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Social and Emotional Learning, Moral Education, and Character Education: A Comparative Analysis and a View Toward Convergence

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Anyone can become angry—that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—this is not easy. (Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV, Section 5)

Aristotle's words suggest that humans have long been interested in how best to manage their emotional and social lives. Most recognize that their emotional reactions to events have significant impact on their social interactions and effectiveness. Many have considered the question of how individuals or groups of individuals might acquire more effective ways of regulating their emotional responses or social relations. Others prefer to frame the question in terms of how individuals or groups learn to guide their behavior in correct or virtuous ways. Many have looked to traditional educational environments as places to make progress towards these aims. Indeed, as one of the primary cultural institutions responsible for transmitting information and values from one generation to the next, schools have typically been involved in attending to the social-emotional well-being and moral direction of their students, in addition to their intellectual achievements.

Not surprisingly, moral education (along with its close cousin, character education) and social-emotional learning have emerged as two prominent formal approaches used in schools to provide guidance for students' behavior. Moral education focuses on values and social-emotional learning focuses on the skills and attitudes needed to function in relevant social environments. Pedagogically, the two approaches have come to differ more in practice than in their deeper conceptualizations. Moral education has focused more on the power of "right thinking" and "knowing the good," and social-emotional learning has focused more on the power of problem solving (Elias, Zins, Weissberg et al., 1997; Huit, 2004). Both, however, in their most discerning

theorists and practitioners, have recognized the role of affect (Emperies & Arsenio, 2000; Nucci, 2001). Now that research has caught up with this observational and intuitive understanding, both approaches are converging toward a central pedagogy involving the coordination of affect, behavior, and cognition and the role of the ecological-developmental context.

Paradoxically, moral education and social-emotional learning are values-neutral approaches to aspects of socialization. Acknowledging the role of context brings to visibility the elephant in the room in discussions of moral education, which is the source of moral authority or direction. This is an arena in which individuals and groups are going to disagree. However, from the perspective of America's public, secular education system in a nation committed to democratic principles, there are sets of values and moral principles that can be seen as consensual. Dewey has written about these with particular eloquence. And Nucci (2001) has found that even among religious children of different denominations, there is a consensus about moral values that transcend religion and degree of belief (e.g., most children would believe that stealing is wrong even if G-d commanded people to steal).

Yet, as it is said, the devil is in the details. What exactly constitutes "stealing"? Taking a friend's pencil and not returning it? Grabbing an apple from an open marketplace to bring home to your siblings when your family is hungry? Copying from a neighbor's test paper? More difficult in many cases is defining the positive value. What is "honesty"? Always saying the truth, all the time? Telling a hospitalized person how lousy they look? Pointing out to a classmate who has a problem with an activity in gym that he has not succeeded on 10 consecutive trials? Walking into class and telling the teacher you did not do the assigned reading?

Gather a group of educators or parents into groups and ask each member of each group to think about one child they know well. Ask the first group to think about a child who is highly responsible. Ask the next one to think about a child who is respectful. Have members of the third group think about one who is honest. Have the final group think about a young person that they would say is an exemplary citizen in their school or community (or if you are able to explain this without "giving away the answer," family). Ask them to picture the child they are thinking about and then write down or discuss what it is about that child that has earned the label of responsible, respectful, etc., in their eyes. Tell them that you are not interested in an abstract list, but things specific to the child they are envisioning. And then have each group come up with a consensus statement containing their observations.

When one leads a discussion and puts each group's responses on pieces of newsprint (yes, we will be honest, we really mean large sheets of Post-it pad paper) for all to see, a pattern invariably emerges and participants realize that to enact any of these cherished values and attributes, one needs a large number of skills. Responsibility involves time and task management and tracking and organization; respect involves empathy and social approach behaviors; honesty involves self-awareness and communication skills; good citizenship involves problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution, as well as group and teamwork skills. And many of the skills cross-cut areas, such as the need for clear communication in citizenship and interpersonal sensitivity in responsibility. Indeed, there are instances in which children will "want to do the right thing" but either will not know how or do not believe they can do so successfully.

Efforts at moral and character education, however their objectives may be defined, are designed to inform behavior. Enacting their principles requires skills (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; see Narvaez, chapter 16 this volume). Berman (1997) has framed this by defining skills that he believes are essential for the development of social consciousness necessary to live effectively as an engaged citizen in the modern world; Dalton, Wandersman, and Elias (2007) have identified a similar set of cross-cultural "participatory competencies." These are the specific cognitive, behavioral, and affective skills needed to effectively enact key roles in a given social context.

Lickona and Davidson (2005) have made explicit what has been implicit, or at least not featured, within character education, by articulating a distinction between moral and performance character. It is their way of codifying that “doing the good” does not follow automatically from “knowing the good.” Most current writings about moral education and social-emotional learning are aligned with these prevailing notions.

As moral and character education and social-emotional learning move toward what we believe is an inexorable and long-overdue convergence, having a sense of the trajectory of the SEL side should help practitioners, theorists, and researchers appreciate and put to better use the assets and limitations of the field. Because much has been written about the evolution of moral and character education (e.g., Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006; Lickona, 1976, 1991; Nucci, 1989; Wynne & Ryan, 1997; see also the present volume), the following will emphasize the development of SEL and elucidate its underlying bases. Again, it must be noted that in contexts with differing sources of moral authority, focal values and requisite social-emotional skills might vary from those that will be the implicit focus here. The considerations we present are relevant across particular sets of moral principles or interpersonal skills. In subsequent sections, we present thoughts about the implications of this background for linkages with moral and character education.

THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

Traditional views of the development and evaluation of SEL point to some of the first known writings about social and emotional skills (e.g., Aristotle’s *The Nicomachean Ethics*, cited in Goleman, 1995, as quoted above) and the increasing amount of interest and research on social or emotional intelligences over the past 150 years. They typically begin with Darwin’s exploration of the importance of emotion in evolution, in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, 2001). They also usually cite Thorndike’s proposal of a “social intelligence” component—an ability to comprehend others and relate to them effectively—to overall intelligence (Elias, 2001), although proponents did not find much subsequent support for Thorndike’s ideas. Sternberg’s work (1985) on what he then referred to as “practical intelligence” found more empirical support for such a concept, and Gardner’s research (1993) on multiple intelligences delineated and supported two distinct and related components—intrapersonal (emotional) and interpersonal (social) intelligences. The Consortium on the School-based Promotion of Social Competence (1994) emphasized the importance of integrating cognition, affect, and behavior to address developmental and contextual challenges and tasks. Prior to this point, the study of intelligence, emotion, and social relations tended to be separate; with Sternberg and Gardner’s work, it became clear that these phenomena were related to one another (Mayer, 2001), although others (e.g., Piaget and Dewey) had noted these interrelationships much earlier.

By the late 1980s, much evidence supported the idea of integrated social and emotional skills. Mayer and Salovey played a seminal role in rigorously defining and finding empirical support for “emotional intelligence,” as it is understood currently. In the first half of the 1990s, they produced a series of reviews and studies that presented support for emotional intelligence, provided a strict definition for the construct and a measure for assessing it, and demonstrated its validity and reliability as an intelligence (Mayer, 2001). Goleman popularized the concept and added some social components to the definition in his book, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995). Shortly thereafter, Reuven Bar-On’s (Bar-On, Maree, & Elias, 2007) extensive work in defining and assessing emotional intelligence came to prominence. Table 13.1 contains a summary of the way in which these founders of SEL defined the key skills and attitudes comprising the construct.

TABLE 13.1
Primary Conceptualizations of Social-Emotional Learning/Emotional Intelligence Skills

The Salovey and Mayer (Brackett and Geher, 2006) approach to emotional intelligence

1. Accurately perceive emotions in oneself and others and in one's ambient context,
2. Use emotions to facilitate thinking or that might inhibit clear thinking and task performance,
3. Understand emotional meanings and how emotional reactions change over time and in response to other emotions, and
4. Effectively manage emotions in themselves and in others ("social management")

Bar-On's five key components (1997):

1. Be aware of, to understand and to express our emotions and feelings non-destructively.
2. Understand how others feel and to use this information to relate with them.
3. Manage and control emotions so they work for us and not against us.
4. Manage change, and to adapt and solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature.
5. Generate positive affect to be self-motivated.

Goleman (1998) and CASEL's (2005) five clusters of SEL, each of which is linked to a collection of skills:

1. Self-awareness.
2. Social awareness.
3. Self-management.
4. Responsible decision-making.
5. Relationship management.

CASEL's Elaboration of Social and Emotional Learning/Emotional Intelligence Skills (Kress & Elias, 2006):

1. Self-Awareness
 - Recognizing and naming one's emotions
 - Understanding the reasons and circumstances for feeling as one does
 - Recognizing and naming others' emotions
 - Recognizing strengths in, and mobilizing positive feelings about, self, school, family, and support networks
 - Knowing one's needs and values
 - Perceiving oneself accurately
 - Believing in personal efficacy
 - Having a sense of spirituality
2. Social Awareness
 - Appreciating diversity
 - Showing respect to others
 - Listening carefully and accurately
 - Increasing empathy and sensitivity to others' feelings
 - Understanding others' perspectives, points of view, and feelings
3. Self-Management and Organization
 - Verbalizing and coping with anxiety, anger, and depression
 - Controlling impulses, aggression, and self-destructive, antisocial behavior
 - Managing personal and interpersonal stress
 - Focusing on tasks at hand
 - Setting short- and long-term goals
 - Planning thoughtfully and thoroughly
 - Modifying performance in light of feedback
 - Mobilizing positive motivation
 - Activating hope and optimism
 - Working toward optimal performance states
4. Responsible Decision-Making
 - Analyzing situations perceptively and identifying problems clearly
 - Exercising social decision-making and problem-solving skills
 - Responding constructively and in a problem-solving manner to interpersonal obstacles
 - Engaging in self-evaluation and reflection
 - Conducting oneself with personal, moral, and ethical responsibility

(continued)

TABLE 13.1
Continued

5. Relationship Management

- Managing emotions in relationships, harmonizing diverse feelings and viewpoints
 - Showing sensitivity to social-emotional cues
 - Expressing emotions effectively
 - Communicating clearly
 - Engaging others in social situations
 - Building relationships
 - Working cooperatively
 - Exercising assertiveness, leadership, and persuasion
 - Managing conflict, negotiation, refusal
 - Providing, seeking help
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In a parallel track, educators were becoming increasingly interested in applying the ideas of social and emotional intelligence in educational environments. John Dewey (1933) was among the first to propose that empathy and effective interpersonal management are important skills to be conveyed and practiced in the educational environment. It was not until the early 1990s, however—contemporaneous with the work of Mayer and Salovey—that the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was founded to apply the construct of emotional intelligence and its related theory, research, and practice to schools and education.

