

EDUCATING FOR MORAL IDENTITY

An Analysis of Three Moral Identity Constructs

With Implications for Moral Education

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Moral identity has received increased attention from psychologists who are interested in people's motivation to act morally (e.g., Blasi, 1983; Colby & Damon, 1993; Frimer & Walker, 2008; Hardy & Carlo, 2005, 2011a). This attention has led to an incredible array of theory and research on moral identity constructs recently appearing in the literature. The purpose of this article is to translate this new body of theory and research into general educational applications through the following: (1) an examination of the developmental progression and stability of 3 moral identity constructs, (2) an exploration of how moral identity might develop in different educational contexts through a review of existing research guided by a general principle derived from the 3 constructs, and (3) highlighting the relevance of the 3 constructs within these educational contexts. Although significant theoretical questions remain, this analysis and evaluation reveals that these constructs can inform effective approaches to moral education.

One long-standing purpose of psychological theories is to inform the improvement of education (Damon, 1997). Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) stipulated more specifically that theories of psychological *development* (specifically cognitive-developmental theories) should have education as their aim and provide the foundation of education. This psychological-theory-to-educational-practice relationship is the cornerstone of the current paper. Our aim is to examine recent, specific psychological constructs of moral identity and the educational implications that follow from them.

Psychologists have been increasingly discussing the importance of the role moral identity plays in moral action (e.g., Blasi, 1983; Colby & Damon, 1993; Frimer & Walker, 2008; Hardy & Carlo, 2005, 2011a). Considered by many to be the modern father of moral identity research, Blasi (1984) argues that moral commitments are at the core of a strong moral identity, with those commitments and moral values being central and essential to one's self-understanding. However, not everyone has a strong moral identity. Others with a weak—or even no—moral identity exhibit a

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self-understanding that has moral notions at the periphery of importance to the self, or are not included at all. His conceptualization of moral identity is embedded in his self model of moral action (1983), which he created to explain why people's moral judgment may or may not be consistent with their moral behavior. He argued that individuals' moral judgments might better predict moral action if they were essentially mediated by moral identity as well as other moral psychological components. Though Blasi did not describe a developmental progression for each of these components, he believed that such existed. He described the model as speculative and had little relevant data at the time to support it. Since then, Blasi's model along with his other work on the moral self (Blasi, 1983, 1984, 1995) has been highly influential. For example, the moral identity scholars of the three specific constructs examined in this paper have referred to and discussed Blasi's notions of the moral self and identity in at least one, if not all, of their publications. Unfortunately Blasi's model and ideas have yet to be fully fleshed out and remain fairly abstract, not easily translatable to empirical research.

Colby and Damon's (1993) work on moral identity also laid important groundwork for the three recent moral identity constructs examined in this paper. In studying the commitment of 23 moral exemplars, Colby and Damon found that the most remarkable characteristic across all exemplars was their deep unification of self with moral goals in such a way that the exemplars "[came] to see morality and self as inextricably intertwined, so that concerns of the self [became] defined by their moral sensibilities" (p. 304). Colby and Damon's study confirmed the importance of studying the self and identity in relation to moral development.

Thus, Blasi's (1983, 1984) and Colby and Damon's (1993) work provided a broad, general foundation for moral identity research. In the past decade or so, a number of promising moral identity constructs have emerged from this foundation. The three constructs we chose to focus on in this paper are moral centrality

(Frimer & Walker, 2009), moral identity (Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim, & Felps, 2009), and integrity (Schlenker, Miller, & Johnson, 2009). We chose these constructs because each one (a) has a strong conceptual tie to Blasi's (1984) and Colby and Damon's (1993) work on moral identity, and (b) has a recent and established empirical research record. We also chose these three because, as a group, they span across several subdisciplines in the psychology literature. Frimer's and Walker's moral centrality studies can be found in developmental and personality journals; whereas Aquino's moral identity research is published in social psychology, personality, and business, and psychology journals; while Schlenker's integrity studies are in clinical and personality journals. Thus, psychologists and educators interested in moral identity may not be familiar with all three of these constructs and their bodies of literature given that the authors publish in journals of varying psychology subdisciplines that have different audiences.

