Chapter 33
The Developmental Contours of Character

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Introduction

Historically, there has been a chasm between the fields of developmental psychology and education. While so much of educational practice is or should be based on theory about and research on child and adolescent development, sadly this is less common than one might presume. In a recent editorial for *Edutopia*, Chris Colin (2009) laments that "what is discovered in the lab tends either to stay in the lab or is basically irrelevant to the classroom." He then lays out the many reasons for this failure: the two disciplines tend to work in isolation from each other; psychological work is complex and often highly abstract or theoretical; there is a tendency to want to apply basic research before it is fully understood. Nonetheless, there are plenty of examples of cases where effective practice is attained by the timely and appropriate application of child and adolescent psychological research. In other words, this is the path we ought to travel, even if there are many hurdles to overcome.

In this chapter we will make a more specific argument for the application of child psychology to character education, and, particularly, we will work to answer the question of "what is character?" Our goal here is not to produce a laundry list of personality traits or, for the eager educator, to generate a "how-to" manual for classroom practice. Rather, we mean to demonstrate how contributions from developmental psychology can help clarify the contours of character. We maintain that by getting clearer about character's complex structure or form, we can better substantiate the best practices for character development and education. Ultimately, we define character education as intentional strategies within schools to foster children's capacities and motivations to act as moral agents, i.e., to do good in the world. Our discussion will focus on a few specific, though certainly not all, aspects of moral agency: self-regulation; autonomy; perspective taking and moral reasoning; empathy and emotional competence. First, though, we will explore why character education should be seen as part of the general aims of education.

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"Intelligence Plus Character"

Any educator with a social conscience can recall Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, famous phrase "Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education." Moreover, most, if not all, can go on to express why these words are important: many so-called smart people, despite their intellectual competencies, may nevertheless behave badly or be committed to harmful paths of action. Indeed this was King's point back in 1947 when he authored his short essay, "The Purpose of Education," for a college newspaper. Citing as an example the former governor of Georgia, and well-known segregationist, Mr. Eugene Talmadge, King acknowledged the statesman's ability to "think critically and intensively" while taking exception to Talmadge's contention that people of color were "inferior being[s]." King's conclusion to his essay has become a well-rehearsed mantra for character educators far and wide: "[E]ducation which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be gifted with reason, but with no morals."

In contemporary circles of character education, King's distinction between intelligence and character resembles the division that is now often drawn between "performance character" and "moral character" (e.g., Character Education Partnership, 2008; Lickona & Davidson, 2005). That is, performance character, like intelligence more broadly, need not apply to moral or ethical concerns per se. Rather, matters of performance point specifically to skills that allow individuals to optimally regulate their thoughts and actions, or exert self-control, and achieve levels of personal excellence in their conduct (e.g., achieving one's "personal best" in a running race or swim meet). Moral character, on the other hand, refers directly to interpersonal ethical imperatives such as justice or compassion. Such imperatives, or social prescriptions, are understood as *intrinsically* good, and *not*, as Berkowitz and Puka (2009) have suggested merely "*derivative* of the ends toward which they are applied (e.g., courageous in the service of saving innocent lives or courageous in fulfilling a violent gang initiation)" (p. 108, italics added).

Despite the utility of this distinction, the idea that morality or moral character can be carved off so neatly from other areas of human conduct is troublesome, and speaks to the tension within character education regarding the best practices for nurturing moral competence. At the very least, dimensions of performance and moral character should be seen as complementary, as Lickona and other character educators have urged. That is, as individuals develop the kinds of regulatory abilities that allow them to meet standards of practical *personal* excellence, they must also be aiming at high standards of prescriptive *interpersonal* excellence. Drawing again from King's essay, educators must foster "not only the power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate." The tension, in this case, between personal and interpersonal dimensions of character is not so much resolved as it is held in check – personal desire or ambition is constrained by attention to, and concern for, interpersonal norms or codes of conduct.

Still, there are good reasons to resist this characterization of human life, not the least of which are the implications that moral conduct ultimately results from

external constraint and that moral character is little more than an "add-on" or non-essential ingredient in the formation of virtuous people. A more integrative approach to these concerns would advocate for a position that makes it less easy to split the spheres of character, and human life, so readily in half. Here, the words of another famous social and educational reformer, John Dewey, come to mind: "moral science is not something with a separate province. It is physical, biological, and historic knowledge placed in a humane context where it will illuminate and guide . . . [human] activities" (Dewey, 1922, p. 296). Character, insofar as it might prove to be a "moral science," can be seen to draw from many domains of knowledge and human life (e.g., biological, psychological, social, cultural, and historical) that are, in turn, situated within a humanistic framework. Although this is a daunting task, it is not impossible. Chikura Hiroike, whose seminal opus *A Treatise on Moral Science* written in the early twentieth century founded the field of "moralogy" in Japan, integrated a wide array of disciplines (e.g., psychology, law, history, biology, economics) in his effort to develop a universal scientific theory of morality (Hiroike, 1966). While our attempts remain less ambitious than Hiroike's, such an integrative and humanistic conception of science informs our approach to character education. This approach, as we will show, is one that adopts some of the scientific tenets of developmental psychology as its "humane context" for guiding educators and others with a vested interest to promote the positive growth of children. The field of developmental psychology, however, is not without its own share of tensions too, particularly if we attend to the "historic knowledge" that Dewey insists is so critical.

Summary and Implications

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous description of the goals of education parallels the contemporary distinction between performance and moral character. The gap that this distinction implies between personal and interpersonal standards of excellence should be filled by integrative efforts to develop a humanistic "moral science."

