We propose that social psychological findings on the intuitive bases of moral judgment have broad implications for moral education. The “five foundations theory of intuitive ethics” is applied to explain a longstanding rift in moral education as an ideological disagreement about which moral intuitions should be endorsed and cultivated. The Kohlbergian moral reasoning side has sought to limit the domain of moral education to Harm and Fairness-related moral concerns, whereas character education approaches have tried also to cultivate intuitions concerning the Ingroup, Authority and Purity foundations. Recent attempts to merge the two lines of moral education have not fully addressed this ideological rift, for example by delineating how a single approach could reconcile opposing group- and individual-focused conceptions of moral education. We conclude that psychological research on moral intuition offers a descriptive account of human morality that reveals problems with attempts to create a normative basis for moral education from either side of the ideological divide.

Keywords: Moral education, moral intuition, ideology, character education

Ideology and Intuition in Moral Education

“The significance of moral education is found in its articulation of the moral culture we adults idealize. It is a mirror of the moral culture we prize and thus seek to pass on to succeeding generations” (Hunter, 2000, p.9).

How can two reliably positive words—“moral” and “education”—become so contentious and divisive when put together? We all want children to grow into good people, but ideas of this “good” vary considerably. For some, good children are obedient, respectful and patriotic; for others, they are free-thinking, independent and egalitarian. How has the field of moral education reconciled this diversity of objectives? For the most part it hasn’t. Contrasting views of the good have been at such odds historically that two separate fields—character education and moral reasoning education¹—have developed to address them.

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¹ We use the term “character education” to refer to an entire line of related approaches, including virtue ethics, Christian ethics, and character development; we use the term “moral reasoning education” to refer to the primarily Kohlbergian line of approaches, sometimes referred to as rational moral development or simply moral development.

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When we argue about what kind of moral education is best for children, we are really arguing about a more fundamental question: what is morality? In this paper we suggest that it is this fundamental question that has divided educators and parents along ideological lines, and that advances in moral education theory and practice will require that we address the question explicitly. We propose that recent social psychological work on the importance of affective and automatic processes in all aspects of social life has broad implications for answering this fundamental question.

We begin by proposing a working definition of morality that is equally hospitable to liberal and conservative ideologies. Next, we give a brief overview of the ideological histories of the two dominant approaches to moral education. We then apply a recent theory of the “five foundations of intuitive ethics” (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2007) to explain the rift in moral education as an ideological disagreement about which intuitions should be endorsed and cultivated. This will allow us to examine ideological disputes on the sources of moral authority, the role of society and culture in the moral development of the individual, and the possibility of a universal normative theory of morality to guide education.

What is morality?

Philosophers have offered a variety of definitions of morality. Many stress abstract features of moral judgments, such as that they are universal (applying to all who are similarly situated, in any culture); they are prescriptive (telling people what they ought to do); and they generally override other kinds of judgments (such as one’s personal preferences; see, e.g., Hare, 1981). Psychologists have usually drawn on philosophers, but have sometimes added some specification of content to the philosophers’ focus on form. In a widely used definition of the moral domain, Turiel (1983) wrote that the moral domain refers to:

- prescriptive judgments of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other. Moral prescriptions are not relative to the social context, nor are they defined by it. Correspondingly, children's moral judgments are not derived directly from social institutional systems but from features inherent to social relationships—including experiences involving harm to persons, violations of rights, and conflicts of competing claims.

In a later publication, Turiel (2006) explicitly derives this definition from the long enlightenment tradition of emphasizing individual rights and liberties. By linking this definition so explicitly to the heritage of the Enlightenment, Turiel risks making his definition ethnocentric. It well-captures what those of us in the enlightenment tradition take to be morality, but there is no reason to think that Turiel’s definition would be recognized and accepted by people in other traditions.
We believe it is better for social scientists to ignore philosophers and just examine morality as an empirical phenomenon. We think the best approach is a functionalist approach that is anchored in what people and societies are trying to do when they regulate, punish, gossip, praise, and otherwise engage in moral life, broadly speaking. We propose this definition: moral systems are sets of interlocking values, practices, institutions, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate selfishness and make social life possible (Haidt, 2008). We think this is a better starting point than Turiel’s because it can accommodate a broad range of moralities, from very liberal/progressive to very conservative/traditional. We find it helpful to imagine two ideal types, two very different ways that societies have found to reign in selfishness:

**Individualizing moralities** are like the legal system writ small. Society is thought to be composed of individuals, all of whom are equal. The purpose of morality is to protect individuals from harming or exploiting each other, and to empower them to pursue their own goals. Violence, injustice, and oppression are the principal evils. The extension and defense of individual rights is a principal means of combating these evils.