With increased attention given to moral identity, one might surmise that it would be an important target for moral education efforts. However, very few scholars to date have substantially addressed this. One scholar to do such is Dan Lapsley (2008; Lapsley & Stey, 2014). His discussion of the educational implications of moral identity emphasizes the idea of attachment as a primary mechanism of moral identity development. He conceives attachment broadly to include not only parent-child attachment, but attachment to friends, exemplars, school, social networks, and organizations. Reflecting on the role of parents in the development of moral chronicity (easily accessible and activated moral knowledge structures and mental representations, Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004) leads Lapsley and Stey (2014) to wonder if "the education of moral self-ideal is not always a matter of pedagogy or curriculum and does not take place primarily in schools" (p. 95). Still, Lapsley and Stey (2014) see promise in moral identity research to positively influence educational

practice. Matsuba, Murzyn, and Hart (2011) have also discussed educational applications of moral identity, though their focus is on how their own moral identity model (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1998, 1999)—which in its early formation did not draw on Blasi's work—has been and could be used in moral education programs.

Our discussion of educational implications of moral identity research in this paper expands on the previous treatments of this topic in two major ways. First, we focus more intently on three recent moral identity constructs, analyzing the developmental trajectory and stability of each construct. Second, we provide a more in-depth exploration of how moral identity could be developed in different contexts. In general, we attempt to answer the following questions: How do the particular dimensions of these three moral identity constructs inform our teaching for moral education? Can the discoveries from this research help us find more effective practices in moral and character education, or to encourage existing ones? The objectives of this paper, then, are threefold: (1) examine any developmental progression and stability of three recent and increasingly popular moral identity constructs, (2) explore how moral identity might develop in different educational contexts through a review of the broader literature guided by a general principle derived from the three constructs, and (3) highlight the relevance of the three constructs within these educational contexts. Although significant theoretical questions remain, this analysis and evaluation reveals that these constructs can inform effective approaches to moral education.

Moral identity, according to more recent discussions by Hardy and Carlo (2011a, 2011b) that are grounded in Blasi's (1984) work, refers to the degree to which morality is important to a person's identity. Of course, this definition raises the questions of "what is identity?" and "what is morality?"—the answer to which Hardy and Carlo leave largely unexplored. Broadly speaking, *identity* refers to

aspects of self-definition that include, but are not limited to, one's goals, values, beliefs, commitments, and standards for behavior and decision making (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). *Morality*, also broadly defined (in order to be inclusive of a wide range of ethical theories), involves how one should be concerned for and act in the service of human welfare and justice. Educating for moral identity then is the process of developing, in a person, a set of goals, values, beliefs, commitments, and standards that are in the service of human welfare and justice that are central to who that person is. For when those goals, values, beliefs, commitments, and standards are firmly in place, central to personal identity, and chronically accessible (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004), a person will be more likely to act in accordance with them (Blasi, 1983).

While these general definitions orient us to the broad goals of educating for moral identity, it is the particular dimensions of these moral identity constructs that will help us discern relevant educational applications. Specifically knowing a construct's developmental progression and stability can elucidate new and interesting moral education applications. The next section will clarify what is meant by *developmental progression* and *stability* and explain why they are important. An outline of each of the three constructs follows, leading to the distillation of a general principle for moral identity formation as *the process of linking an individual's identity to a set of goals, values, beliefs, commitments, and standards that are in the service of human welfare and justice*. From this general principle we explore how moral identity might develop in different educational contexts through a review of the broader literature. Here we make the case that it is the practice of acting in accordance with a set of values that is critical in educating for moral identity. We also highlight the relevance of the three constructs within these educational contexts. The paper concludes by summarizing the potential contributions that each of the three constructs make to moral education.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESSION AND STABILITY

Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) argued that any worthy educational program must have a defined ideal for students to reach. They emphasized the importance of having a developmentally informed definition of educational aims and processes. If a moral identity construct is the educational target, the educator must understand the psychological developmental progression of the individual according to the construct, including what a construct-specific morally mature self looks like, whether and how it changes over time, and factors that facilitate its development. The morally mature form becomes the educational ideal that learners work toward. Knowing how the individual changes and what may or may not influence changes can inform educators as to what they can do to provide developmentally sensitive activities, especially in what the nature of the educational activity is, how multiple activities should be sequenced, and the timing of the activities. Hence, an analysis of the psychological developmental theory explicitly or implicitly underlying each construct is critical for discerning its educational implications.