Character Education Meets Developmental Psychology . . . Again

The relationship between character education and developmental psychology has never been easy. While, at least in principle, the two fields hold great potential for informing each other, the intellectual landscape between character education and developmental psychology has long been marked by tension, in much the same way as Colin's (2009) editorial points to a broader tension between education and psychology. For character education, the sources of such tension tend to center around areas of developmental psychology that examine the growth of socio-moral competencies and motivations in children and adolescents. The two most notable sources of this tension, at least from the psychological side of the landscape, can be found in

the cognitive-developmental research tradition associated with Lawrence Kohlberg and Jean Piaget. Both of these figures are credited with putting moral psychology on the map for developmental researchers, but this came with some costs. One of these has been the alienation of traditional character educators (e.g., Ryan, 1989, 1996; Wynne, 1986) whose favored technique for socializing moral values emphasized conforming to routines, systems of reinforcement, and rote learning. Citing Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as their authority, traditionalists in character education have long argued that "virtue of character results from habit" (Aristotle, 1985, p. 1103a18). Although this claim sat well with the once-dominant Behaviorist model in psychology, it stood in stark contrast to the processes of reasoning and deliberation that were – and still are – the hallmark of cognitive-developmental research.

The second source of tension between character education and developmental psychology grew out of Kohlberg's influential critique of character as an approach to morality that amounts to little more than an arbitrary "bag of virtues." Siding with Rationalist philosophers, like Immanuel Kant and John Rawls, and citing evidence from social psychology that cast doubt on the notion of stable character traits (e.g., Hartshorne & May, 1928), Kohlberg argued in his critique that virtue-based accounts of morality fell victim to ethical relativism, and, as such, were an unsound basis for moral education. Specifically, he claimed that "labeling a set of behaviors displayed by a child with positive or negative trait terms does not signify they are of adaptive or ethical importance. It represents an appeal [only] to particular community conventions. . ." (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972, p. 479). Kohlberg's rationalist position was set in contrast, then, to what was seen as the more arbitrary and conventionalized models of morality that guided character education. Interestingly, while many educators highlighted this distinction, others tended to miss it entirely and confuse Kohlberg's educational approach with that of ethically relativistic approaches like values clarification. The causes of this confusion often were the failure of educators to look at the theory undergirding the disparate approaches and to see only the superficial similarities in applied methods (Power & Berkowitz, 1981).

Time, however, has helped to heal some of these old wounds. The constraining influences of the cognitive-developmental tradition and Kohlberg's narrowly rationalist philosophical commitments are now felt less and less in moral psychology. As prominent citizenship scholar and moral psychologist James Youniss has remarked in his review of the most recent *Handbook of Moral Development* (Killen & Smetana, 2006), while "none of the chapters in [the] volume abandoned the essential role that reasoning plays in. . .leading to general moral principles . . . many of the authors have tempered reasoning with such things as the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, emotions which imply interpersonal attachments, and concerns which go beyond particular individuals to society wide issues. These infusions help to humanize the moral agent whose moral choices involve more than the use of cool cognition" (Youniss, 2005, p. 142). The breadth of research questions, modes of inquiry, and psychological constructs under consideration in moral psychology has

reached unprecedented levels. Even those who were once opposed to character as a viable construct now suggest that we may "reconceptualize what is meant by moral character in a way that does not rest on assumptions about personal virtues or traits, while [still] capturing the essential notion that morality cannot be divorced from the person as a moral being" (Nucci, 2001, p. 128). All of this, as Daniel Lapsley and Darcia Narvaez have remarked, puts moral psychology "at an important crossroad ... that opens up new opportunities for theoretical innovation" (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2005, p. 20) and promises to enrich moral psychological research in the post-Kohlbergian era.

Character education is also at a similar crossroads. Regarding its Aristotelian roots, educational researchers (under the heading of "generalists," see Power & Khmelkov, 1997) have begun to recognize that habit and reason are not mutually exclusive. Instead, many have come to resonate with the view that "[children] can and must enter the palace of reason through the courtyard of habit and tradition" (Peters, 1963, pp. 54–55). Echoing these sentiments, moral and character educators (e.g., Berkowitz, 1997; Higgins-D'Alessandro & Power, 2005) are increasingly urging that *habituated* and *critical*, or reflective, virtue be taken together as central processes in the development of the "whole moral person." In this approach, notions of virtue and character have become less trait-oriented, and more focused on the broader psychological systems that sustain moral growth. The definition of character that we will use throughout the present chapter, in fact, describes character in just this way: as "*the composite of psychological characteristics that serve to promote moral agency*" (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, p. 268, italics in the original). We, like others in moral psychology (e.g., Blasi, 2005), see how such conceptual re-situating has made Kohlberg's original claims about the arbitrariness of virtue, or what counts as "character," far less damning. That is, by *psychologizing* character the field now has the means to show the order, or system of relationships, that both motivate and enable moral conduct. This is anything but arbitrary, and, in fact, can be studied in the predictable social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns that emerge over the course of child and adolescent development. In the end, this makes many of the debates in education circles – such as whether character curricula should focus on a particular set of virtues (e.g., the Six Pillars of Character from *Character Counts*), school-related behavioral outcomes (e.g., school discipline, attendance), service behaviors (e.g., community service, volunteerism), and/or academic outcomes (e.g., grades, failures, graduation rates) – rest on more secondary considerations. The "virtues" are a product of a whole host of psychological developments (motives, emotions, values, etc.). The behaviors likewise are multi-determined, again by psychological factors; e.g., attendance has to do with values and self-regulation. The root of character education is it psychological foundation, and, as we hope to show, its reliance on mapping the developmental origins and contours of psychological change that emerge in the lives of children. Still, like any progressive science, developmental psychology is also itself undergoing development. We will, therefore, also try to draw attention to places in the research where this may complicate the conclusions that are drawn.

Summary and Implications

The fields of developmental psychology and character education are at a crossroads that promises to move past old tensions and generate new, and mutually enriching, forms of collaboration. One of these collaborations is represented by our own efforts to "psychologize" character in order to clarify its structure and trace the developmental contours of "what character is."

