personality and 20  
21 improved moral functioning (see Narvaez, 2005). Interventions should 21  
22 include the full range of moral skill development, from moral perception 22  
23 and sensitivity to moral action skills. 23  
24

25 On a precautionary note, it appears that most laboratory research of 25  
26 moral functioning is conducted on college students. It is not clear that 26  
27 people under the age of 30 or so have fully developed capacities in the 27  
28 prefrontal cortex, a key player in moral functioning (Luna et al., 2001), so 28  
29 researchers of moral functioning in college students should keep in mind 29  
30 that mature adults with intact brain function likely behave differently. 30  
31 Novices are easily dumbfounded and college students are fairly inexperi- 31  
32 enced about life. Studying adults would provide a better look at mature 32  
33 moral functioning (Blasi, in press). However, adults may have sophisticated 33  
34 capacities in a specific type of moral expertise (e.g., action) and not another 34  
35 (e.g., judgment), and so research should examine what brings about these 35  
36 differences and what implications they have for moral functioning generally. 36  
37

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