As Zins, Elias, and Greenberg (2007) explain, the term “social–emotional learning” was derived from a journey that has been driven by concepts, research, and practice. It began with a shift in thinking from prevention of mental illness, behavioral–emotional disorders, and problem behaviors as a goal and moved toward the broader goal of promoting social competence. Looking at the prior literature on social competence, the skills needed for sound functioning in schools, and at the emerging research on the importance of emotions, CASEL drew on Goleman’s (1995) formulation of key SEL skill clusters and expanded them (Table 13.1). Indeed, in selecting the name, “social and emotional learning,” CASEL recognized that it was essential to capture the aspect of education that links academic achievement with the skills necessary for succeeding in school, in the family, in the community, in the workplace, and in life in general. Equipped with such skills, attitudes, and beliefs, young people are more likely to make healthy, caring, ethical, and responsible decisions, and to avoid engaging in behaviors with negative consequences such as interpersonal violence, substance abuse and bullying (Elias, Zins, Weissberg et al., 1997; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000).

Such learning is important to students because emotions affect how and what they learn, and caring relationships provide a foundation for deep, lasting learning (Elias, Zins, Weissberg et al., 1997). In a climate of ever-growing concern about academic achievement, attending to emotions was emerging as a matter of at least as great an emphasis as cognition and behavior. In a landmark book that brought together the research evidence about SEL and academic success from all fields, Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg (2004) concluded that successful academic performance by students depends on (1) students’ social-emotional skills for participatory competence; (2) their approaching education with a sense of positive purpose; and (3) the presence of safe, supportive classroom and school climates that foster respectful, challenging, and engaging learning communities. It is the totality of these conditions and the processes they imply that are now best referred to collectively as social-emotional learning, rather than continuing to view SEL as linked entirely, or even mainly, to a set of skills.

The logic model behind this view, in simplified form, is that (1) students become open to learning in environments that are respectful, orderly, safe, academically challenging, caring, involving/engaging, and well-managed; (2) effective SEL-related programs emphasize, impart, and develop key attitudes and skills that are essential for reducing emotional barriers to learning and successful interpersonal interactions; and (3) reducing emotional barriers to effective learning and interaction is essential for low performing students to learn academic content and skills deeply and for all students to reach their potential and apply what they learn in school to life inside and out of school.

CASEL's research (CASEL, 2005; Elias, Zins, Weissberg, et al., 1997; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Greenberg et al., 2003; Weissberg, Durlak, Taylor, Dymnicki, & O'Brien, 2007) has continued to show that schools of social, emotional, and academic excellence generally share five main characteristics:

1. A school climate that articulates specific themes, character elements, or values, such as respect, responsibility, fairness, and honesty, and conveys an overall sense of purpose for attending school;
2. Explicit instruction and practice in skills for participatory competence;
3. Developmentally appropriate instruction in ways to promote health and prevent problems;
4. Services and systems that enhance students' coping skills and provide social support for handling transitions, crises, and conflicts; and
5. Widespread, systematic opportunities for positive, contributory service.

These schools send messages about character, about how students should conduct themselves as learners and members of common school communities, about the respectful ways staff members should conduct themselves as educators, and about how staff and parents should conduct themselves as supporters of learning. In other words, SEL competencies are developed and reinforced not by programs but rather in the context of supportive environments, which lead to asset-building, risk reduction, enhanced health behaviors, and greater attachment to and engagement in school.

In CASEL's definition of SEL, one can see that the theoretical understanding of how children learn key social competencies has become more sophisticated than earlier views of social skills acquisition. First, there is recognition that social performance involves the coordination of affect, cognition, and behavior, and that these areas, as well as their coordination, develop over time. Second, skill acquisition is the ongoing outcome of processes that depend on nurturance, support, and appreciation in various environmental contexts. Third, much is now realized about the many accumulating influences on students, not all of which are consistent with the development of SEL skills. There is pressure and modeling in the mass culture for impulsive behavior, quick decision making, short-term goal setting, extreme emotions, and violent problem solving. Students' acquisition and internalization of life skills occurs in a maelstrom of many competing forces of socialization and development.

Research has gone beyond showing that SEL is fundamental to children's health, ethical development, citizenship, academic learning, and motivation to achieve (Zins, Weissberg, et al., 2004). It has also demonstrated the impact of systematic attempts to improve children's SEL. As they have evolved in the last decades of the 20th century and the early 21st century, these interventions have focused on fostering students' social and emotional development.

Generally, they are premised on the understanding that students experience the educational process as a social one; learning is facilitated (or hindered) by relationships and interactions

with teachers or peers. In general, a student who has more developed social “intelligence” will have improved abilities to navigate the challenges and processes of learning than one who does not. For example, a child who has poor understanding of how to effectively manage human relationships may be unable to communicate her needs to teachers or to others in the classroom environment; this will likely impede her learning. SEL curricula are also based on the growing body of evidence that students’ emotional experiences affect their learning and their demonstration of that learning (Damasio, 1994; Patti & Tobin, 2003). This is most effectively illustrated by contrasting the differences in information acquisition between a child who is enthusiastic about a topic and one who is not, or the differences in test results between a child who can channel her anxiety about an exam into better information recall and a child who is overwhelmed by his fear of assessment. Although SEL programs seek to develop social and emotional “intelligences,” these aspects are not viewed as fixed traits in that field. Instead, SEL programs aim to help students develop a set of skills that can help them better manage their own emotional state and their interactions with other people in the educational environment in order to maximize their learning experiences (Elias, Kress, & Hunter, 2006). Progress toward these goals is made most quickly and enduringly when programs adopt a two-pronged approach to SEL: intervention components aimed at individual students *and* at the school climate in general. Overall, it is critical that individual students learn about, practice, and regularly perform new thinking and behavior patterns in their everyday interactions at school. Yet it is equally important that SEL programs help teachers and administrators develop their own social and emotional skills and incorporate SEL paradigms and techniques on a broad level throughout the school (e.g., within the disciplinary and evaluative structure) (Elias et al., 2001; Elias, Zins, Weissberg, et al., 1997; Elias, O’Brien, & Weissberg, 2006). As these processes take hold, the classroom and school become places where social and emotional matters are openly discussed, valued, and practiced. When the educational culture changes this way, it is much more likely that any new skills being attempted by students will be noticed and reinforced.