The other dimension that has implications for education concerns the stability of the construct. In other words, how sensitive is the construct to contextual/situational influences, particularly across diverse situations when developmental shifts are not predominant? Answering this question helps educators determine whether the construct is more like a personality trait that is stable across situations and characterized by individual differences or is more akin to a universal social psychology construct with its stability largely dependent on the situational norm or situational factors at hand. This has implications for moral educators, for a moral identity construct that is either extremely stable or highly unstable would pose some challenges. A construct extremely *stable* across diverse situations would be fairly entrenched in the individual's personality.

How resistant it is to educational activities? If it is a highly stable personality trait and resistant to situational demands and influences, how powerful would the educational activity have to be in order to influence the student? For a moral identity construct that is highly *unstable* across various situations, the long-term efficacy of any successful educational activity becomes questionable. Consider Hartshorne and May's (1928-1930) classic studies of honesty (or rather, lack of honesty). The psychologists showed that school-age children, including those that had specific moral education lessons about honesty, were not consistent in being honest across different situations. Hartshorne and May emphasized the power of the situation for a particular construct. The power of the situation to alter the construct can also be construed as the *lack of stability* of the construct. If the construct, by its very nature, is highly susceptible to varied factors that change from situation to situation, educators would want to know whether and how they can create and maintain an environment that would impact the norms and situational factors in order to lessen the flux of the construct's strength.

Thus, knowing a construct's developmental progression and stability helps educators identify important factors when translating theory into educational applications. For this reason, the focus of the analyses of each construct in the following section is on (a) the psychological developmental theory underlying it and (b) its stability. This analysis will proceed after a brief introduction of each construct: how it is defined and assessed, and how it stands in terms of its current state of empirical evidence

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF EACH MORAL SELF CONSTRUCT

Frimer and Walker's Moral Centrality

Moral centrality, according to Frimer and Walker (2009), is the degree to which moral convictions are a central part of one's identity. More specifically, Frimer and Walker opera-

tionalize moral centrality as the extent to which agentic and communal values are integrated with one another. Their operational definitions of agentic and communal values are based on the work of Schwartz (1992) wherein achievement and power are embodied in *agency*, and benevolence and universalism in *communalism*. More specifically, agency “entails the motivation to advance the self in a social hierarchy through social power, dominance, material wealth, and achievement,” and communion “entails the motivation to promote the interests of others through a concern for the welfare of others in everyday interactions and through a more universalized concern for others beyond the primary reference group and for ecological preservation” (Walker & Frimer, in press, p. 7). In measuring moral centrality, Frimer and Walker use a structured interview coupled with their own coding paradigm.

Frimer, Walker, and colleagues have published a handful of studies thus far examining moral centrality. In their first study, Frimer and Walker (2009) found that moral behavior was positively predicted by communal values and negatively predicted by agentic values. They also found that there was a positive relationship between participants’ weaving both agentic and communal themes into their own narratives and their normative moral behaviors. In two subsequent studies, the researchers used a similar method with the same coding paradigm in order to study the integration of agency and communion in moral exemplars and matched comparison participants. They found moral exemplars, compared against the matched sample, elicited more agentic and communal themes and integrated them within their narratives and personal goals (Frimer, Walker, Dunlop, Lee, & Riches, 2011). They also found differences with a younger adult exemplar and comparison sample whereby agency was used by the exemplars to further both agency and communion compared to the comparison group who used agency to further more agency (Dunlop, Walker, & Matsuba, 2013). Using archival data, Frimer, Walker, Lee, Riches, and Dunlop (2012) examined

agency and communion motives of two groups of historical figures, one group consisting of moral exemplars and the other group that did not. As predicted, moral exemplars had integrated agency and communion motives whereby they treated agency motives as a means to an end of communion motives. The comparison group, on the other hand, showed predominantly agency motives that were both a means to an end as well as an end unto itself.