The World Through Developmental Lenses

Before we begin to sketch out what some of the psychological processes related to character are, an additional word about the central assumptions of developmental psychology should be introduced. Rose colored or not, seeing the world through the lenses of developmental science offers a unique view of psychological constructs like character. To begin, developmentalists study change and the patterns or system-like properties that emerge within such change. This means that a phenomenon like character, first and foremost, is seen as a *dynamic* process, and *not* a fixed feature of a person. Even if past research had not been successful in debunking the notion of static personality traits (e.g., Mischel, 1968), the older, traditionalist account of character would have been at odds with a developmental emphasis on order and change. This is not to contend that there are no continuities in human development. In effect the best predictor of future psychological characteristics is present psychological characteristics. The point is that this creates an illusion of stasis, where reality is fluidity and change. An honest person (one who tends to be truthful) will likely remain an honest person; however, the act of telling the truth is a product of an ever-changing set of conditions (e.g., social pressures of the moment, likely consequences of acting one way or another, strength of conscience, how alert one is at the moment, etc.). Some of the changes are transitory and momentary, but others are developmental in nature.

A developmental perspective also means that character cannot be broken down, or reduced, to any one part of the developing person. Rather, much like Dewey's sentiments toward "moral science," character emerges from the interaction, or convergence, of a variety of dynamic forces that include biological, psychological, and social contributions. In this sense, a developmental approach to character might be likened to famous philosopher and mathematician Henri Poincaré's (1901/1952) remarks that science is no more "an accumulation of facts . . . than a pile of bricks is a house." That is, developmental scientists look to find in character not a collection of "things" (e.g., personality traits, virtues, etc.), but a pattern of "processes" that build on one another (like the arrangement of bricks in a house). These processes are what allow individuals to ultimately function as competent moral agents. Our next task will be to describe what some of these processes are and how they interrelate, as well as to show how they may inform practices in character education. We will focus particularly on the development of self-regulation, autonomy, perspective taking and moral reasoning, and, finally, empathy and emotional competence.

Summary and Implications

Developmental psychology offers a unique way of defining character, one based on the interrelations between multiple psychological processes that enable individuals to function as competent moral agents. We focus particularly on the patterns of development seen in the following processes: self-regulation, autonomy, perspective taking and moral reasoning, and, empathy and emotional competence. Although this list is far from offering a complete picture of the nature of character, it nevertheless begins to show the value that developmental research holds for defining its contours.

Self-Regulation

Following Lickona and Davidson's (2005) argument that performance character is necessary for the full flourishing of moral character, a natural place to begin looking for characteristics that enable a person to function as a moral agent is the developmental literature on *self-regulation*. Self-regulation allows for the "conscious control of thought and action" (Kerr & Zelazo, 2004, p. 148), and has been argued to lie at the "heart of all socially useful, personally enhancing, constructive, and creative abilities" (Lezak, 1982, p. 281).

The self-regulation literature grows out of work assessing neurological functioning in adult brain-damaged patients (e.g., Lezak, 1995; Luria, 1966). Because of their injuries, these patients went from autonomous and competent people to ones displaying poor judgment, disruptive perseverative tendencies, and abnormal social behavior. In short, they lost most of the ability to regulate their own conduct, especially in the social and moral spheres (Anderson, Bechara, Damasio, & Damasio, 1999). In a reverse parallel to the path followed by brain-damaged adults, research has similarly shown that young children possess poor or disorganized regulatory abilities that, over time, improve and allow them to grow into more regulated individuals. In keeping with this parallel, the concept of self-regulation, as well as the procedures to assess regulatory functioning, has been adapted from this earlier literature on adults and applied to children (e.g., Carlson, 2005). At least in part, understanding this history helps to account for the dominance of brain-based approaches to the development of self-regulatory abilities (e.g., Barkley, 1997; Diamond & Gilbert, 1989). Still, as we will show, social experience and context also play a critical role in self-regulation, suggesting that it cannot be reduced to maturational factors alone (Hammond, Bibok, & Carpendale, 2010; Maccoby, 2000).

Self-regulatory abilities appear early in development. Already by age 2, children can engage in some voluntary inhibition (Aksan & Kochanska, 2004), and children become fairly competent at inhibiting impulsive or unsanctioned behavior over extended periods of time by age 5 (Peake, Hebl, & Mischel, 2002). This is also the age by which fairly complex problem-solving begins to emerge (Zelazo, 2008). Self-regulation is generally argued to emerge through caregiver-assisted, or *scaffolded*, regulation (Turner & Berkowitz, 2005); but, even from the tender ages of 4 or 5 onward, young persons become capable of regulating their own behaviors

without parental assistance, for longer periods of time, and in more novel situations (Kopp, 1982, p. 200). Further significant gains in such self-control are seen between the ages of 5 and 7, and are ascribed to children's growing abilities to effectively apply metacognitive mediations such as self-talk (or "private speech") and mental imagery (Berkowitz, 1982).

Improving self-regulatory abilities allow children to complete tasks, cope with frustrations, and generally behave according to social expectations and norms without continual monitoring by adults. These developments are especially important for the school context, where children "need to be able to follow directions, not be disruptive of the class, and be sensitive to other children's feelings" (Blair, 2002, p. 112).

The ability to follow directions, respect social norms, and respect others also provides a natural link to research on the development of *conscience.* Conscience is defined as the ability to carry out "societally desirable acts without surveillance" (Kochanska & Thompson, 1997, p. 54), and has been operationalized in studies as the ability to follow parental (or experimenter) requests and commands (Karreman, van Tuijl, van Aken, & Dekovic, 2006). Kochanska and her colleagues, in particular, have shown that young children's compliance to caregivers' requests is highest when the parent–child relationship encompasses two key features: mutual responsiveness and shared positive affect (Kochanska, 1997; Kochanska & Aksan, 1995; Kochanska & Murray, 2000). These findings are also consistent with Maccoby's research (e.g., Maccoby & Martin, 1983, as cited in Grusec, 1997, p. 17–18) indicating that parents who successfully elicit mutual compliance from their children have created an environment in which delaying immediate personal gratification is done in the service of meeting mutual goals.

In the study of conscience, the two most relevant streams of research deal with children's *inhibitory control* and *rule-use*. Inhibitory control is the ability to delay or prevent so-called prepotent responses, such as reaching for an interesting toy. This is also known as the *delay of gratification* (e.g., Mischel, 1974). This approach to inhibition uses a *forbidden object* paradigm, originally created to test aspects of Freudian theory (Singer, 1955). The researcher designates some desirable object (e.g., a gift, a toy, or a snack) as "untouchable" and then asks the child participant to wait alone with the object while the researcher leaves the room for a certain period of time. Success at this procedure is determined by how long children wait before caving to their desire to obtain the prohibited object. Children who avoid touching the object are typically rewarded with either a more desirable object at the end of the delay period (e.g., Mischel & Ebbesen, 1970) or, in some versions of the procedure, simply with the object itself (e.g., Cournoyer, Ruth-Solomon, & Trudel, 1998).