**Binding moralities** are like the nervous system writ large. Society is thought to be composed of institutions and groups, the most basic of which is the family. The purpose of morality is to socialize and reshape individuals who, if left to their own devices, would pursue shallow, carnal, and selfish pleasures. Morality binds and coordinates people to create groups, which are essential for individual and social flourishing. Attacks from outside and subversion from within (by traitors or free-riders) are the principal evils. The military, the police, religion, and an ethic of personal responsibility are principal means of combating these evils.

We believe that educators who stress moral reasoning do so in part because they favor, or implicitly assume, an individualizing approach to morality, whereas educators who are drawn to character education are more likely to favor or assume a binding approach to morality. The divide is therefore not just a disagreement about values; it is a deep ideological divide about the fundamental units of society and the ideal form of the relationships among these units. In many ways these two visions of morality seem mutually exclusive; nevertheless, we will conclude that any moral education that seeks to engage the full moral lives of those to be educated must include both individualizing and binding aspects of morality.

**Two Brief Histories of Moral Education**

**Character Education**

The notion that virtue and moral character should be cultivated in children via formal education can be found in the ancient texts of many cultures, but it is most often traced back to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (350 BCE/1985). For Aristotle, ethics was a practical science, far more difficult, messy and imprecise than theoretical sci-
ences like metaphysics and mathematics. Central to Aristotle’s vision of moral education was his assertion that while intellectual virtue may be learned, moral virtue must be acquired by habit—it is like a muscle that must be built up slowly by guided virtuous action, and that can atrophy with disuse. The habit of virtue tends toward the mean—for instance, courage lies between the deficiencies of cowardice and the excesses of rashness—but the “right” midpoint may be different for different people in different situations (Book II, chapter 6).

This particularist aspect of Aristotle’s thinking was a stark contrast to Plato’s theory of forms, according to which the form of the Good was a transcendent and eternal entity, the same for all people at all times. It also seems to anticipate and repudiate Kant’s (1785/1989) moral absolutism, in which some principles exist apart from circumstances and consequences. For Aristotle, the right moral education depends on the particular deficiencies and excesses of the individual, as gauged by the educator. However, he noted that as a general rule people tend to err toward excesses in pleasure and self-indulgence, and so we should correct for students’ pleasure biases by cultivating self-discipline (Book II, chapter 9). This ancient curriculum of discipline and habits of self-control remains an essential part of most character education approaches today (e.g., Hunter, 2000; Lickona, 1997).

Character educators can also trace many of their ideas back to Emile Durkheim. In Moral Education (1925/1961), Durkheim argued that the two essential elements of morality are the spirit of discipline and the attachment to groups. The spirit of discipline is the cold part of morality that constrains the will of the child and bends her toward duty; the attachment to groups is the warm part that makes the child want to fit in and be a valued group member. Both are essential for binding children to society. Here Durkheim rejects the Kantian view that the will is an autonomous entity that should follow the dictates of reason: “By itself, [Kant] says, the will is autonomous...for a purely rational being, the law then loses its obligatory quality, its coercive aspect...But in fact, we are not beings of pure reason; we have sensibilities that have their own nature and that are refractory to the dictates of reason” (Durkheim, 1925/1961, p. 109). Because of these nonrational sensibilities, children (and adults) need society as the source of moral obligation, duty, and the moral goods to which they can aspire. Consequently, Durkheim’s pedagogical recommendations for moral education rely heavily on punishment and rewards, creating a highly disciplined “society” in the school, and fostering empathy to attach children to their social groups. Durkheim’s influence can be seen in the character- and discipline-focused youth organizations that proliferated in early-20th-century America, such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA and YWCA (Hunter, 2000).