Research suggests that SEL curricula designed in such a way have demonstrated positive effects not only on school-related attitudes and behavior, but also on students’ academic achievement and test scores (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). Weissberg et al.’s (2007) meta-analysis of 270 studies of school-based SEL preventive interventions found that they had a significant impact on social-emotional skill performance, positive self-perceptions, school bonding, and adherence to social norms, with effect sizes ranging from .22 to .61. Findings related to reduced negative behavior, school violence, and substance use were sustained through a follow-up period of at least six months. Perhaps most salient in the current education climate is that SEL-related programs showed significant impact on academic achievement test scores (mean effect size = .37) and grades (mean effect size = .25).

Such a history hints at but obscures the contributions of three streams of influence on the definition of SEL, its implementation in school-based contexts, and its connection to moral and character education. Understanding this aspect of SEL’s background is important for seeing the converging and, we believe, intertwining pathways that will increasingly define these fields.

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY AND THE COGNITIVE REVOLUTION

Social Learning Theory (SLT; e.g., Bandura, 1973; Rotter, 1954) had enormous impact on the methods and techniques of SEL programs. It was derived from work in clinical and personality psychology and an appreciation of how cognitive factors led to the persistence of behaviors that appeared on the surface to be undesirable and even counterproductive. Rotter, a seminal theorist

in this field, studied under Alfred Adler and was highly influenced by his work with children. “Striving for superiority,” “style of life,” and “fictional finalism” are all essentially cognitive schemas that presage much of the later work in cognitive-behavioral theory. Bandura, in particular, observed how traditional, purely behavioral learning theories were unable to explain how humans acquired novel, unrehearsed, and unreinforced behavior from watching other individuals’ actions (Bandura, 1973). SLT therefore focused not only on the impact of modeling and observation but also the way in which individuals draw from their experiences to create expectancies about interactions with others. These expectancies, in turn, exercise strong influence on behavior.

Bandura (1973) referred to aspects of this process with his concept of the reciprocal interaction between behavior and environment; in contrast to existing, behavioral learning theories that focused primarily on how environmental cues elicited and reinforced behavioral patterns, he argued and found evidence to support how an individual’s aggressive behavior actually creates an environment that elicits further aggression. From an SLT point of view, solutions to aggressive behavior include not only helping an individual develop new behavioral patterns but also sharpening the individual’s observations about the contingencies in the environment and changing the environmental contingencies that support aggressive behavior in the first place (Bandura, 1973).

Bandura applied SLT to the understanding and treatment of aggressive behavior (Bandura, 1973); it is this application that is of most relevance to SEL programs. For example, he argued that, without providing a child with more effective skills, it would be very unlikely that her aggressive or antisocial behavior would change because her environment would inevitably, if infrequently, reinforce it. He also proposed that preventive or treatment programs be implemented in children’s natural settings, carried out by individuals with whom the aggressive person would have extensive contact (e.g., teachers or parents). This would increase the likelihood that new behavior patterns would be elicited and reinforced by the individual’s everyday context. Further, the importance of shared expectancies in SLT indicated that aggression was frequently a by-product of how groups of people interacted; because of this, Bandura suggested that entire groups receive violence-prevention interventions so that the social forces enabling aggressive behavior would be reduced even as individual behaviors were being addressed (Bandura, 1973). These insights informed SEL’s emphasis on providing students with new skills directly while simultaneously altering the educational context so that it supports more socially and emotionally “intelligent” behavior.

Bandura’s insights into the role of modeling in human learning and behavior also had a significant impact on intervention work. SEL curricula implicitly and explicitly rely on modeling by both adults in educational environments (e.g., teachers and other school staff across aspects of the school day and routine) and by peers (e.g., fellow students or mentors) to convey and reinforce newly acquired social and emotional skills. Bandura demonstrated how individuals could acquire new, more prosocial behavior patterns through observing others, a process that could be facilitated by the strength of the observer’s motivation to pay attention to the model’s actions, the ability of the observer to focus on salient aspects of the modeled behavior, and the observer’s familiarity with and use of all of the component responses comprising the modeled behavioral chain (Bandura, 1973). These and other facilitators and prompts are well integrated into effective SEL programming. Programs will, for example, put incentives in place for students to observe and practice new, more skilled behavior, provide structured observation opportunities to help students focus on a specific set of skills or responses, and help teachers structure students’ practice of new skills so that they can put together complex chains of socially or emotionally skilled behavior and responses (Elias & Clabby, 1992).

Generalization, in SLT, is a function of creating an expectancy about the likely desirable outcome of a behavior and its value. For this reason, the overall climate of the classroom and school (i.e., the normative structure) is important to sustaining prosocial behavior. Behaviors

must reach a certain threshold of repetition, reinforcement, and salience if they are to be internalized. As more influences in the environment provide messages contrary to the program, the “dosage” of whatever an SEL (or moral or character education program) wishes to convey in attitudes and skills will have to be higher before an intervention’s message is received and remembered. Hence, SLT recognized the powerful role presented by the ecological environment while also keeping in focus that it is the individual’s interpretations of the environmental contingencies (i.e., expectancies) that would ultimately be the most powerful influence on behavior.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

Many intervention approaches within SEL draw on cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) as the basis of their pedagogy. This approach, in turn has SLT as its underpinning. It was a short road from SLT’s focus on expectancies and the role of modeling to the observation of Meichenbaum (1977) and others that these expectancies were in consciousness and therefore likely to be “kept in mind” and influence behavior through the process of self-talk. Behavior founded on faulty premises—misunderstandings of the social environment, extreme thinking about how the world works or one’s place in the world, or strong but misplaced emotions, such as depression due to pessimism (all of which can be found in Adler’s theories)—is likely to be categorized as maladaptive or pathological.