As this procedure suggests, the development of inhibitory control allows the child to avoid the immediate and impulsive course of action, favoring both long-term goals and social norms. Although inhibitory abilities may be seen from a self-interested perspective, such as when a delay response leads to receiving greater personal rewards, there are often moral, or at least socially prescriptive, implications for successful inhibition. One prominent contributor to this area of research, Walter Mischel (1974), has gone as far as claiming that it is "difficult to

conceive of socialization (or, indeed, of civilization) without … self-imposed delays" (p. 250).

More recently, researchers have begun to examine rule-use as an aspect of self-regulation (Bunge & Wallis, 2008). One of the most popular procedures to assess rule-use is the *Dimensional Change Card Sort* (*DCCS;* Zelazo, Müller, Douglas, & Marcovitch, 2003). This task presents children with cards featuring pictures that vary on at least two dimensions, the shape of the image (e.g., a boat or a rabbit), and the color (e.g., red or blue). Children are first asked to sort the cards into piles according to one dimension, such as the color. One rule needed to solve this task can be stated as: "put all red cards in this pile." The children are then asked to repeat the procedure, but are now told to sort according to the other dimension, e.g., the shape of the picture. A rule for solving the task would then become: "put all rabbits in this pile." To complicate the sorting rules still further, sometimes a third request can be made that involves arranging cards with or without black borders. Children can then be asked to sort borderless cards using one rule (e.g., the picture rule), and bordered cards using another rule (e.g., the color rule). What appears to make this task difficult for children is not memory demands, but rather resolving the demands of rule conflicts. That is, when two or more rules are operating simultaneously, success on the procedure is only possible if children formulate higher-order rules that allow them to integrate the competing sorting requests.

It is not difficult to see how this new rule-use paradigm can also be extended to the study of social norms and social compliance (e.g., Barkley, 2001; Beer, Shimamura, & Knight, 2004). As self-regulation develops, children become better at "retrieving rules for governing behavior in the current context" (Bunge & Zelazo, 2006, p. 118). If society is also to be conceived of as rule-based, especially its laws and social norms, then the ability to select the correct rules and norms for the particular situation may "govern some of our highest-level behaviors, involving very abstract concepts" (Bunge & Wallis, 2008, p. xiii) such as fairness and equality.

Much like past debates in character education regarding the active and passive dimensions of children's conduct, the self-regulation literature also has struggled with the issue of whether to frame the child as an active agent or a passive patient. For instance, children's failure to agree with caregiver requests and rules is often "conceptualized exclusively in terms of childhood dysfunction" (Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1990, p. 398), conflating self-regulation with compliance. Indeed, the literature that operationally defines self-regulation as compliance rests uneasily with studies charting the development of *non*compliance to parental requests (e.g., Abe & Izard, 1999; Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1990). This problem is recognized in the conscience literature, however, with calls for an expanded look at the role of bi-directional influences between children and their caregivers (e.g., Kuczynski & Hildebrandt, 1997).

Similarly, recent literature on rule-following has attempted to acknowledge the constructive agency of children, such as with Kerr and Zelazo's (2004) recognition that children eventually develop "higher-order rule[s] that [allow] them to … select the appropriate discrimination on which to base their behavior" (p. 155). Such higher-order rules provide the basis for prioritizing among various possible rules.

When character education lists a set of values (or virtues or character traits), they are open to the old Kohlbergian "bag of virtues" challenge (Kohlberg, 1968). However, the role that higher-order processes play in decision-making provides exactly the solution that this challenge requires. Decision-making rules offer the basis for rational prioritization among competing claims or values, while self-regulation more generally allows for the psychological competency to resist impulsive choices, delay gratification, and enact such higher-order rules.

Awareness of children's developing self-regulation is important in school settings. Educators frequently grapple with issues of "character" that are in many instances a matter of the delay in development of self-regulation. Early childhood educators (roughly children ages 3–5) and primary grade teachers (roughly ages 6–8), in particular, confront challenges when children act impulsively in ways that prove physically dangerous or merely disruptive of the orderly and effective functioning of the classroom. One difficulty with these behaviors is that they could arise from multiple sources, such as temperament differences (impulsive vs. reflective children), socialization in either overly permissive or overly restrictive households (Kochanska & Thompson, 1997), or from clinical problems, particularly attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD; Barkley, 1997), each of which can suggest different courses of intervention. Although these concerns present self-regulation as a kind of polemic, on the more positive side, it is also clear that self-regulation has critical links to success in school. Specifically, researchers have pointed to evidence from successful early intervention programs, such as the Chicago Parent–Child Center and Abecedarian Program, that have achieved dramatic increases in academic performance by working to promote children's self-regulatory abilities (Blair, 2002). For this reason, some researchers (e.g., Blair, 2002; Müller, Lieberman, Frye, & Zelazo, 2008) have proposed looking at children's self-regulation as a marker of general *school readiness*, i.e., children's ability to meet the cognitive, affective, and social challenges of the school setting.

Summary and Implications

Self-regulation is the ability to consciously control actions, and has clear links to both academic performance and social–moral conduct. Inhibitory control and rule-use are two important dimensions of self-regulation. Research suggests that children begin to master both of these dimensions in the early years of elementary school, which allows them to complete work with less and less adult supervision, as well as comply more readily to others' requests.

Autonomy

The claim made in the conscience literature that self-regulation "makes it possible for the child to begin to comply to parental demands" (Kochanska, Murray, & Coy, 1997, p. 263) is only a small step away from the view that self-regulation is "the

ability to modify and control behaviour in order to conform to social norms" (Beer et al., 2004, p. 1091). This thesis echoes back to the classic work in sociology of Émile Durkheim, who argued that society influences people by "exerting pressure on individual consciousnesses" (Durkheim, 1895/1964, p. 101).