In their review of modern character education programs, Lapsley and Narvaez (2006) offer the following traditional definition of moral character: “a manifestation of certain personality traits called virtues that dispose one to habitual courses of action.” They argue that traits, virtues and habits are conceptually unclear or contro-
versial in the realm of psychological science, and that this has led to an over-emphasis on strict behaviorism in psychological treatments of character education. In the last half of the 20th century, as behaviorism waned and Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental approach came to dominate moral psychology, talk of authority, discipline and even character became passé in academia. Recently, high-profile conservative books like Hunter's (2000) The Death of Character and Bennett's (1993) The Book of Virtues have called for a return to character- and virtue-based moral education in public schools.

Moral Reasoning Education

While character education approaches are diverse and not always aligned with a particular intellectual tradition (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006), the moral reasoning approach is more uniform, with common objectives and philosophical foundations. The movement's central figure, Lawrence Kohlberg, is so central that this line is often referred to as Kohlbergian moral education. Kohlberg's most direct influence was Piaget, but in his search for a universal and normative theory of morality Kohlberg's philosophical roots go back to Kant. In his Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (1785/1989), Kant laid the groundwork for a rational morality guided by a priori truths and not concerned primarily with consequences or utility. For Kant, morality was based on duty to the moral law, but this moral law came from within, not without: the individual's intrinsic sense of right and wrong conferred the obligation, and anything interfering with the autonomy of the will (such as rewards or punishments from others) interfered with true morality. Kant is perhaps the purest expression of the “individualizing” morality we mentioned earlier because it is up to the individual to refrain from doing anything immoral (that is, anything one would not wish to be a universal maxim), creating a purely autonomous will that is “a law unto itself.” If a child refrained from lying out of fear she would be caught, or even out of love for parents who told her that lying is wrong, this would not be a moral act in Kant's system. Only if she rationally chose to tell the truth unconstrained by outside forces would this child have made a moral choice.

In his landmark book The Moral Judgment of the Child (1932/1997), Piaget offered an empirical critique of both Kantian rational morality and the anti-Kantian morality of authority advocated by Durkheim. Piaget observed boys playing games of marbles, and noted a developmental progression of continuous stages in the boys’ application of the games’ rules, from motor to egocentric to cooperation to codification. From these observations Piaget proposed cognitive-developmental stages of children's understanding of rules: “The collective rule is at first something external to the individual and consequently sacred to him; then, as he gradually makes it his own, it comes to that extent to be felt as the free product of mutual agreement and an autonomous conscience” (Piaget,
1932/1997, p. 28). Although not as strictly individualist as Kant, Piaget's constructivist approach to moral development focused attention on the individual child and her ever-increasing sophistication in understanding rules. Thus Piaget was a harsh critic of any moral education that sought to constrain the child with authority and external discipline: “It is, as we said in connection with Durkheim, absurd and even immoral to wish to impose upon the child a fully worked-out system of discipline when the social life of children amongst themselves is sufficiently developed to give rise to that inner submission which is the mark of adult morality” (Piaget, 1932/1997, p. 404).

Piaget's constructivism had a profound influence on Kohlberg, who elaborated Piaget's continuous stages of rule-understanding into distinct cognitive-developmental stages of moral reasoning, still progressing from egocentrism to external authority to internal reasoning about moral principles. In brief, Kohlberg's (1969) stages were as follows: Stage 1—obey rules to avoid punishment; Stage 2—follow reciprocal fairness rules for mutual benefit; Stage 3—internalize rules and conventions of the family and peer group; Stage 4—internalize norms and laws of society; Stage 5—reason about principles behind social laws; Stage 6—reason purely from these principles, regardless of social or cultural norms. For Kohlberg, following Kant (1785/1989) and Rawls (1970), the fundamental principles of moral reasoning were fairness, equality and justice; moral development consisted in increasingly sophisticated understandings of these principles. Kohlberg felt that approaches centering on character, values or virtues did not promote the development of moral reasoning. Rather, Kohlbergian moral education sought to help students move from stage to stage by presenting them with moral dilemmas, discussing them, and requiring students to confront any contradictions between their answers and universal principles of fairness (Kohlberg & Turiel, 1971).

Kohlberg's system faced two major critiques. Gilligan (1982) argued that because Piaget and Kohlberg paid more attention to boys, they concentrated too exclusively on justice and rights. Her observations of girls' development suggested that concerns about harm and welfare should be included in theories of moral development. Owing largely to Gilligan's influence, some care-based moral education approaches were devised that sought to cultivate empathic responses in children (e.g. Noddings, 1992). Turiel (1983) argued that Kohlberg was actually describing two parallel developmental tracks, one reasoning about moral issues (harm, rights, justice) and the other reasoning about conventional issues (local norms, customs). Despite these critiques—and by adapting to them—Kohlberg's approach dominated moral psychology and moral education for more than three decades; this domination has only recently begun to recede (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2005; Krebs & Denton, 2005).