A key premise for CBT is that problematic patterns of cognition, affect, and behavior are learned and therefore, can be replaced with more adaptive patterns learned in their stead. One area of CBT, social problem solving (Chang, D’Zurilla, & Sanna, 2004) captures best the two main strands of CBT that have contributed to SEL. First, problem solving has become a core part of CBT (Kazdin & Weisz, 2003) and is at the foundation of the vast majority of SEL approaches (CASEL, 2005). While there are differences in exact procedure and nomenclature (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994, use the term, “social information processing”), the common features involve a process of identifying a problematic situation, addressing the feelings related to it, putting a problem into words, defining a goal, generating multiple options, analyzing their potential consequences for short and long-term implications for self and others, making a choice, planning and rehearsing how to carry out that choice, taking the necessary action, and reflecting on what happened and what can be learned from it.

Spivack and Shure (1974) were pioneers in recognizing that what they called “interpersonal-cognitive problem solving” need not be taught only to individuals in clinical settings. Rather, a preventive effect could be achieved by building these skills on a universal basis, in the regular context of school and family life. Such skills would make it less likely that maladaptive patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting would arise? Others, such as Ojemann (1964), had arrived at similar conclusions and in the 1970s, programs to build these essential social-cognitive competencies began to be developed and expanded. These programs were built from the outset on a strong research base, and empirically demonstrated their effectiveness not only in preventing forms of psychopathology but more generally in enhancing wellness (Cicchetti, Rappaport, Sandler, & Weissberg, 2000; Elias & Clabby, 1992).

At this point, the SEL pedagogy and the CBT pedagogy have many points of convergence. Both emphasize the use of real-life problems but also recognize the benefits of thinking through how to handle hypothetical situations before dealing with affectively charged present situations. Both emphasize the processes of brainstorming, goal-setting, observation/modeling and practice/rehearsal of new behaviors, anticipation of potential obstacles and planning for them, reflection on experiences, and the use of prompts and cues as an aide to generalization. It is essential, from an SEL point of view, to recognize that generalization is viewed as occurring through skill appli-

cation and repeated mastery, in a large number of contexts, and over a long period of time. This derives directly from the SLT point of view that behavior is situational and that the strength of generalized expectancies derives from the number and salience of situations in which a particular behavior or set of behaviors has proven to be valuable.

There are powerful implications of this from an intervention point of view. Effective SEL requires congruence between any school-based program and the overall climate and environment and norms of the school. Interventions confined to one class period once or twice per week for even a whole year are not likely to be as effective as approaches that are coordinated across aspects of the school day, carried out and prompted continuously, and continued across multiple years to have a cumulative effect. It is noteworthy in this light that interventions emerging from the values education/clarification/affective education movements, begun around the same time, did not focus extensively on this set of implications. They were derived from a different set of pedagogical assumptions, which we will touch upon later.

THE ROLE OF AFFECT

SEL as a movement grew out of the growing interest in emotional intelligence popularized by Daniel Goleman (1995), although, as noted, the term preceded his usage of it. Nevertheless, Goleman's work placed a strong focus on the role of emotion, or affect, in everyday behavior—reasoning, decision-making, and the like. Others had preceded him: Significantly, Piaget, in his relatively under-noticed work, *Intelligence and Affectivity* (1981), spoke clearly about the integration of affect and cognition and was pessimistic about attempts to disentangle them. He saw emotions as having directive and energizing functions, among others, and as vital for the implementation of intelligent action in the world. Therefore Goleman's emphasis was not new, but his renewal of it was accompanied by a resurgence of research in the area and a strong interest in emotion research on the part of significant funders.

The work of another individual, Carolyn Saarni (2007), has illuminated our understanding of the role of affect in everyday life. Saarni focused on the development of emotional competence well before “emotional intelligence” became defined, and her work is an essential part of that field's development. Her view of the eight skills of emotional competence takes a sophisticated developmental/transactional perspective (Saarni, 2007):

1. Awareness of emotional states, including the possibility of experiencing multiple emotions at levels we may not be aware of consciously at all times.
2. Skill in discerning and understanding the emotions of others, based on situational and expressive cues that have a degree of cultural consensus as to their emotional meaning.
3. Skill in using the vocabulary of emotion available in one's subculture and the link of emotional with social roles.
4. Capacity for empathic involvement in others' emotional experiences.
5. Skill in understanding that inner emotional states need not correspond to outer expression, both in ourselves and others, and how our emotional expression may impact on others.
6. Skill in adaptive coping with aversive emotions and distressing circumstances by using self-regulatory strategies and by employing effective problem-solving strategies for dealing with problematic situations.
7. Awareness that relationships are largely defined by how emotions are communicated within the relationships.

8. Capacity for emotional self-efficacy, including viewing our emotional experience as justified and in accord with our moral beliefs.

As one can see, Saarni's view of emotional competence contains bridges to social problem solving and other cognitive skills, much as problem solving can contain bridges to the affective domain. Her final skill contains a link to the moral domain, recognizing the directive and contextual influence that moral beliefs provide.

Indeed, researchers such as Adolphs and Damasio (2001) now view our emotional capacities as being among the earliest human capacities to develop and essential for sound decision making and relationship formation. They derive this in part from examinations of the consequences of isolated frontal lobe damage that prevents the integration of emotional information into everyday life. Forgas and Wyland (2006) conclude that rather than seeing emotion as deleterious to rational judgment, affect is better viewed as highly influential on what we think, what we do, and how we understand and use social information. In essence, affect is an integral part of our lives.

