Early Character Development and Education

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It is a well-worn refrain that more attention must be paid to the moral character of our youth. Such pleas are prevalent in the mass media and in professional forums, and typically are justified by data reflecting the misdeeds of youth; e.g., crime, substance use, unwed teen pregnancies, suicide. Whereas it is unclear that the state of youth morality is at a nadir and imprudent to suggest that character education is a panacea (Bebeau, Rest, & Narvaez, 1999), it is nonetheless clear that character education should and can be part of the solution (Developmental Studies Center, 1998).

This article represents an attempt to investigate what we know about character development in early childhood, in order to suggest how we can effectively promote character in early childhood education. For the purposes of this manuscript, early childhood will be defined as 18 months to 6 years of age. Research has suggested that a moral sense begins around 18 months (Lamb & Feeny, 1995) and formal schooling typically begins around 6 years of age.

The challenge is to implement character education so that it has the desired impact on the development of children's character (Bebeau et al., 1999). There are numerous obstacles to such effective implementation, including a lack of an empirical base to justify character education (Leming, 1993), poor dissemination of character education information to practitioners, contentiousness among disagreeing proponents of character education (Berkowitz, 1997), and very limited training of pre-service teachers (Berkowitz, 1998; Jones, Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Central amongst these challenges is the fact that we do not have a clear empirically-grounded sense of what teachers must do in the early childhood classroom (or any classroom, for that matter) to promote character development. This paper will address that limitation by drawing from the literature on teaching for character development and even more substantially on the literature on parenting for character development. Bridges between the two literatures will be suggested. Finally, we will offer some suggestions from a more clinical perspective on how early childhood teachers can deal with character dysfunction in students. First, however, we will need to define some terms.

Definition of Terms

This field is filled with semantic strife (Berkowitz, 1997). Terms such as moral education, character education, and values education are bandied about in quite confusing fashion. For some, character education connotes a particular ideological slant on shaping socio-emotional and moral development. For others, it represents a broad rubric for any attempt to affect socio-emotional and moral behavior. Some view moral education as the overarching summary term for such efforts, but, for others, it connotes a narrow emphasis on cognitive stages of moral reasoning. Hence it is useful to define one's terms before venturing forth into the treacherous terrain of this field. Readers are cautioned to actively investigate how such terms are being used, as they are likely used in different ways by different authors and speakers.

In order to avoid the controversies between those approaches often referred to as *character education* and *moral education* (Bebeau et al., 1999), the terms will be used interchangeably here, because each is used variably in the literature and there is no consensual definition of either. In both cases they will here refer to "any form of intentional education aimed at promoting the growth of moral functioning; to increase the individual's capacity to function as an effective moral agent" (Berkowitz, in press, p.2). This easily encompasses a broad array of diverse programs such as literature-based studies of character traits, democratic school governance reform, moral dilemma discussion programs, and cross-curricular studies of values. Rather than dwell on the ideological controversies in the field, it is more useful to examine what different approaches consider morality or character to be.

Numerous models have been offered proposing a wide range of moral characteristics. The four most promising are the affect-cognition-behavior triad (Lickona, 1991), the seven part moral anatomy (Berkowitz, 1997), the seven dimension model of character development (Hay, et al., 1994), and the four component model (Rest, 1985). While there is clear conflict between these models (cf., Bebeau et al., 1999), they all present relatively comprehensive models of the moral person that reflect the complexity of moral functioning. This is in stark contrast to former monolithic models that emphasized a single facet to the exclusion of all others. Therefore, we rely on all of these models and others in defining early childhood character development (see "Signs of Early Character Development" below).

What "counts" as moral or character *education* is also far from consensual. Depending in part on one's ideology and on one's understanding of the moral person, very different conceptions of moral education may arise (Dalton & Watson, 1997). For some it is very didactic, whereas for others it may be quite autonomous and reflective. Here we will argue that the complexity of the moral person requires a multifaceted and complex approach to education. To employ an organic metaphor, if one wants to raise a diverse set of crops, one does not use a single agricultural approach. Likewise, if one understands character to include a diversity of psychological characteristics such as emotion, cognition, behavior, personality, and identity (Berkowitz, 1997), then promoting its development will entail a complex educational strategy. Even the suggestion that character education is *intentional* is problematic because educators can unintentionally affect children's character development as well. However, we will restrict our discussion to efforts that are intended to influence moral functioning. Having described some of the complexity in this area, let us turn to a more concrete and focused consideration of the nature of early character development.