Simplified dichotomous contrasts of the two main approaches to moral education are given in Table 1.
The Moral Foundations of Moral Education Approaches

In the past two decades social psychological studies have revealed that much of our thought processes are fast, automatic, and not available to introspection (see Wilson, 2002; Andersen, Moskowitz, Blair, & Nosek, 2007, for reviews). Implicit or unconscious processes have been found to play a central role in attitudes and stereotypes (Nosek et al., 2007), goals and motives (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007), judgments and decision-making (Shafir, 2007), and social behavior (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002). Haidt’s Social-Intuitionist Model (Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008-a) argues that moral judgments also involve these quick and intuitive processes, and that moral assessments of right and wrong are primarily made intuitively, with moral reasoning often playing a post-hoc justificatory role. In determining what kinds of intuitions guide these moral assessments, Haidt relied on Shweder’s three ethics of Autonomy, Community and Divinity (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra & Park, 1997), which offered a description of the different moral codes found in cultures around the world. Reviewing anthropological and evolutionary literatures, Haidt and Joseph (2004) expanded Shweder’s three ethics, incorporating Fiske’s (1992) four relational models into a theory of innately-prepared moral intuitions. As the theory has developed (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2007) these five moral foundations have been labeled as follows: Harm/care, Fairness/reciprocity, Ingroup/loyalty, Authority/respect, and Purity/sanctity. The Harm foundation covers basic concern for others’ suffering, including the compassion and care Gilligan (1982) stressed. Fairness covers norms of reciprocal...
relations, equality, rights, and justice, encompassing the majority of psychological
treatments of morality since Kohlberg (e.g., Turiel, 2006; Hauser, 2006). Ingroup
covers moral obligations that come along with group membership, such as loyalty
and vigilance against betrayal. Authority covers the moral obligations of hierarchi-
cal relations, such as obedience, respect for superiors, protection of subordinates,
expectations of social role fulfillment, and respect for traditions and institutions.
Purity is based on widespread intuitions about divinity involving feelings of moral
disgust as well as transcendent notions of sacredness, elevation and spiritual purity.
In terms of Shweder's three ethics, the Harm and Fairness foundations map onto the
ethics of individual autonomy, the Ingroup and Authority foundations correspond
to the group-focused ethics of community, and the Purity foundation matches the
ethics of divinity. In terms of our definition of moralities above, Harm and Fairness
are the sole foundations of “individualizing” moralities, while “binding” moralities
are also built on the Ingroup, Authority and Purity foundations.

Haidt and Graham (2007) have proposed that many battles in the culture war can
be explained via the five foundation theory. Specifically, they hypothesized that liberal
morality rests primarily on the Harm and Fairness foundations, while conservative
morality rests on all five. In this view liberals are less likely to recognize Ingroup, Au-
thority and Purity concerns as moral, and so both sides see the other as immoral or
morally ignorant when a specific issue pits these against Harm and Fairness concerns.
For example, liberals may see gay marriage as a moral issue about equal rights (Fair-
ness), and since gays aren’t hurting anyone by getting married, there’s no Harm viola-
tion—that’s the end of the moral story. Conservatives, on the other hand, may make
reference to gays as an outgroup trying to infiltrate the straight institution of marriage
(Ingroug), assert that gay marriage violates the authority of the Bible or church doc-
trine or traditional sex roles (Authority), and try to elicit disgust by linking gay mar-
riage to polygamy and bestiality (Purity; see, for example, the April 7, 2004 Associated
Press interview with Senator Rick Santorum, or Supreme Court Justice Scalia’s dissent
in Lawrence v. Texas). In a series of studies using multiple measures of the foundations,
Graham, Haidt and Nosek (2008) found that liberals tended to endorse and value the
individualizing foundations more than the binding foundations, while conservatives
tended to value all five foundations relatively equally.