Much like contemporary developmental research on the topic, Durkheim identified both inhibition and rule-use as determinants of social and moral behavior. Durkheim saw inhibition as "the means by which social constraint produces its psychological effects" (Durkheim, 1895/1964, p. 102). In his work on moral education, Durkheim also confronted the issue of individuals' agency. Although not widely recognized, he admitted that because any given moral rule is "a general prescription, it cannot be applied exactly and mechanically in identical ways in each particular circumstance. It is up to the person to see how it applies in a given situation" (Durkheim, 1925/1961, p. 23). While this claim seems to parallel more recent interest in children's formulation of higher-order rules, Durkheim's sociological account, as a whole, had little to say about the role of individual agency (Boudon & Bourricaud, 2002; c.f. Sawyer, 2005).

Jean Piaget's influential book, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (Piaget, 1932/1965), by contrast, can be read as an extended critique of Durkheim's approach to morality and individual autonomy. Perhaps because Piaget's ideas were introduced to North American audiences through the lens of Kohlberg's work, more attention was placed on the stage-like growth of moral reasoning than on his critical reactions to the view that moral conduct reduces to social compliance (Sokol & Chandler, 2004; see also Piaget, 1965/1995). In fact, Piaget saw the central goal of moral education as leading children to "the reconstruction of knowledge rather than [its] social transmission" (Duveen & Psaltis, 2008, p. 183). Vidal (1998) has argued that Piaget wrote his critique in a spirit of autonomy, democracy and freedom, and opposed the notions of conformity and discipline present in Durkheim's work. Capturing this "democratic spirit," Piaget introduced some valuable ideas concerning moral autonomy that continue to shape the landscape of developmental psychology and character education.

Piaget is well known for parsing moral development into *heteronomous*, or other-controlled, and *autonomous*, or self-controlled, stages. Counter to the "cognitivist view" view that is typically associated with Piaget, however, in *The Moral Judgment of the Child* he characterizes these two stages of morality in terms of the two main social spheres that children inhabit. In the case of heteronomous morality, Piaget uses the asymmetrical power relations between children and adult caregivers to argue that moral reasoning takes an absolutistic form – rules dictated by parents are inviolable and, from the point of view of the child, cannot be changed, as the relationship is structured by unilateral respect. On the other hand, autonomous morality is characterized as emerging in symmetrical peer-relations marked by reciprocity, mutual respect, and affective exchange (Carpendale, 2009; Sokol & Hammond, 2009). As such, moral rules are understood by the child as being negotiated and flexible.

In character education, there has long been a tension between more conservative or traditional (e.g., Wynne & Ryan, 1993) educators and more liberal or

progressive ones (e.g., DeVries, Zan, & Hildebrandt, 2002). The former focus more on hierarchical methods of socialization (teaching about character, behavioral management systems) whereas the latter focus more on pedagogies of empowerment (democratic classrooms, class meetings, moral dilemma discussions). From a Piagetian (1932/1965) standpoint, this is precisely the tension between a heteronomous morality (moral rules defined by the dictates of authorities such as parents and teachers) and autonomous morality (moral rules defined by deliberation and debate). Lawrence Kohlberg (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989), in particular, elaborated on this framework by creating democratic experimental schools with foci on promoting both justice and a sense of community. This constructivist approach is based heavily on promoting an autonomous moral agent who nonetheless orients to the social–relational concepts of justice and community. Hence, the school is not intended to promote individualistic character (egoism), but rather socially aware, autonomous moral agents (Berkowitz & Puka, 2009). This is precisely what a successful self-governing society requires of its democratic citizens. Hence autonomy is a critical element in the socialization of civic responsibility and character (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006), but is far from the full picture, which requires a balance of autonomy with social responsibility.

A salient, though perhaps undervalued, aspect of Piaget's work is also the role that peers are seen to play in the development of autonomy, a view carried forward by James Youniss' blending of Piaget with the work of Henry Stack Sullivan (Youniss, 1980). In the standard reading of Piaget, an autonomous stage of moral reasoning follows only after a heteronomous stage. However, Piaget actually describes a different process. Children in fact are capable of autonomous interaction before age 7 at the more fundamental level of action and interaction with others (Carpendale, 2000). In other words, although autonomous *reasoning* about morality may develop later, autonomous moral *action* or conduct arrives earlier. Children's understanding of morality is thus characterized by both attributions of heteronomy and autonomy depending, in large part, on how they coordinate their social relations with adults and peers.

The central role that cooperation has in children's emerging autonomy and self-regulation points to the value of educational programs that encourage cooperative learning strategies and student-to-student collaborations (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Encountering new perspectives and being required to coordinate them with one's own, in particular, has long been recognized as a critical skill in children's moral reasoning (Berkowitz, 1985) and moral identity (Youniss & Yates, 1997). Research by Leman and Duveen (1999) has shown, for example, the positive benefits of pairing children of different reasoning orientations, either heteronomous or autonomous. Based on their analysis of 60 pairings, they found that when asked to jointly solve a moral dilemma these dyads evidenced more advanced forms of reasoning (for similar findings, see Berkowitz, Gibbs, & Broughton, 1980). Similar findings have been reported for other school-based outcomes such as mathematical understanding, map reading, etc. (Berkowitz, Althof, Turner, & Bloch, 2008). Such encounters with enriching, new perspectives can be fostered by collaboration with peers.

The success of programs utilizing peer collaborations is well documented (see Johnson & Johnson, 2004), even if not widely used in character education. A notable exception is the *Child Development Project* or CDP (Developmental Studies Center, 1997). Informed in part by Deci and Ryan's (1985) model of motivation, the CDP has built a comprehensive elementary school reform model on institutionalizing educational practices that fulfill three core motivations: autonomy, belonging, and competence. Teachers trained to facilitate collaborative decision-making and problem-solving promote student autonomy. Specifically, they help moderate discussions where genuine differences in perspectives arise and oversee the allotment of children in pairings or groupings that maximize positive mutual exchange. Just as we have stressed, however, the CDP argues that promoting autonomy alone is an inadequate developmental (or educational) goal, but most be balanced against the other prosocial motivations of the program.