Early Childhood Character Development

A variety of approaches to understanding character development in early childhood have been offered. Lamb (1993) has identified three characteristics of early moral development: prosocial behavior (altruism), empathy, and awareness of standards (a precursor to conscience). In later work, Lamb and Feeny (1995) included compliance as a variable. Berkowitz and Grych (1998) have expanded that list to include a social orientation, self-control, self-esteem, moral reasoning, and conscience. Devries and Zan (1994) take a more focused position and define early childhood morality by how children think about rules and how they think about people and social relationships. For Dunn (1987), moral development in the second year of life focuses on "the child's growing grasp of social rules and of the consequences of his or her actions for other people's feelings or needs" (p. 91). Hay et al. (1995) define character simply as "an individual's *general approach to the dilemmas and responsibilities of social life*" (p.24) but elsewhere (Hay et al., 1994) offered a more differentiated conception of early character that includes sensitivity to others, cooperativeness, caring for the needy, helping others meet their goals, social problem-solving skills, standards for honesty, and adhering to social and moral norms. The psychoanalytic approach highlights the internalization of societal "do's" and "don'ts" as well as the development and management of affect (e.g., guilt, shame, empathy) and the development of internal working models of relationships (Emde, Johnson, & Easterbrooks, 1987). To further complicate matters, it has been argued that understanding the development of morality or character in young children entail a phenomenological perspective (Damon, 1988). That is, understanding children's morality requires an understanding of how children make meaning of the social and moral world.

> Children's moral sensibilities are easy to overlook if we expect them to be
> expressed in behavior that conforms to our adult standards...Adults who
> would understand children's morality must understand the significance of
> children's acts within the context of the child's world. (Damon, 1988, pp. 8-9).

From these and other perspectives we can ascertain that there are many facets to early moral or character development. Those concerned with understanding how to nurture and foster character in early childhood therefore need to consider the complex constellation of developing characteristics of nascent character. For our purposes here, we will generate a list of such characteristics that are particularly relevant to preschool education. Then we will consider what is known about fostering the development of those characteristics.

In a prior article (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998), we addressed this same issue from the perspective of early parenting. Four foundational components of character (social orientation, self-control, compliance, self-esteem) and four moral components of character (empathy, conscience, moral reasoning, altruism) were identified. Moral components were defined as intrinsically moral aspects of functioning and foundational components as those that support and facilitate moral functioning but are not necessarily moral or immoral themselves. Many of the character aspects cited above can be subsumed under these eight dimensions. For example, altruism can be understood to include sharing and caring for the needy. Conscience includes awareness of standards, understanding social and moral norms, and guilt. We are not, however, trying to suggest that this list is exhaustive. Our goal is to identify several of the most important moral characteristics and demonstrate how teachers of young children can be instrumental in their development.

Signs of Early Character Development

What would a young child who is developing character look like? The models of moral development described above suggest a common core of characteristics that enable us to begin to answer that question (cf. Berkowitz & Grych, 1998). The following list includes the eight characteristics elaborated by Berkowitz and Grych, plus two more that we consider essential in early childhood development: honesty and social skills. They should be viewed as ideals or goals for children; and children's developmental levels must be taken into account when considering signs of moral functioning. It is common for young children to lie and to protect their interests; in fact it is developmentally appropriate for them to do so. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect the following list of moral characteristics to be consistently and unambiguously manifested by young children. Rather it is the tendency toward such characteristics that marks moral development.

> *Self-control.* Such a child would be able to control her behavior. She would be able to constrain her impulses when they are socially inappropriate.

> *Empathy.* She would be sensitive to other's emotions and needs. She would show a sympathetic emotional response to the distress of others.

> *Social orientation.* She would value and seek out positive interactions with others and would seem to value positive relationships with others, especially adults.

> *Compliance.* She would tend to comply with externally imposed standards and rules. She would adhere to social and moral norms.

> *Self-esteem.* She would have a generally positive conception of herself and be optimistic about her capacities.

> *Conscience.* She would feel bad when she transgressed, try to make reparations, understand general "do's" and "don'ts," and feel the need to try to adhere to them.

> *Moral reasoning.* She would be able to reason about right and wrong and try to discern the right thing to do. She would know social and moral rules and be able to apply them accurately.

> *Altruism.* She would care about others, help others, share, and cooperate with others. She would be willing to sacrifice her own interests for the legitimate needs of others.

> *Honesty.* She would routinely tell the truth, even if her own interests were in jeopardy.

> *Social skills.* She would be able to begin to take others' perspectives. She would be able to resolve social conflicts effectively.