These studies found that liberal and conservative individuals were not qualitatively
distinct; the foundations varied continuously along the political spectrum from ex-
treme liberals to extreme conservatives. When we compare the two dominant forms of
moral education, however, the differences are as stark as directly comparing only these
ideological endpoints. While the moral reasoning lineage (from Kant to current neo-
Kohlbergians) is predicated on an exclusive focus on Harm and Fairness, the character
education movement has also tried to incorporate Ingroup, Authority and Purity.

For instance, Lapsley and Narvaez (2006) list the “schedules of virtues” of over a
dozen major character education programs, from the early 20th century to today. This
list reveals virtues related to all five foundations: Harm (compassion, caring, kindness,
helpful, friendly, empathy, peacemaking, love), Fairness (justice, due process, equality, fairness, equality of opportunity), Ingroup (loyalty, teamwork, civic virtue, citizenship, trustworthiness, cooperation), Authority (respect, duty, obedience, law-abiding, respect for school property), and Purity (temperance, self-control, cleanliness, faithful to spouse, self-discipline). In response to Kohlbergian moral education and the “values clarification” movement (in which students choose their own values), character education programs stressed specific virtues that all children need to learn (Hunter, 2000). While each program has a slightly different list of virtues, nearly all of them build on all five foundations, seeing each as necessary to the proper moral formation of children.

In moral reasoning education, however, the moral domain has been explicitly narrowed to two of the five foundations. For Kohlberg and Turiel (1971), justice concerns are the pinnacle of moral maturity, and culture-specific values and virtues such as loyalty, respect, obedience, chastity and cleanliness are rejected as part of an “ethical relativism” that would equate morality with whatever the local community values. Following Kant and Piaget, Kohlberg’s justice-centered morality is both internally constructed by the child and universal across cultures. After a brief period of debate, Gilligan’s (1982) critique was accepted by most Kohlbergians, and so the moral domain was expanded to include Harm as well as Fairness. Turiel’s domain theory took Kohlberg’s non-inclusion of the binding foundations a step further, explicitly rejecting them from the moral domain and classifying them as non-moral convention (Turiel, 1983). This preferencing of the individualizing over the binding foundations can be found in both Piaget’s and Kohlberg’s stages of moral reasoning, in which the highest “postconventional” stages are marked by a valuing of individual welfare and justice above the “conventional” concerns of group cohesion, respect for authority, sanctity, and group-defined decency. The ideological nature of such preferencing has been pointed out before (Emler et al., 1983).

In the Kohlbergian model, someone with a two-foundation morality is simply more morally developed than someone with a five-foundation morality. In the character education model, however, someone with virtues related to only two foundations would be morally deficient. These approaches to moral education tell opposing stories not just about how morality develops, but about what morality is, and about what kinds of creatures we humans are.

Are We Morally Educating Group Members or Individuals?

Theorists often credit Aristotle and Kant with the intellectual grounding of the two basic moral education approaches (cf. Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006), but one could just as easily credit Hobbes and Rousseau for their grounding in implicit theories of hu-
man nature. Hobbes (1651/1994) has come to represent the view that human nature is essentially bad, and that we need the constraints of civilization to keep individuals from running amok in unrestrained self-interest. For Rousseau (1762/1979), the “natural man” was essentially good, and civilization’s effect on the individual child was morally deleterious. The heart of this conflict is a question: Who is moral education for, the group or the individual? The easy answer would be “both,” yet theories of moral education tend to privilege one over the other, with major consequences for their goals and methods.

In ancient Greece, the goal of moral education (and education in general) was training children to be good members of their community; this involved shifting students’ values from individual interests to the interests of the family and the polis. In echoing this model, Durkheim (1925/1961) highlighted the role of the binding foundations in moral education: immersed in group life, children are taught respect for traditions via the authority of the ingroup, an authority that comes to be taken as sacred. The child is largely passive in this model, receiving the rules, norms and values of the group from her teachers and parents. Piaget (1932/1997) rejected this passivity, claiming that the child actively constructs morality through personal discovery and cooperative play; the rejection of passivity in favor of a constructivist view of morality also entails diminishing the importance of group virtues (loyalty, role fulfillment, purity norms) in favor of individual-based/dyadic virtues (justice, equality, compassion). While character education approaches involve considerations of what will work best for the group, moral reasoning approaches focus on the individual reasoner becoming less and less dependent on the group for her ethical decisions.