Summary and Implications

Children are more than just passive recipients of moral lessons from parents, caregivers, and teachers. Instead, they are autonomous agents who actively construct their moral knowledge. The bulk of children's moral growth occurs within peer settings where relationships are characterized by mutual respect and reciprocity. Research suggests that fostering positive peer relationships and collaborative opportunities promotes the development of autonomous moral reasoning.

Perspective Taking and Moral Reasoning

The study of perspective taking in developmental psychology, or what is generally characterized as the ability "to put oneself in the place of another person" (Light, 1979, pp. 9–10), has it origins in the experimental procedure now known as the "three mountains task" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1948/1963). Developed by Piaget and his close colleague, Barbel Inhelder, the task was designed to explore the developmental changes in 4- to 12-year-olds' skills of spatial or *visual* perspective taking. The task involved asking participants to take a particular position around a three-dimensional miniature model, or diorama, of a mountain village, and respond to a series of questions about the visual perspective of other individuals that were positioned differently from themselves. The children selected their responses from a set of pictures of the diorama. Up until age 9, children often failed the task by providing egocentric responses – that is, by selecting pictures that depicted their own visual perspective rather than that of others.

Piaget and Inhelder's procedure for studying children's *visual* perspective taking skills served as a springboard for other researchers' interest in *social* perspective taking, or the ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of others (Chandler & Boyes, 1982). Drawing on Piaget and Inhelder's early insights describing children's

growing abilities to coordinate and integrate others' perspectives, the efforts of developmental researchers to articulate a model of social perspective taking consolidated around Robert Selman's (1973, 1980) work in the 1970s. Selman described five levels of perspective taking, beginning with young children's early egocentric failures, moving through their increasing skills to consider and coordinate multiple perspectives simultaneously with their own, and ending with adolescents' emerging appreciation of how broad social ideologies (e.g., Catholicism, Feminism, or Conservative political values) shape interpersonal relationships (see Martin, Sokol, & Elfers, 2008, for further elaboration). Although rooted in a strong theoretical foundation, Selman's model has been substantiated over the past 35 years through both his clinical practice and educational initiatives. For instance, pair therapy – one of Selman's counseling innovations – partners children with social limitations, and through joint efforts to share their perspectives and coordinate their activities, helps the them develop greater interpersonal skills and promote their social awareness (Selman & Schultz, 1990). Selman's developmental model also informs his contributions to literacy training and program evaluation (e.g., *Facing History and Ourselves*; Schultz, Barr, & Selman, 2001). His most recent work, for instance, has involved devising developmentally sensitive curriculum materials that teach children to recognize and appreciate multiethnic diversity while honing their joy of reading (Selman, 2003). Not all developmental research on perspective taking, however, has been as successful at integrating theory and practice. This can be seen, for instance, in the contemporary theories-of-mind literature exploring children's understanding of their own and others' mental states.

Although Piaget's early work was principally aimed at characterizing the processes of perspective taking (an aim that Selman's work preserved), much of the research that followed these seminal efforts became more focused on the content of what children were being asked to reason about. As research interests shifted from visual, to cognitive, to affective, and to experiential perspective taking, to name just a few content areas; and, as more and more procedural innovations were introduced into a panoply of studies, Piaget and Inhelder's contributions were eventually eclipsed by a new research paradigm now known as children's developing *theories of mind* (Astington, Harris, & Olson, 1988). The particular content of this research enterprise is children's reasoning about the mental states that are understood to guide behavior, such as people's beliefs, desires, or intentions. One experimental procedure, in particular, has been the focal point of this literature: the assessment of children's false-belief understanding. The most common strategy for testing this understanding involves asking young children to follow a short story involving two characters, a boy named Maxi and his mother (Wimmer & Perner, 1983). Participants see Maxi place a chocolate bar in one location, and then, while Maxi is absent, his mother moves it to another, second location. Success on this procedure – or what is now typically referred to as the *unexpected transfer task* – is determined by children's responses to the question at the end of the story: "Where will Maxi look for his chocolate?" Although a seemingly straightforward and simple question, countless studies have revealed that children under the age of 4 fixate on where the chocolate has been moved, and not where Maxi originally placed it (Wellman,

Cross, & Watson, 2001). This leads the children to fail the procedure by responding that Maxi will look to the second location, where the mother moved the chocolate during his absence. In short, children before the age of 4 are generally regarded as failing to understand that others may hold, and act upon, false or diverging beliefs about reality.

Although there are other assessment procedures (such as the *unexpected contents*, or Smarties, task, see Gopnik & Astington, 1988) to determine if children appreciate others' divergent belief states, the common conclusion from these studies is that preschool children lack a critical understanding of how mental states operate in guiding conduct and navigating the interpersonal world. That is, they lack a fully developed "theory of mind." One of the practical upshots from this research is that children's social competence should also be greatly hampered, unless or until, they achieve a full-fledged theory of mind. While the empirical work has yet to make good on this claim (for an elaborate review, see Astington, 2003), one study by Lalonde and Chandler (1995) suggests caution in how theory-of-mind research is applied to the complexities of social conduct. Using a battery of false-belief measures and teacher questionnaires of children's classroom conduct, Lalonde and Chandler (1995) reported a pattern of varied correlations between theory-of-mind skills and social competence. The strongest relations were found in the area of cooperative play among peers and the lowest in children's conformity to standards of politeness and orderly conduct. Based on this evidence, they argued that insofar as children's social competencies might require the enlistment of creative and reasoned negotiation strategies (represented by what they called the "intentional" behavioral items on their questionnaire), then having a sophisticated understanding of others' mental lives became an important tool. On the other hand, when such reasoned or generative skills were not needed, such as when being asked to follow the well-established practices of the classroom or conventions of the broader society (what they called "social conventional" behaviors), then theory-of-mind competence was largely irrelevant (and sometimes even a hindrance) to competent social functioning.