She should engage in these behaviors consistently (at a level appropriate for her age) and she should do so even when not supervised, monitored, or under the threat or promise of concrete consequences (rewards or punishments). She should also treat people and things with respect and take responsibility for her own actions. The remaining question is how to foster the development of such a child. Before we move forward, however, it is important to offer some caveats to this recipe for early childhood character development. First, this list is incomplete. However, for our purposes, it should be quite ample to explicate how early childhood educators can foster character development. Second, this list represents and ideal

perspective. It describes what the ideally moral child would be like. Few adults could match up to such a description. It serves the purpose of identifying the goals of parenting and education for character. Third, it overly simplifies character. Character is not a list of discrete characteristics, but rather an integrated amalgam of multifaceted characteristics. In many moral situations we must adjudicate *between* legitimate moral characteristics (e.g., compassion vs. honesty). This list does not address this complexity adequately. Often it is the role of moral reasoning to resolve such conflicts. With these caveats aside, we can now proceed to examine the role of the early childhood educator in children's character development.

The Teacher's Role in Early Childhood Character Development

The first place to look for clues as to how teachers can help foster good character in preschool children is the extensive empirical literature on the effects of parenting on early childhood development. This is because much more is known about the effects of parenting on child development than is known about the effects of teacher behavior on child development. Berkowitz and Grych (1998) recently reviewed this literature and identified five core parenting strategies that collectively foster the development of character: induction; nurturance/support; demandingness; modeling; democratic family process. We examine how these five strategies can be applied in the classroom, and then consider five additional strategies derived from the educational literature: facilitating understanding; teaching human values; fostering caring relationships; helping children handle emotions; respecting children. These latter five strategies tend to be somewhat broader in nature and less well-anchored in empirical research than the five strategies adopted from the parenting literature. All ten of these strategies, however, have been selected because they have been shown to affect some subset of the character aspects just discussed.

Induction

Induction is a strategy of explaining to the child one's evaluative reactions to the child and her behavior; e.g., explaining why you are pleased or displeased with her behavior. Furthermore, effective induction includes in those explanations an explicit focus on the consequences of the child's actions for others, especially affective consequences for others; i.e., how the other feels or is likely to feel as a direct result of the child's actions or words. Parents' use of induction is associated with greater empathy, more highly developed conscience, higher levels of moral reasoning and altruism (see Berkowitz & Grych, 1998), as well as a broad range of additional desirable psychological outcomes in children. (For a more detailed description of the research supporting these conclusions, as well as those for the other four parenting strategies, see Berkowitz and Grych, 1998).

This strategy has clear applications to teacher-child interactions. Teachers who simply punish (or reward) without explanation do little to support character development. One common misunderstanding is that induction must be devoid of affect; that a good parent or teacher will engage in explanation in a very matter-of-fact emotionless tone of voice. This is far from the truth. Induction can and indeed should be done so that there is an accurate expression of the parent's or teacher's feelings. If you are thrilled with a child's behavior, explain why but be sure to manifest your pleasure affectively. If you are frustrated or angry with the child's behavior, then again explain why but show your frustration or anger. Indeed, research has demonstrated that moralizing affectively (teaching a moral lesson with feeling)

is more effective than doing so without feeling (Doebert & Nunner-Winkler, 1985; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow & King, 1979).

Nurturing and Support

In the parenting literature, one of the most widely researched concepts is parenting style. Baumrind (1980) has identified four parenting styles based on two central parenting dimensions: responsiveness and demandingness. The most psychologically desirable parenting style (at least in Western society) is Authoritative parenting, which is the conjunction of high responsiveness and high demandingness. Authoritative parents express warmth and love to their children, pay attention to them and respond appropriately (responsiveness), and set high expectations for their behavior, development, and achievement (demandingness). We will examine the two dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness separately, beginning with responsiveness, which we here label nurturance and support.

Parental nurturance and support have been linked to an array of positive developmental outcomes, including the moral characteristics of conscience and moral reasoning and two characteristics designated as meta-moral characteristics by Berkowitz (1997): secure attachment and self esteem (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998). They are considered meta-moral because they are not moral characteristics but support the development of moral characteristics; e.g., secure attachment increases altruism. Just as parents need to be sensitive to the signals, moods, and rhythms of children, so do teachers.

> Teachers can serve as effective caregivers-loving and respecting their students, helping them succeed in school, building their self-esteem, and enabling them to experience what morality is by having the teacher treat them in a moral way. (Lickona, 1991, p. 72)

Teachers need to understand when a child, for example, is hungry, needs a nap, or needs to be left alone. This is sensitivity and it is necessary for appropriate responsiveness. Once the teacher understands the child's state, then the teacher needs to respond appropriately and in a timely fashion. Clearly this is much easier for a parent with only one or two young children at home than it is for a teacher who may have 20 young children in the classroom. So this is a matter of degree; the more the teacher can recognize children's signals and respond accordingly, the more that teacher is likely to foster the development of conscience, moral reasoning, and self-esteem.