Of course, group vs. individual is not an either/or choice, nor is it treated as such in the moral education literatures. Character education programs almost unanimously assert that when it comes to moral education, what is good for the group is good for the individual (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). Piaget’s work was foundational for individual reasoner approaches to morality, but he repeatedly stressed the importance of group play, in which children learn to negotiate, cooperate and set rules—his “autonomous” stage was dependent on social interactions with peers. And although Kohlberg’s postconventional stages are marked by reflection on justice principles “prior to society,” development in the early stages is marked by progressing from egocentric understandings to “good son” (Stage 3) and “good society member” (Stage 4) moralities.

Kohlberg is often viewed as a strict individualist who later in his career came to embrace more social aspects of morality in his “just communities” approach (Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989). But in fact Kohlberg’s interests in moral communities date back to time he spent in Israeli kibbutzim in the late 60s. This experience led him to agree with Durkheim that the social group has a powerful social reality and moral force (Kohlberg, 1971a). Kohlberg worked on putting the just communities approach into practice throughout the 70s and 80s, but most of his writings about this experience were not published until after his death in 1987 (Power, Higgins
& Kohlberg, 1989). Kohlberg’s just communities were small groups of students who would have democratic community meetings to debate and decide on matters of school governance and discuss ethical dilemmas. For Kohlberg these meetings would allow the students to develop as individuals and as a community, based on their reasoned reflection on the principles of justice, equality and compassion. However, the just communities approach still leaves out (and often explicitly repudiates) the group-based moral considerations of Ingroup, Authority and Purity, with discussions exclusively based on Harm and Fairness principles. The meetings proceed with rational argument, dilemma discussion and reasoned persuasion, a far cry from some of the group-building exercises of moral communities (see McNeill, 1995, for a discussion of the group cohesion attained by moving together in time). At base, both Kohlberg’s and Piaget’s systems are group-oriented in pedagogy but individualistic in philosophy and ideology. If the goals of the two moral education approaches—shaping moral group members vs. shaping individual moral reasoners—are so fundamentally at odds, how can they be reconciled?

Attempts to Merge these Roads

Many psychologists and education researchers have noted the rift in moral education approaches, and many have offered integrative theories and practices (Narvaez, 2006). In this section we will briefly describe a few recent attempts to merge the character education and moral reasoning lines of moral education into a single approach.

One of the most prominent current approaches in moral education is the positive youth development movement (Berkowitz, Sherblom, Bier & Battistich, 2006). On this view, children’s positive development in one area (say, social relations) will influence and depend upon positive development in another area (say, emotional understanding). Thus positive youth development seeks to unite not only moral reasoning education and character education, but fields extending beyond moral education such as social and emotional learning (CASEL, 2002) and positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Much of the theoretical basis lies in Berkowitz’s theory of “moral anatomy” (Berkowitz, 1997), described as “an attempt to tease apart the constituent parts of moral personhood” (Berkowitz et al., 2006, p. 690). The moral anatomy model makes the important point that moral reasoning is just one of these constituent parts, and should not be seen as the sole locus of moral development; for instance, children must also develop strategies for emotion management and perspective-taking in their classroom interactions (CASEL, 2002).

Despite the apparent breadth of the positive youth development approach, however, all of its constituent parts concentrate on the individual, and on dyadic interactions between individuals (Berkowitz, 1997). Positive youth development interventions take into account the social contexts of family, community, and culture, but remain centered on treating the individual (Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, & Anton, 2005). Character
education is conspicuous as the only part of positive youth development that includes group-based concerns beyond welfare and fairness, and the potential for conflicts between this perspective and a more atomistic individual focus are not addressed. In discussing character education, Berkowitz et al. (2006) raise the possibility that there may be disagreement about what “positive” youth development even means, and simply assert that at least we’re all pro-positive: “the up side of this vagueness is that it is not difficult to find agreement that children’s development should be positive rather than negative” (Berkowitz et al., 2006, p. 684). They go on to speculate that all can agree that things like compassion and fairness would be considered positive and desirable outcomes of youth development. But this side-steps precisely the areas of contention between character education and moral reasoning education—namely, the group-binding moral foundations that character education sees as positive but Kohlbergian approaches see as negative at the higher stages of moral development. Nothing in the positive youth development approach serves to reconcile or adjudicate between the two sides when they hit upon disagreements about whether a particular practice (e.g., discipline), virtue (e.g., chastity, respect for authority) or trait (e.g., obedience) represents a positive or negative direction for youth development.