In terms of character education, Lalonde and Chandler's (1995) interpretation of their data serves as a reminder that moral character draws from different psychological mechanisms, some involving more reflective capacities than others. Much like our earlier discussion of the integration of habituated and critical (or reflective) dimensions of virtue, successful navigation of the social world requires the coordination of multiple psychological processes. Moreover, Lalonde and Chandler's conclusions are also reminiscent of Lawrence Kohlberg's "necessary but not sufficient" argument in the study of children's moral reasoning.

In developmental psychology and moral education, Kohlberg's name is virtually synonymous with the six stages of moral reasoning that he originally formulated in his Ph.D. dissertation in 1958. These include pre-conventional levels of reasoning that show young children's preoccupation with material rewards and punishment (i.e., Stages 1 and 2), conventional levels of reasoning that illustrate individuals' growing awareness of social roles and their desires to fulfill the obligations that attend each (i.e., Stages 3 and 4), and, finally, post-conventional levels of reasoning that give evidence of increasingly principled considerations related to

fundamental rights and welfare of all people (i.e., Stages 5 and 6). The formulation of these stages and the interview procedure used to elicit individuals' reasoning (e.g., the Heinz dilemma) is widely known. What is perhaps less known, however, is Kohlberg's stance on the relationship between perspective taking and moral reasoning.

Extending Piaget's notion of structural parallelism (Piaget 1947/1950, 1968/1970), Kohlberg argued that certain cognitive processes which were basic to one domain of thinking, such as an individual's level of perspective taking, should also be basic to other domains, such as their level of moral reasoning. Importantly, these domains could be parallel in their formal structure without being identical in their content (e.g., perspective taking was not the same thing as moral reasoning although both share a similar stage-like structure). In other words, "moral reasoning has prerequisites in other domains of thought" (Walker, 1988, p. 48) that serve as necessary-but-not-sufficient conditions for the attainment of the corresponding moral stage. This view of structural parallelism, in turn, led researchers to hypothesize that "it should be possible to stimulate moral development only if the appropriate prerequisites in cognitive and perspective-taking development have been attained" (p. 53). That is, certain socio-cognitive prerequisites were seen as placing individuals in a "state of readiness" to advance to higher levels of moral development. One study, in particular, provided evidence for just this claim. With a sample of children between 4th and 7th grades, Walker (1980) investigated the effectiveness of a moral development intervention program. The program was designed to stimulate the onset of Stage 3 moral reasoning in this age group. He conducted pre- and post-intervention assessments of children's cognitive level, perspective-taking skills, and moral reasoning abilities in both an experimental group and a (no-intervention) control group. The results from the study indicated that the only children to achieve Stage 3 moral reasoning in the *post*-intervention assessment were the children who had already scored at Stage 3 perspective-taking and Stage 3 cognitive abilities (i.e., the beginning of formal operational thinking) in the *pre*-intervention assessment. Walker (1980) concluded that the intervention was effective only insofar as some children – those with the appropriate cognitive and perspective taking prerequisites – were "ready" to advance to the next level in their moral reasoning.

The conclusions from Walker's (1980) study in particular, as well as the implications that follow from perspective taking research in general, point to the importance of tailoring character education programs that fit with children's socio-cognitive readiness. From a developmental perspective, effective programs can never be just "one size fits all." Moreover, the view that particular psychological skills may be necessary but still not sufficient to capture the richness of moral growth, resonates with our earlier point that character draws from multiple developmental processes without being reduced to any one in particular. Being "ready" for character, then, is clearly a complicated matter. But "ready" here also suggests another important nuance that neither the processes of self-regulation nor perspective taking reveal in any significant way. This has to do particularly with the motivational aspects of character. That is, what moves a person at the visceral level to really care about

being good? Or to show concern for matters of right and wrong? To address these questions, our sketch of character and its developmental contours must also include the processes of empathy and emotional growth.

Summary and Implications

Perspective taking, or the ability to put oneself in the position of another, allows individuals to recognize and understand other people's thoughts and feelings. Recent trends in perspective taking research deal particularly with children's developing theories of mind, or an understanding of the mental states that guide behavior. Research suggests that perspective taking, or possessing a theory of mind, is both a critical interpersonal skill and a necessary prerequisite for moral growth.

Empathy and Emotional Competence

Empathy plays at least two roles in an individual's development, an epistemic and a moral role. On the one hand, in its epistemic role, empathy allows an understanding of others, and in particular an understanding of their emotions. In this sense, empathy may be linked to other forms of social-cognition, such as perspective taking. On the other hand, in its moral role, empathy leads to care and concern for others – or that motivational dimension of character that is missing from the other psychological processes we have discussed. For this reason, empathy is widely regarded as an important part of human life (Davis, 1994; Wispé, 1991).

One widely accepted rendering of empathy originates in the work of Nancy Eisenberg and her colleagues. As they suggest, empathy is fundamentally an "emotional reaction elicited by and congruent with another's emotional state or condition" (Eisenberg et al., 2002, p. 993). Eisenberg also elaborates on the connection between empathy and morality, building on what many see (e.g., Wispé, 1987) as the close tie between empathy and sympathy. Specifically, empathy refers to a state of emotional concordance or understanding that disposes a person to express concern for others, whereas sympathy indicates an actual feeling of care for another. However, many use empathy "to signify both types of reactions" (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989, p. 130), thereby investigating an "empathy/sympathy complex" (Moore, 1987, p. 340) rather than a "pure" form of either state.

Because empathy is traditionally seen as an affective process, it is often set in opposition to "colder" matters of pure cognition. This split between emotions and cognition has a history that dates back to ancient Greece, making it a highly entrenched view in Western psychology. Nevertheless, some researchers have resisted the either-or opposition between emotion and cognition by attempting to show the manner in which they are integrated (Sokol & Hammond, 2009). Martin Hoffman's (2000) account of empathy is perhaps the most well known,

although other integrative efforts have also begun to emerge in the neurosciences (e.g., Bråten, 2007; Decety & Ickes, 2009).