Nurturance can also be very developmentally productive when manifested in discussions of moral issues (Powers, 1982; Walker & Taylor, 1991). Children who discuss such matters with adults who are loving and supportive mature more quickly than do children whose discussions with adults are flavored by conflict, negative affect, or a lack of affection. Children need to feel valued, to feel that it is safe to disagree with adults, and that adults will continue to value them even when dealing with difficult or troubling issues. It should not be difficult therefore to understand why such interactions produce self-esteem, secure attachment relationships, and mature moral reasoning.

Demandingness

The second of the two dimensions of Baumrind's (1980) concept of Authoritative parenting, Demandingness, is actually a complex concept. Clearly it entails setting high

standards for children. As Damon (1995) has argued recently, one of the contemporary failings of our culture is the low standards we typically set for children. But simply raising the bar is not adequate by itself. Demandingness also entails support. If a parent or teacher simply tells a child "I expect you to stop hitting other children from now on," this is not likely to be effective. Rather, the parent or teacher needs to not only express the expectation for optimal performance but must also provide support to the child so that she can effectively alter her behavior. This might, for example, involve teaching children to use words rather than fists, teaching them how to solicit adult intervention, or even directly facilitating positive peer interactions.

The concept of "scaffolding," which has become quite popular in the education literature (Rogoff, 1991), directly addresses the support aspect of demandingness. Scaffolding entails providing the appropriate level of support for a child and then, as the child increases in mastery, removing support incrementally to maintain an optimal balance between ability and support. The ultimate goal is for the child to achieve mastery so no support is needed or given. This may be most obvious for purely physical tasks; e.g., tying one's shoelaces or building a tower of blocks. However, it applies as well to socio-moral skills such as peer conflict resolution. At first, the teacher may need to act as mediator asking questions such as, "What else could you do to avoid getting into a fight?". Eventually the children will be able to resolve the conflict without assistance from an adult.

This still is not a fully effective vision of demandingness. The parent or teacher needs to not only set the standards and offer the appropriate supports, but must also be vigilant in monitoring whether the standards are being met. The teacher needs to pay attention to whether the child has been less aggressive with peers lately, and should respond accordingly, either with pleasure and rewarding attention if the focal behavior has improved or with disapproval and consequences if the child's behavior has not improved.

Modeling

Teacher behavior is a very powerful influence on the development of students. Even when it appears that children are not noticing adults' behavior, some of them likely are taking it all in. This is especially true in a classroom where the teacher is the authority figure and there are so many children who can notice everything the teacher does. As Lickona points out, it is not merely the teacher's behavior directed at the child herself that makes an impact. It is also the teacher's behavior directed at others. Students will frequently evaluate a teacher's character on how that teacher treats others. Certainly how he or she is treated by the teacher is most central to the consciousness of a preschool child, but teachers should be aware that they are always on the stage.

> Teachers can serve as models-ethical persons who demonstrate a high
> level of respect and responsibility both inside and outside the classroom.
> Teachers can also model moral concern and moral reasoning by their
> reactions to morally significant events in the life of the school and the
> world at large (Lickona, 1991, p. 72)

Parents who model self-control and altruism tend to have children higher in both of these characteristics (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989; Maccoby, 1980; Yarrow, Scott & Waxler, 1973). From early childhood through adolescence, children learn much from how adults

around them behave. When a teacher proscribes swearing, but then is overhead swearing on the phone or in the hallway to a peer, then the proscription loses its teeth and children will be more likely to ignore it. It is difficult for a teacher to instill character in students if that teacher is frequently observed behaving with poor character, for example, by being vindictive, by playing favorites, or by taking her moods out on children. It is also critical that teachers remember that how they treat everyone in the school is observed by children. How teachers talk to each other, how they treat the custodians and bus drivers, how they talk about the administrators, and how they interact with parents all are examples of forms of modeling that affect children's character development. Children will learn much more from demonstrations of how to behave than they will from exhortations. For example, telling them to take turns is less effective than taking turns oneself.