That said, its potency and perhaps its evolutionary primacy often lead individuals to experience difficulties in interpreting and managing emotional influences—what Forgas and Wyland (2006), refer to as “affective blindness” (p. 81)—and wanting certain things passionately for reasons difficult to discern or, in some cases, reasons that are faulty and harm-inducing. Of course, clinicians know well that affective experiences can sometimes become overgeneralized, exaggerated, or otherwise take on disproportionate influence on behavior; usually this is best interpreted as an attempt to preserve the individual from some anticipated harm. Regardless, in highly emotionally charged situations, people often suffer a decline in their ability to carefully and in detail examine all ramifications of the likelihoods and consequences of potential actions.

Forgas and Wyland (2006) suggest that congruence of affect, cognition, and behavior best takes place when affect is well integrated into the process. Their Affective Infusion Model implies that affective information is less salient when situations require less processing and are more likely to elicit a pre-existing or familiar response. In more novel situations, where inputs and considerations are more complex and scripts are less clearly applicable, we often have the most personal investment and so affect becomes an essential part of our understanding and response. Of course, how one creates schemas or scripts is not a matter of uniformity, and so one is left coming away most strongly with the view that affect is going to be a part of everything we do, to a greater or lesser extent, and there will be situations where affect may lead us astray, others where affect should be more prominently attended to, and many that fall in between. As Damasio (1994) puts it, feelings are not external to how we function and are best relied upon as both internal and external guides to empathy, to understanding the perspective and feelings of others, and to our decisions and their impact on self and others. This point of view has not been lost on those who are concerned about moral and character education and the process by which students make moral decisions and take corresponding action.

Nucci (2001), for example, advocates for a better understanding of how emotion is integrated into moral judgments. “Affect is part and parcel of adaptive intelligence” (p. 109); he argues that it is not useful to see it as somehow having any primacy. He notes that, from an evolutionary psychology point of view, basic emotional schemas and quick, automatic responses have a place in interpersonal relations, especially during infancy and early childhood, but become less adaptive in the typical social environments one encounters later in life. Gradually, the developmental challenge involves the integration of affect into cognitive systems.

Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) point out that emotions appear to be stored as part of our complex representation of events. Consistent with Turiel's (1983) idea of moral understanding not necessarily being uniform across all life domains, they find that the nature of the affective charge associated with an event, situation, or decision, whether due to past or current circum-

stances, influences the way in which information available in a given context is used or valued. Nucci (2001) reviews data suggesting that some children who are aggressive believe, based on the history of their experiences and their interpretation of situations, that they have a right to act this way. In other words, their moral code is constructed in such a way to as to elicit none of the warning bells that might go off in other youth to inhibit their aggressive actions. So while cultures and contexts often provide strong socialization around social conventions and moral guideposts, individual and subgroup circumstances, particularly in valued microsystems (e.g., families, peer groups), can create competing frameworks. Thus, predicting emotional responses in groups may be easier than doing so for individuals.

Bechara, Damasio, and Bar-On (2007) provide an important explanatory mechanism for this phenomenon based on recent anatomical research into the emotions. They identify two key processes that mediate between an observed event and the emotional reaction and experience of the individuals involved. Secondary Inducers of emotion are activated by memories, thoughts, and feelings related to an experienced emotional state. As these Secondary Inducers are brought into awareness, they influence our emotional responses. The other process is Second-Order Mapping. The First-Order Map refers to the most immediate awareness of a feeling as a neurological representation of bodily changes resulting from an encounter with an emotional object, event, or situation, either experienced or recalled. Second-Order Mapping is a re-representation of this feeling filtered through a consideration of the relationship between the individual and the emotion-inducing circumstance and the integration of this information with the present bodily state and the surrounding world.

In essence, emotional reactions are the product of some degree of instantaneous and reflected representations of circumstances in their relational context, but many parameters of the specifics are highly nuanced and individualized. Bechara et al. (2007) report that lesion and injury studies are providing increasing neurological localization of these functions and show clearly how impaired judgment, failure to learn from experience, and compromised decision making in everyday life situations result from failures in the emotional integration system. Particularly instructive are their recommendations for what parents and educators can do to build emotional competence:

1. Foster awareness of bodily sensations and when they arise.
2. Track connections between feelings and emotional labels.
3. Develop mechanisms for controlling emotions.
4. Integrate emotions constructively into problem solving and decision making.

These recommendations are, and have been, standard parts of SEL approaches for many years (as well as increasingly reflected in moral and character education practices), anticipating the findings derived from neurobiology. However, for the introduction of efforts into mainstream socialization practices of schools, considerations beyond those at the individual level are clearly necessary (Dalton et al., 2007), and another theoretical perspective, that of community psychology and social ecology, provides this.

A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY-SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

SEL theorists and researchers have come to agree that SEL interventions seek to change not only direct, immediate reinforcement contingencies that maintain antisocial behavior, but also aim to alter entire systems through interventions that target classrooms—teachers and students alike—as well as schools, districts, and communities. This understanding began in part with Lewin's

field theory and his interest in examining the enormous variety of psychological processes that operate within a particular situation at a given time, and how an individual sits in the midst of an incredibly complex system of interactions between forces at multiple levels (Lewin, 1951). Lewin was among the first to assert that behavior was at least as strongly influenced by context as by individual predilections. This view was expanded by a community psychology/social-ecology perspective, which sought to define the multiple, interactive, and dynamic levels of systems within which individuals develop and adapt (Belsky, 1984; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Dalton et al., 2007).