According to Hoffman, empathy is "a biologically . . . based, cognitively mediated, and socialized predisposition to connect emotionally with others" (Gibbs, 2003, p. 79). In Hoffman's model, the engine for empathic development, and a growing emotional competence, is the emerging agentic control (or self-regulatory abilities) and effective perspective taking of the child. This can be seen in the various levels of development that Hoffman describes. At the earliest levels, empathy is entirely reactive, with emotional responses based almost entirely on environmental cues, particularly those involving signs of distress. Hoffman sees, for instance, the most basic form of empathy – a primitive kind of emotional resonance – in the newborn infant's reactive crying (i.e., crying in response to other newborns' cries).

Later, children have a better ability to engage a more agentic response to the emotional displays of others. Yet this response may be egocentric and lack perspective-taking. Hoffman relates how one "14-month-old boy responded to a crying friend with a sad look, then gently took the friend's hand and brought him to his own mother, although the friend's mother was present" (Hoffman, 2000, p. 70). Besides developing the ability to more appropriately respond to the distress of others, further developments in empathy allow children to discern distress from more general situational factors and not just expressions of emotion. For example, a child may feel empathy for a friend that has lost a pet, even though the friend may not be present when the child hears the news.

Another similar view to Hoffman's can be found in the work of Carol Saarni (2007). Saarni makes an attempt, however, to situate empathy in a richer model of emotional competence – one that has been adopted within many social–emotional learning initiatives in education (e.g., Elias, Parker, Kash, Weissberg, O'Brien, 2008). According to Saarni, there are eight facets of the child's developing emotional competence, including the recognition of emotions, in both oneself and others, understanding emotional communication, and coping with negative emotions.

Reminiscent of a more classical tradition, Saarni builds moral responsiveness into her definition of this multifaceted view of emotional competence. As she remarks, "having emotional 'skills' divorced from a moral sense does not constitute a genuine emotional competence. Emotional competence entails 'doing the right thing'" (Saarni, 1997, p. 39). She also suggests, just as we have here, that such a nuanced emotional competency must be intrinsically interwoven with other psychological processes, such as self-regulation: "One is optimally self-regulating when one has a rich and varied emotional life that is shared with others" (p. 39).

As both Saarni's and Hoffman's accounts suggest, the development of empathy involves a wide range of increasingly integrated abilities, including, in its more advanced forms, the ability to take the perspective of others. Research on empathy, however, suggests two other important psychological facets involved in its development: emotional literacy and self-efficacy. Respectively, these appear to correspond to the epistemic and moral roles that empathy is understood to have.

Basic forms of empathy require children to recognize expressions of the emotions in others and the feeling of emotions in themselves (Saarni, 1997).

Even the more advanced forms of empathy depend on being able to recognize emotion-causing situations and to adequately respond to these. Some research, however, shows an intriguing disjuncture in the way that individuals may evidence high perspective-taking, or other socio-cognitive, skills while simultaneously possessing low empathic abilities. For example, many bullies score well on more cognitive aspects of social understanding, such as standard theory-of-mind measures, while nevertheless showing evidence of empathic deficits, i.e., a low emotional understanding of others (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Gini, 2006; Joliffe & Farrington, 2006; Krettenauer, Malti, & Sokol, 2008). For this reason, some character and socio-moral education programs, such as PATHS (Kusché & Greenberg, 1994) and Roots of Empathy (Gordon, 2000, 2005), teach children to specifically discuss and recognize emotions as a way to build emotional literacy within a larger repertoire of socio-cognitive competencies.

Besides emotional literacy, recent research on bullying and antisocial conduct suggests that another factor contributing to the expression of empathic care is *self-efficacy*, or the confidence in one's abilities to produce changes in the world. In bully–victim situations there are often bystanders, and low-level empathic responding, or emotional resonance, is often insufficient to motivate them to intervene by helping the victim (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2008). Active bystanders in bullying situations – that is, those who intervened to help – have been shown to have high levels of empathic responsiveness and high levels of self-efficacy. School-based intervention programs such as EQUIP (DiBiase, Gibbs, & Potter, 2005) address this additional dimension of caring for others, training students both in emotional literacy and in ways to efficaciously apply their concern to make a difference for others.

Summary and Implications

Empathy is a form of emotional social understanding that is linked to increased prosocial conduct (e.g., care for others) and decreased antisocial conduct (e.g., bullying). Although empathy begins with very simple affective connections, it can develop into advanced forms of perspective taking. Research suggests that emotional literacy and self-efficacy are particularly important for fostering empathic expressions of concern for others.

Conclusion

Our quick survey of some of the research findings in developmental psychology has indicated the following: (1) children as early as 5 or 6 years of age have begun to master inhibitory control and the coordination of complex rule usage, allowing them to function more independently, and successfully comply with adult requests and broader social conventions; (2) children's emerging autonomy and construction of moral knowledge, while obviously informed by contact with adults, nevertheless

benefits greatly from peer collaborations and positive opportunities for exchanging perspectives on problems or issues within peer groups; (3) perspective taking, and especially coming to an understanding of false-belief (one of the central markers of a theory of mind), during the early elementary years is a critical step in the development of interpersonal competencies and, more generally, suggestive of the necessary-but-not-sufficient social-cognitive conditions that enable moral growth throughout the developmental course; and, finally, (4) empathy and children's growing emotional competence rests on an integrated set of skills, especially perspective taking, basic emotional literacy, and self-efficacy. All of these findings and conclusions help us trace the contours of character development and to illustrate its multifaceted structure. In this regard, these findings not only show the promise of future exchange between developmental psychology and character education, but also highlight the continuing value of viewing character in psychological terms.

Where the exchange between the two fields of developmental psychology and character education goes from here is an exciting question. At least for us, continuing to explore the points of intersection between the fields will allow further insight into what character is and how it is shaped. Our picture of character is far from complete, with noticeable gaps even in the present effort to trace some of its basic contours (e.g., we have not elaborated on the processes of moral identity development). We have also said next to nothing about the broader integrative impulses that motivate our exploration of character, nor about the prospect of contributions beyond developmental psychology that could further delineate what a more fully elaborated "moral science" looks like. When we began the present discussion, we suggested that there are many hurdles to overcome in the joint study of child development and education. The truth is that there are many bridges to build. Hopefully, our modest contributions here have provided a few planks to get this process started.

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