Lickona’s (1997) “4th and 5th Rs” involves more of the group-level concerns of character education than positive youth development. Lickona proposes a thorough-going character education approach—centered on cultivation of virtues related to all five foundations—but adds Kohlbergian practices such as dilemma discussion and ethical reflection to its methodology. The program seeks to cultivate the virtues on three levels: knowledge, feeling, and behavior, or “head, heart and hand” (Lickona, 1997). To do this Lickona employs Kohlbergian dilemma discussion from the just communities approach but also talks about the teacher as moral role model, classroom discipline as moral authority, and the school as a somewhat Durkheimian moral culture. Lickona has been criticized by moral reasoning researchers (Nucci, 2006; Narvaez, 2006) for using the “bag of virtues” approach derided by Kohlberg himself, and for having insufficient grounding in psychological science. It seems possible that such critiques are ideologically as well as academically motivated, due in part to Lickona’s inclusion of group-based virtues outside of the Kohlbergian pantheon.

The most recent and theoretically elaborated merger attempt is Narvaez’s Integrated Ethical Education (IEE; Narvaez, 2006), which seeks to use advances in cognitive and social science to combine the two dominant moral education approaches. At the heart of IEE’s merger of character education and moral reasoning is the idea of novices becoming “moral experts” by gaining “ethical know-how” in Rest’s (1983) four skills of ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical motivation, and ethical action. Although IEE covers emotions and even intuitive responses, the term “ethical know-how” is telling: Narvaez focuses on reasoning and knowledge in expertise, formulating the four ethical skills as determining, solving, prioritizing, and staying on task (Narvaez, 2006, p. 716). Similarly, Narvaez’s program applies social psychology’s insights on the ubiquity of automatic processes (an application we whole-heartedly agree with), but her picture
of a moral expert is someone who can morally reason and make decisions quickly and automatically; very little is said about how automatic moral judgments, or the automatic activation of attitudes, should fit into moral education (for more on the judgment/decision-making distinction, see Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008-b). This omission again seems to side-step precisely the most contentious issue: should students’ intuitive moral reactions based on Ingroup, Authority and Purity be cultivated, or should moral education consist in teaching students how to suppress or reason past such reactions?

The IEE theory is firmly on the moral reasoning education side in its focus on the moral expertise of individuals: like Kohlberg’s just communities approach it acknowledges the importance of the social environment of moral development, but the development itself (from moral novice to moral expert) is strictly individualistic. Like moral reasoning approaches, the social concerns covered by IEE are overwhelmingly dyadic—that is, teaching individual students how to treat others fairly and avoid harming them. The place where the two approaches really require integration, however, is in their stances on the group-focused moral foundations of Ingroup, Authority, and Purity—and it’s unclear how IEE would reconcile the deep oppositions of the two sides of the ideological divide in moral education. For instance, Narvaez cites the findings of evolutionary psychology that “communal values are embedded in our genetic code and species memory” (Narvaez, 2006, p. 722), and yet only one of the 28 moral expertise skills in the IEE system (“Valuing traditions and institutions,” p. 717) unambiguously supports this group-based morality. (Another skill, “Connecting with others,” could qualify if used in more than a dyadic way.) The ambiguity of the skill “Responding to diversity” in fact embodies the ideological conflicts left unaddressed by the model: from an individualist moral perspective, diversity should always be responded to positively for reasons of inclusion and fairness, but from a group moral perspective diversity should be met with a negative response, as it could disrupt the unity of the ingroup, confuse the social hierarchy, or even blaspheme what the group holds sacred.