Democratic Group Decision-making and Discussion

Parents who rely more on family decision-making and open family discussion of moral (and other) issues tend to have children who are more compliant (Kuczynski, et al., 1987), reason more maturely about moral issues (Haan, Smith, & Block, 1968; Holstein, 1969), have more highly developed consciences (Kochanska, 1997), have higher self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967), and are more altruistic (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). Clearly, showing respect for children's perspectives in family discussions is a rich and powerful way of nurturing character development in children. Lickona (1983) has articulated this clearly in his "fairness approach" to parenting. In parallel, he has described how to create a democratic classroom and offers detailed suggestions for implementing class meetings as a means of stimulating character development (Lickona, 1991). DeVries and Zan (1994) echo this theme when they argue that "a unique characteristic of constructivist education is that responsibility for decision making is shared by everyone in the class community" (p. 125). The objective of this is to "contribute to an atmosphere of mutual respect in which teachers and children practice self-regulation and cooperation" (p. 125). Additional objectives they identify are (1) highlighting the importance of fairness, (2) creating a sense of ownership of the class by the class, and (3) increasing the sense of shared responsibility for the life of the class.

This approach to classroom management both treats children with respect and models the same for the children. They learn to listen to others, to value others' points of view, to take responsibility for rules and decisions, to respect rules, to understand where rules come from and why they are important, and to accept decisions that don't go their way. Parents and teachers who use this approach tend to report less behavioral problems. Perhaps somewhat counter-intuitively, research suggests, for example, that parents who are more flexible and rely more on negotiation rather than direct control have more compliant children (Kuczynski et al., 1987; Westerman, 1990). Authoritarian power assertion does not produce desirable behavior in the long run and is not developmentally productive for children.

Clearly, the limits of democratic classroom management are largely determined by the developmental level of the students. Preschool children will not be able to run a fully democratic classroom. However, preschool teachers can employ democratic classroom management techniques for selected aspects of classroom life. Student input into classroom behavioral rules tends to be quite appropriate even at such a young age.

Facilitating Understanding

Facilitating understanding is a critical component of constructivist teaching (DeVries & Zan, 1994). It includes the introduction to children of new and challenging issues for thought. This is part of helping them construct knowledge. As Dalton and Watson (1997) point out, "the role of adults, is not to force development through external shaping, but to *guide and work with the child's natural tendencies to develop in an adaptive or positive direction*" (p.161). They argue that children naturally construct meaning from their experiences and that education should honor, support, and be consistent with that natural propensity. In other words, educators of young children need to understand how the children understand, and to structure the classroom environment to respect children's need for constructing meaning, as opposed to simply having meaning conveyed to them by adults.

Part of this process is recognizing that children need to be intrinsically motivated to learn and develop (Dalton & Watson, 1997). If they are to optimally construct meaning, then they must be motivated to do so. According to Deci et al. (1991), children have, as one of three basic needs, the necessity to develop a sense of autonomy. Dalton and Watson suggest that, by necessity, character education must be sensitive to the need for autonomy. Autonomy is satisfied in part by honoring the child's need to make meaning of the world, rather than having it externally imposed upon her. DeVries and Zan (1994) reinforce this by suggesting that teachers need to help children construct knowledge and be sensitive to their developmental stages. This latter notion is especially true for very young children. DeVries and Zan offer the following example:

> When a child insists that a classmate bumped his block structure on purpose, the teacher recognizes that the child does not and perhaps cannot appreciate that actions may not reflect intentions (p. 71).

Hence, teachers need to learn to structure their classrooms and alter their teaching styles to (1) understand children's levels of understanding, (2) provide stimulating issues and examples to challenge children's current ways of understanding, and (3) provide opportunities for children to construct their own meanings.

Teaching Humane Values

Lickona (1983) has argued that parents need not just practice what they preach, but they must preach what they practice as well. He further emphasizes:

> There is a new awareness that the academic curriculum has been a sleeping giant in values education, But the academic curriculum is the chief business of schooling. We would be wasting a great opportunity if we failed to use that curriculum as a vehicle for developing values and ethical awareness (Lickona, 1991, pp. 162-3).

Dalton and Watson (1997) emphasize the need to teach humane values. This may be one of the most ubiquitous and controversial aspects of current incarnations of character education. Most character education initiatives include some explicit teaching of values, but clearly this is not the only way to foster the development of desirable values. We have already argued for modeling as one of the most powerful influences on character and values. Nevertheless, it is important to reinforce the notion that kids also need to know what adults

value. One way to discover this is by observing their behavior, but another is by having those adults explicitly articulate and justify those values, recognizing that there may be disagreement about which values teachers should promote. Professional groups such as the Character Education Partnership offer extensive support in dealing with the issue of value selection.