Children's social-emotional skills (and moral values) emerge out of an interaction with parents and other caregivers and family members, educators, medical personnel, and others whose responsibilities include navigating children through the socialization process. However, these interactions are framed by the nature of the formal and informal groups and organizations in which these interactions occur, the neighborhoods and communities within which they reside, and the overall zeitgeist that is communicated through the mass media. While social ecology theory is clear that small-group interactions are the most powerful developmental influence, the way in which digital media invade lives of families means that elements of the zeitgeist have greater potency than when events seemed more distant (Dalton et al., 2007). The implications of this are that the influence of SEL programs must be placed in a larger ecological frame. Interventions must be more encompassing and their impact will be related to their congruence with messages being imparted by other sources of influence.

Consider several simple examples. Programs teaching skills in delay of gratification must contend with social influences urging individuals to "just do it" and to take quick, and often violent, action. Pressures to be best or first will balance the skill of waiting one's turn. In an example that intersects both SEL and moral education, the discipline and skills needed for studying for a test are too often offset by an almost desperate need to succeed, and hence to cheat. In summary, the community psychology/social ecology perspective has led SEL researchers to embrace the understanding that lasting SEL skill acquisition and concomitant significant improvements in student behavior and academic achievement will be greatest to the extent that entire systems of psychological and social forces are addressed by particular interventions in sustained ways (Elias & Clabby, 1992; Zins, Weissberg, et al., 2004).

Our understanding of the background of SEL shows its progression toward an ecological, developmental, and systemic conceptualization of how skills are acquired and maintained and the nexus within which interventions work. We now proceed to examine ways to understand the current and potential pathways of convergence between SEL and moral and character education.

AREAS OF CONVERGENCE BETWEEN MORAL AND CHARACTER EDUCATION AND SEL

In recent years, formal organizations have developed to help codify and promulgate theory, research, and practice in moral and character education and SEL. The Association for Moral Education, founded in 1976, was the first of these (www.amenetwork.org/about/index.htm, retrieved 3/25/07). The Character Education Partnership was founded in 1993 for the purpose of advancing the field in schools: (www.character.org/site/c.gwKUJhNYJrF/b.1046953/k.C538/History.htm, retrieved 3/25/07). And as noted earlier CASEL was founded in 1993 to bring SEL into schools (www.CASEL.org). That said, the time has clearly arrived when the advocacy aspect of these organizations must give way to convergence in the interest of children and advancing their common agendas, as well as the common aspects of their science and practice.

Huitt (2004) points out that fundamental to many approaches to moral and character education, and a criticism of some of Kohlberg's (1984) work, is a reliance on "right thinking" as leading to "right behavior." This has led to a pedagogical emphasis on values clarification/analysis/inculcation. These methods have not found strong empirical support. However, in more recent years, as the field has coalesced under the banner of character education in the context of schools, the connections between "right thinking" and proper behavior have been given greater attention. As noted earlier, this has culminated conceptually in Lickona and Davidson's (2005) distinction between moral character and performance character. They have urged that an emphasis on moral values is necessary but not sufficient to influence behavior and yield enactments that would allow one to be seen as having "good character." The latter, more often than not, is a result of one's actions. Clearly, this requires some theoretical and practical position regarding what behaviors are important for these enactments. As our exercise earlier about thinking of persons who embody different aspects of admirable character implied, such a perspective leads to greater convergence between SEL and moral/character education. SEL, as a set of basic interpersonal competencies, can be used for good or ill; but to be used for good, they must be mastered well—Responsibility, Respect, Honesty, and other desirable aspects of character all require sound SEL competencies; hence, the latter are participatory competencies in the fullest sense of that concept.

We wish to conclude by positing areas that we believe lie at the intersection of moral and character education and SEL. We do this by sharing observations based on a number of schools recognized as exemplary in SEL, character education, and related domains. In doing so, we attempt to align ourselves with others in the field whose past observations have been confirmed subsequently by replicated research.

HOW TO CREATE STRONGER MORAL SENSIBILITIES AND MORALLY GUIDED ACTION IN YOUTH

At the end of *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916) provides a trenchant and prescient view of moral education:

The most important problem of moral education in the school concerns the relationship of knowledge and conduct.... The two theories chiefly associated with the separation of learning from activity, and hence from morals, are those which cut off inner disposition and motive—the conscious personal factor—and deeds as purely physical and outer; and which set action from interest in opposition to that from principle. Both of these separations are overcome in an educational scheme where learning is the accompaniment of continuous activities or occupations that have a social aim and utilize the materials of typical social situations. For under such conditions, the school becomes itself a form of social life, a miniature community and one in close interaction with other modes of associated experience beyond school walls. All education which develops power to share effectively in social life is moral. It forms a character which not only does the particular deed socially necessary but one which is interested in that continuous readjustment which is essential to growth. Interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest. (<http://www.worldwideschool.org/library/books/soc/education/DemocracyandEducation/chap26.html>)

Dewey's observations implicitly speak to the convergence of SEL and moral and character education and point toward, at a conceptual level, ways these approaches can be synergistic. Here, we wish to move toward some modest, pragmatic suggestions that may be thought of as first steps, rather than comprehensive, encompassing integrative approaches. A current individual

with Deweyan insights, James Comer (2003), has made the point that children cannot be taught character, but rather “catch” it from the adults around them and the nature of the interactions they directly and indirectly experience. That said, it is not obvious exactly what children need to be exposed to, or for how long and in what ways, if they are to become “infected” with sound character. Perhaps some readers can recall parents bringing their children to spend time with friends who had measles or chicken pox in the hope that they would get these diseases then, rather than just prior to a family vacation time. Sometimes it worked, but more often, it did not. How, then, can we maximize the likelihood that parents and teachers can expose children to the conditions that are more likely to lead to a strong moral compass and the fortitude to follow the directions being pointed to? SEL has a great deal to say about how well an individual will be able to pick up the cues and experiences being provided by the environmental context. However, even if the skills are functioning well, the question remains about what kinds of experiences are necessary, or desirable, to create a strong moral sense and a commitment to act on that sense?