There is much to admire in the theories and pedagogical systems of these integrative approaches, such as their attention to emotion, action, and (in the case of Narvaez) the automatic nature of moral processes. All of them have made great contributions in terms of encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and uniting psychological science with educational research. Our critique is not meant to disparage their work; rather, it is meant to point out how attempts to integrate character education and moral reasoning approaches have not fully addressed the ideological divide over the breadth of the moral domain. Each integrative program avers that both virtue and reasoning should be taught, but fails to specify how conflicts between group and individual morality can be arbitrated without making an ideological commitment to one or the other. Do individual and community flourishing always go hand in hand, or might they at times be opposed? Should individual moral development be based on, bound to, and limited by the group? It is difficult to answer these questions without explicitly or implicitly making a normative claim for one side or the other.
Conclusion: On Norms and Normativity

When social psychologists empirically demonstrate the automatic heuristics and biases of human thought, they may show ways in which they are problematic in some environments (Kahneman & Tversky, 1973) or ways they can be helpful in other environments (Gigerenzer, Todd, & ABC Research Group, 2000), but they do not make the claim that these heuristics are normatively good or bad in and of themselves—they simply exist and deserve to be described. Similarly, when we give an account of the five foundations of intuitive ethics, we use the word “moral” descriptively rather than normatively: the theory is a descriptive account of the basic ways in which people around the world see things as morally right or wrong, and these intuitions may have positive or negative consequences depending on the context. To call the foundations “moral” normatively might entail arguing that the virtues and values of all five foundations are good and right because people have intuitive moral reactions based on them. Others have made such normative claims (see Kass, 1997, on the “wisdom of repugnance”), but one could just as easily use our descriptive account to normatively argue that our moral intuitions aren’t always good, that there is a “dark side” to human morality (for example, see Bloom, 2007, on the moral convictions of suicide bombers). In this paper we have tried to show how an ideological divide between two different normative conclusions—endorsing an individualizing morality or a binding morality—gave rise to two separate lines of moral education theory and practice. We have also tried to reveal how moral education entails staking a normative claim in what one believes is right and worthy of passing on to the next generation. Is moral education then a necessarily normative enterprise, and if so, how can the descriptive findings of moral psychology hope to inform it?

It is common for scientific researchers to make normative claims against prejudice and stereotyping, or in support of social justice and individual welfare. For instance, in the introduction to their Handbook of Moral Development, Killen and Smetana (2006, p. 4) express the hope that the research in the volume “advances the course of society towards justice, fairness, and equality.” It is unlikely that anyone would be offended by this, because it is unlikely that anyone would self-identify as anti-justice, anti-fairness, or anti-equality. But when character educators make the normative claim that children should be taught obedience to authority and respect for tradition, this becomes controversial because many come to the opposing normative conclusion that these “virtues” can ultimately become vices, as when Nazi soldiers obeyed genocidal orders or whites in the U.S. violently enforced the traditions of segregation and oppression of blacks. In response to such moral atrocities, Kohlberg wanted to be able to normatively claim that the principles of justice and fairness were more important than the principles of tradition or authority, regardless of the context. He attempted to derive the normative “ought” of Kant and Rawls from the empirical “is” of his cognitive-developmental psychology (Kohlberg, 1971b). Kohlberg’s normative aspirations continued in the work of Turiel (1983; 2006), whose moral-conventional distinction limits morality to that which has “intrinsic interpersonal consequences.”
related to welfare or fairness; anything else is merely conventional norms with no inherent normative value. This decades-long union of philosophy and psychology has been critiqued for *a priori* constraining the empirical field of moral psychology to intuitions of justice (Blasi, 1990), excluding a high percentage of people’s daily moral concerns (including the group-level concerns that the character education side construes as normatively good).

So is there no hope for a solution? Philosophers have been debating the normative grounding of moral truths for millennia, and it seems unlikely that ideologically-opposed moral educators will reach a final normative agreement anytime soon. However, we see the empirical questions as much more tractable: what educational practices are effective for the specific aims advocated by each side? What programs foster compassion and fairness, and which lead to cohesive moral communities? Do practices aimed toward individual morality always interfere with group-level goals, or are there conditions under which both can be attained? Precisely when and how can moral training in group-focused morality have adverse effects on individual-focused morality, and vice-versa?

Moral psychology and education science can answer these questions without staking a normative claim on one side or the other. It is likely that such empirical work will enrich and inform normative conclusions about morality; we see much more cause for hope in this process, rather than one in which normative conclusions determine the empirical questions (and answers). Moral educators in turn can make use of the ideological division by confronting it directly: the age-old debate about which virtues we want our children to embody should itself become part of moral education. Further moral education integration will require confronting the inevitability of moral disagreements, and acknowledging the limitations of both sides. Wrestling with the contradictions inherent in a five-foundation morality can be a moral education in itself, even if a final normative resolution is never reached.

References


Ideology and Intuition in Moral Education


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