Fostering Caring Relationships

It is very clear that schools and classrooms that are perceived as caring environments foster greater character development (Developmental Studies Center, 1998; Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989). The central ingredient in such environments is how people in the classroom or school treat each other. Children need to feel connected to the classroom and school in a positive way, and such connections stem from how people in the classroom or school treat one another. One of Deci et al.'s (1991) core needs is belonging. This need for belonging can result in healthy development when it is adequately met by a prosocial, caring person or group (e.g., a benevolent teacher or a prosocial classroom environment). If the need remains unmet or is met by an antisocial or uncaring person or group (e.g., an abusive parent or an antisocial youth gang), then this will likely lead to the development of undesirable characteristics. Much of this conceptualization comes from attachment theory, which although originally conceptualized as the bond between infant and parent, has been more broadly applied.

> Although attachment theory began by focusing on the mother-child relationship, it soon evolved to include other significant caretakers and therefore has implications for how we relate to children in the classroom (Dalton & Watson, 1997, p. 163).

An important aspect of developing a sense of belonging is that for children to be likely to form caring relationships, they need the capacity to do so. This capacity emanates from early experiences with nurturant parenting, in which a healthy attachment bond is both formed in parental love and nurturance and forms the template for later relationships with peers and teachers.

Another important element in fostering caring relationships is the promotion of interpersonal understanding (DeVries & Zan, 1994; Selman, 1980). DeVries and Zan define interpersonal understanding as a "process of decentering to think about the other's point of view and to figure out how to coordinate it with one's own through negotiation" (p. 74). (This element actually overlaps the already discussed need to facilitate understanding as well.) They argue that the teacher accomplishes this by using (modeling) strategies more advanced than those used by the students, by suggesting alternative strategies to students during conflicts, and by supporting students attempts to engage in interpersonal negotiation. Shure (1992) describes an effective and concrete program for facilitating the development of such interpersonal problem-solving skills. For instance, Shure and Spivack (1978) have developed a training program for parents that effectively provides them with strategies for conflict resolution that promote the development of more mature forms of interpersonal cognitive problem-solving in their children. Lickona (1991) suggested five elements for the effective teaching of conflict resolution: (a) a planned curriculum about conflict resolution; (b) structured skill training for conflict resolution; (c) using class meetings to address common classroom conflicts; (d) intervening to help children be more effective at resolving conflicts; (e) making students responsible for resolving conflicts.

Helping Children Handle Emotions

With the publication of Daniel Goleman's (1995) *Emotional intelligence*, there has been great interest in children's emotional development and especially the role of parenting (Gottman, 1997). Emotions have been at the heart of conceptions of character for a very long time (Damon, 1988). However, some recent models that rely heavily on cognitive abilities (e.g., Kohlberg, 1976; Piaget, 1965), have tended to under-emphasize the role of emotions in moral development. Nonetheless, emotions such as shame, guilt, empathy, sympathy, disgust, and compassion are critical to a full understanding of character (Berkowitz, 1997; Damon, 1988).

Children, especially young children, have great difficulty with managing their own (and others') emotions. DeVries and Zan (1994) argue that teachers need to help children achieve "emotional balance." They argue that this is a gradual process of impulse control, self-examination, and perspective-taking. Teachers facilitate this by helping children develop better understanding of their own emotional lives and better understanding of others' emotions and motivations. To accomplish this, teachers must (1) help children engage in self-reflection, especially about their emotions and reactions, (2) simply acknowledge and legitimize children's emotions, (3) use conflict mediation techniques, and (4) help children let go of and manage their emotions, especially difficult and threatening emotions.

Kindlon and Thompson (1999) argue that boys are at particular risk in our culture for having under-developed emotional lives. They offer numerous recommendations for how to rectify this cultural bias, some of which are quite relevant to educators. For instance, they recommend giving boys permission for an internal life of emotion, helping them develop a vocabulary of emotions to promote self and social understanding, teaching them that emotional courage is a form of courage, promoting empathy as a personal resource, and exposing them to male models with mature emotional lives.

Respecting Children

Lickona (1983, 1991) has argued that character at its core amounts to respect. Fostering respect in children is a central goal of character education. However, there are quite different views on how to accomplish this.

> When people talk about cooperation between adults and children, they often mean children's compliance with adult demands. Rather, we mean the teacher's relations of reciprocity with children. These arise from respect for children as people and respect for the nature of their development. (DeVries & Zan, 1994, p.70).

Lickona (1983) has argued in a parallel fashion that respect is a "two way street," meaning that if adults want children to be respectful, they must respect children. For teachers, the same argument holds:

> Teachers convey and model respect by speaking the language of respect in their interactions with children. They also teach respect by taking children's thoughts and feelings seriously (Lickona, 1991, p. 74)

This also satisfies the autonomy need that Deci et al. (1991) have identified. The concepts of democratic classrooms and promoting understanding are also quite consistent with this notion of respect for children. Teachers need to examine their styles and classrooms to identify the ways that they honor autonomy, respect children's feelings and understandings, and value children's voices and participation in the life of the classroom.