Of course, as noted earlier, difficult questions must be faced, such as the perceived source of moral authority. Different religions will provide different moral codes, although with a strong degree of overlap. What seems true in studies of modern religious identity development is that moral education is best thought of as a comprehensive system of socialization as opposed to creating religious identity or adherence to a set of values by simply exposing students to a set of individual moral principles. Without a nomological net to connect the moral principles in some way, it is very likely that an individual will deal with morality in a highly pragmatic and contextual manner rather than having an enduring set of guiding principles as the basis for his or her decisions and actions. We believe it is for this reason that Dewey forged such a strong link between democracy (as an organizing principle for morality) and education (as one potent source of moral experiences) and why character education approaches have implicitly or explicitly used frameworks drawn from religious observance as an organizing principle for sets or pillars of values/morals (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The work of Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (2002) offers some guidance with regard to the kinds of experiences and circumstances adults can provide that are likely to build a strong sense of morality and moral action in young people. In their view, morality involves children having sympathy, empathy, and compassion for others. Sympathy refers to the capacity to understand what is happening to others and to take the perspective of being in their shoes. Empathy adds to this an emotional attunement so that one not only understands but also shares the emotions of the others in their situation. Compassion brings in a behavioral component, such that one understands, feels, and is moved to act in a situation. While the distinction between these three emotions is not precise, they serve to underscore that moral action requires something “extra” on the part of an individual and does not follow automatically from being empathic.

In contemporary society, the print and digital media bring many moral situations to individuals’ attention in the comfort of their homes. We see tragedies of hunger and disease, horrors of war and genocide, ravages of natural disasters. In the vast majority of instances, we are not moved to act, though we have a moral objection to what we are seeing and hearing. Brendtro et al. (2002), drawing on the Circle of Courage model, Kessler (2000), drawing on her work on spiritual development in youth, and Elias, Tobias, and Friedlander (2002), drawing on their work with parents, conclude that children need adults in their lives to provide them with a balance of Appreciation, Belonging, Opportunities and Support for Competencies, and Contributions. In essence, to educate or parent children in an emotionally intelligent way (i.e., so that they have a strong moral compass, an orientation toward moral action, and the SEL skills to carry out their action effectively), caregiving adults must treat children in ways that will foster what is needed.

A CULMINATING DISCUSSION: THE CONVERGENCE OF SEL AND MORAL AND CHARACTER EDUCATION

Consider the case of an individual who is morally committed to an extreme cause, or at least one viewed as such by many. Such an individual receives a form of moral education that includes the key elements presented above. This person is shown much tangible appreciation for the impending action(s), often coming at least in small part from a very highly regarded, even divine, authority figure. There is a clear process of indoctrination into the special group, including rituals and procedure (often in the name of secrecy and security), so that a strong sense of belonging (and in-group/out-group boundaries) is felt. Certain competencies are emphasized, training provided, and opportunities for their use are delineated. Support is also given while competencies are being developed, as well as up to the point of use. Finally, the individual is imbued throughout with a sense of being a meaningful contributor to a larger cause. The actions being asked are far from selfish; perhaps the magnitude of the contribution is portrayed in proportion to the personal sacrifice the individual is being asked to make.

While there are many other influences that can be added to this analysis (such as local contextual or idiosyncratic elements), we believe the considerations we have mentioned are worth examining in future research and as guides to practice. SEL is a parallel movement to moral education in that it is about the process of learning more than the content of learning. That is, educating for morality and educating for social-emotional competence, as opposed to educating about morality and about social-emotional competence. SEL has evolved from skills via programs, to participatory competencies via settings. These competencies are not neutral, however; they are aligned with fundamental, common values and attributes of good character and sound moral development.

The education system has the responsibility of preparing children for citizenship in a democracy and for leading a morally-guided life. It is not schools' responsibility alone to do this, but since schools' ability to educate all children and move them forward depends on their climates being places where children can "catch" character, they cannot "wait" for other responsible agents to act.

Thus, converging elements of SEL and moral and character education are to (1) provide a deep and visceral understanding of moral character by organizing schools as moral, caring communities of character with clear values, and (2) ensure that children are given opportunities and competences to enact their moral character in deep and meaningful ways by becoming active participants in the moral community of the school. Thus imprinted, children will want to seek out such communities as places to live and work and worship, as well as create in their homes communities in which to raise children. This is the promise of SEL and its connection to moral education, contained in this abbreviated logic model: civil schools, engaged students, prepared and participatory citizens of character.

CONCLUSION

From at least the time of the Bible and Aristotle, people have wondered about humankind's potential to learn more effective ways of managing emotional experiences and social relationships; SEL and moral and character education offer at least one possible route to achieve this goal. We have shown that two philosophical positions underlying moral education and SEL each has something to learn from the other. Proponents of SEL have acknowledged that skills require direction and that maladaptive direction, such as might come from extremist or criminal ideolo-

gies, can be pursued effectively through SEL competencies. Moral and character educators are recognizing that it takes more than volition and intention to act with sound character. Sometimes certain behaviors are needed to assert one's values when the mainstream is not in agreement. In other instances, lack of skills in affective awareness or problem solving may lead to an inability to see or take advantage of opportunities for moral action that may exist in one's environment. Proponents of both views now see the need to go beyond a focus on programs and content and look at the way in which individuals develop in the context of their ecological environment over time and how that environment can be modified to impart skills and values that can lead children toward productive futures.

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