We have, to this point, identified an extensive set of teacher behaviors and strategies that can promote healthy character development in the preschool environment. Teachers frequently however have to contend with children who exhibit symptoms of delayed or faulty character development. In the last section of this paper, we offer some strategies for educators to deal effectively and developmentally with such children.

Constructive Responses to Moral Misbehavior in Preschoolers

Occasional misbehavior is common and developmentally normal in preschoolers, but at times children exhibit a pattern of misbehavior which raises serious concerns about their moral development and general psychological adjustment. Children who repeatedly disregard the rights and feelings of others, aggress against their peers, and defy rules and directives create significant problems for preschool teachers trying to provide a safe and nurturing environment for the children in their care. Such children exhibit few of the characteristics of a normally developing moral child that we outlined earlier. For example, their behavior may appear out of control, they may show little empathy or concern for others, and they may evidence delays in the development of conscience (Kochanska & DeVet, 1994). Children exhibiting chronic "moral misbehavior" are likely to require different kinds of responses from teachers than the typical kinds of misbehavior seen in children of this age, and research on the treatment of child adjustment problems provides guidelines that can supplement the ideas described above for teachers.

Clearly the goal for *all* children is to promote the development of moral character. However, before teachers can promote moral development in clinically dysfunctional children, they must more immediately manage the child's disruptive behavior, which is interfering with normal classroom functioning. Only once the chronic and perhaps extreme moral misbehaviors have been eliminated or reduced, can the teacher effectively employ the techniques already described in this paper. It is not being suggested that teachers abandon or suspend the use of more generic character building strategies such as induction. Rather we recommend that for children who exhibit chronic serious misbehavior they supplement such techniques with more behaviorally focused strategies. Once the behaviors are in a more reasonable range, then the emphasis can be shifted to the strategies described above. *All* children deserve and can benefit from the prescribed strategy for promoting moral character development; however, some children need additional interventions to be able to optimally benefit from such strategies.

Intervention approaches based on behavioral principles have proven to be successful for reducing oppositionality and aggressiveness in young children (for a review, see Hersen & Van Hasselt, 1987), and these techniques can be applied in the classroom as well. Whereas positive reinforcement may be sufficient for promoting prosocial behavior in most children, adding judicious use of punishment (e.g., loss of a valued object or privilege, time-out) may be needed for children with behavioral problems. For example, contingency management is designed to change children's behavior by punishing undesired behaviors and rewarding

more pro-social behaviors (e.g., with praise). This approach is most effective if the expectations for children's behavior are clear and reinforcement and punishment are applied quickly and consistently.

The principle of demandingness—communicating behavioral standards and monitoring whether children meet them-thus is particularly important for children showing early signs of antisocial behavior. Moreover, for children to learn more pro-social behaviors (rather than simply decrease undesirable ones) it often is necessary to teach and model the desired behaviors, and to use scaffolding to support children's nascent efforts at behaving more positively. For example, a preschooler who takes toys he wants to play with away from other children may need to be shown how to ask a peer for a toy and reinforced for any attempts to use his new skills. This sort of approach may be beneficial for all children, but particularly powerful for a child exhibiting deficits in prosocial peer interaction. Selman and Schultz (1990) offer an elaborate model of such a process for behaviorally disordered youth that may be used effectively in a classroom setting as well. They therapeutically pair such youth together with the goal of forming a structured friendship, mediated by a trained peer-pair therapist. Shure (1991) has also adapted parenting strategies for behaviorally disordered children that can be quite effectively applied to the classroom. By training parents how to facilitate children's reflection on interpersonal feelings, consequences, and strategies, they empower parents to mediate child conflicts without power assertion or other unproductive strategies. Instead children are encouraged to resolve conflicts by considering the other's point of view. Eventually the child should be able to do this without the parental mediation.

Although contingency-management programs may be effective in changing the child's behavior in the immediate situation, studies indicate that improvements only occur while the program is in effect and often do not generalize to other settings (see Hughes, 1993) and have even been described as counterproductive (Kohn, 1999). Consequently, time-limited interventions focused on a few target behaviors are unlikely to be sufficient to create lasting changes in "moral misbehavior." However, more pervasive effects may occur if recognition and reward of positive behavior and appropriate use of consequences for negative behavior become part of the classroom culture. That is, when teachers regularly notice, teach, and reinforce pro-social behavior and provide consistent responses to aggressive, disruptive behavior. Unfortunately, research suggests that teachers rarely reward prosocial behavior (Caplan, 1993). It is, therefore, all the more important for teachers to pay closer attention to those instances of positive behavior that occur in the classroom, especially for children who have difficulty generating such behaviors.

Moreover, when teachers need to intervene or correct a child's behavior, using induction to engage the child in a dialogue about why certain behaviors are more acceptable than others may help to stimulate children's moral reasoning and thus affect children's moral development more directly. Similarly, discussing the feelings of others who have been affected by the child's misbehavior is a way to promote the development of empathy; directing children's attention toward peers' feelings and trying to link them with the child's own emotional experiences helps children to understand the consequences of their actions. Thus, broadening the focus of attention from a particular behavior to the moral principles underlying the behavior and its effects on others may have a powerful effect on increasing prosocial behavior.

Because moral behavior (and misbehavior) is multifaceted, efforts to reduce persistent misbehavior are likely to be more effective if they integrate more than one approach. For example, social skills training has been paired with contingency management in order to teach children how to interact more positively with their peers, and this combination has been found to be more effective in increasing prosocial behavior than contingency programs alone (e.g., Kazdin, Bass, Siegel, & Thomas, 1989). They may be especially appropriate for a preschool setting because of the emphasis given to social development relative to academic achievement at this age by parents and teachers (Mize & Ladd, 1990).

Social skills programs typically are conducted in a dyadic or group setting and use direct instruction, modeling, and practice with peers to improve skills such as sharing, turn-taking, and cooperating. For example, Mize and Ladd (1990) adapted a social skills group designed for older children to a preschool setting. They paired peer-rejected children and, using puppets, taught them prosocial interaction skills and goals. They then provided opportunities to practice these skills in the context of dramatic play, which itself promotes perspective-taking, cooperation, and social participation. Classroom observations showed that the children used the prosocial skills more with their classmates and reported more constructive ways to resolve peer dilemmas, but did not show a significant decrease in aggressive behavior compared to children who were not in the groups.

Although these approaches may decrease negative and increase positive social interactions, for some children school-based efforts alone will not be sufficient to reduce chronic behavioral problems. Conduct problems are multiply determined (see Hinshaw & Anderson, 1996), and the presence of certain factors requires additional or different treatment approaches. For example, conduct problems often co-occur with attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which is viewed by most researchers as a disorder with a strong neurological basis (see Barkley, 1996). Many children with ADHD benefit most from a combined treatment of medication and psychosocial interventions (Barkley, 1998). Because some degree of impulsivity, oppositionality, and high activity is normative in preschoolers, it is difficult to reliably detect ADHD in children younger than age 5. However, preschoolers who exhibit significantly higher levels of these behaviors than their peers for at least a year may very well have ADHD and should be referred to a mental health professional so that a valid diagnosis can be made (Barkley, 1998).

Noncompliant, aggressive behavior also can be strongly influenced by family factors. For example, a poor attachment history, marital discord, and abusive or neglectful parent-child relations are associated with antisocial behavior in young children (Hinshaw & Anderson, 1996). Consequently, treatment approaches that address children's functioning in a variety of systems (family, school, neighborhood) are more powerful than school-based interventions alone (Henggeler & Borduin, 1990). When repeated attempts to modify children's classroom misbehavior are unsuccessful, teachers need to discuss with parents the possibility that more extensive intervention is warranted. It is particularly critical to bring these problems to light early because children who exhibit serious, persistent "moral misbehavior" in the preschool years are at increased risk for developing more severe psychological disorders later in childhood and adolescence, and early intervention is the best hope for redirecting children's developmental path toward healthy moral functioning.

Conclusion

It is rather noncontroversial to assert that early caretaking experiences are instrumental in character development. Hence, we have identified some central ways that early childhood educators can positively impact on healthy character development in young children: induction, nurturance, demandingness, modeling, democracy, facilitating child understanding, teaching humane values, fostering caring relationships, emotion management, respect. Each of these has an empirical foundation and can readily be applied in the preschool environment. We have also, however, acknowledged that early childhood educators will inevitably confront children who have not already developed a healthy character base. We, therefore have provided some insights into how such educators can positively impact on children who manifest, for example, antisocial tendencies or problems with impulse control.

If society is to flourish and the world in which we live is to be safer and more benevolent, then it must be populated by individuals with healthy character. An essential ingredient in making this possible is how young children are raised and educated in our society. Early childhood educators have a very significant role to play in fostering character development in our youth.

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