Regarding the developmental progression of moral centrality, Frimer and Walker (2009) posit that agency and communion are two different motivational systems. Initially, each system is strengthened and elaborated separately but simultaneously. Being separate motivational systems, there is a mutual tension between the two, which is not problematic until the two motives become more elaborate and start to compete against one another in terms of the attention and the time one is able to allocate to each system. Competition then creates a disequilibrium which can be reduced in one of several ways: (a) regressing to earlier forms, (b) abandoning communion and focusing on agency, (c) abandoning agency in order to focus on communion, or (d) integrating agency and communion. The authors argue that the last of these is the most morally mature and empirical evidence from their studies supports this (Frimer et al., 2011). In terms of important age periods, Frimer et al. (2011) argue that disequilibrium likely arises in adolescence or emerging adulthood, with their more recent studies suggesting that the disequilibrium is present in emerging and early adulthood (Dunlop et al., 2013; Walker & Frimer, in press). How exactly does a person successfully integrate agentic and communal values? Their studies (Frimer et al., 2012; Walker & Frimer, in press) suggest that communion becomes the ultimate, driving motive while agency is used to serve the communal goal.

The degree to which moral centrality is stable is not explicitly addressed by the authors. In their studies, the morally mature are moral exemplars, operationalized as individuals hav-

ing long-standing (often years if not decades) moral commitments in advancing a humanitarian cause. At least in these studies, the integrated values of agency and communion are implied to be something that is relatively stable, once achieved. Moral centrality, in its mature form, seems to be more akin to a fairly stable personality trait, though further research using longitudinal designs would provide a more definitive answer.

Aquino's Moral Identity

Of the three moral identity concepts under analysis here, Aquino's concept has been around the longest and is the most empirically researched. Aquino and Reed introduced their construct in 2002 refining it along the way. Their basic description of moral identity is "the degree to which a person's moral character is experienced as a central part of his or her overall self-concept" (Aquino, McFerran, & Laven, 2011, p. 704). In their most recent writings (Aquino et al., 2009; Aquino et al., 2011; Shao, Aquino, & Freeman, 2008; Smith, Aquino, Koleva, & Graham, 2014), Aquino and colleagues used a social-cognitive framework (per Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004) to define moral identity. As such, moral identity is a cognitive self-schema organized around a set of common moral trait associations. This moral self-schema is more cognitively accessible for some persons than others, implying strong individual differences in people's moral identity. Aquino also posits that certain situations can increase or decrease the cognitive accessibility of an individual's moral identity, arguing that the strength and influence of one's moral identity fluctuates due to variable influences across situations. Moral identity also has two different dimensions: internalization (private experience) and symbolization (public expression). His measure of moral identity assesses both dimensions through a self-report questionnaire, asking participants to rate themselves by the extent to which a group of moral traits is important to them (caring, compassionate, generous, fair, friendly, helpful, hard-

working, honest, and kind). The internalization subscale, consisting of 5 items, has participants rate on a standard Likert scale how central this group of moral traits is to one's self-definition. The symbolization subscale, consisting of 5 items rated on a standard Likert scale, measures the extent to which one's moral self-schema is projected outwardly through one's actions in the world.

Aquino and colleagues have amassed an interesting body of research on moral identity using both correlational and experimental designs. Their correlational findings have focused on individual differences in moral identity. For example, Aquino and colleagues have found that individuals with a stronger moral identity reported greater volunteerism and donation behavior (Aquino & Reed, 2002); greater moral obligation to show concern for the needs and welfare of out-group members (Reed & Aquino, 2003; Smith et al., 2014); greater recall of their own stories of moral goodness (Aquino et al., 2011); and greater ethical leadership (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, 2012). Aquino's experimental studies have focused on manipulating participants' accessibility of moral identity by priming them in order to enhance or suppress moral identity. Enhancing one's moral identity led participants to have greater preference in giving time versus money (Reed, Aquino, & Levy, 2007) and to use less effective moral disengagement techniques (Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freeman, 2007). In addition, activating one's moral identity increased participants' prosocial behavioral intentions (Aquino et al., 2009) and their inclination to share scant resources with out-group members (Smith et al., 2014), with the greatest increases in both studies seen in those with low moral identity. When situational influences suppressed participants' moral identity accessibility, their willingness to act in a selfish manner increased especially for those with strong moral identities (Aquino et al., 2009).

Regarding the development of moral identity, Aquino's writing and research emphasizes interindividual differences rather than intrain-

dividual age-graded changes. Differences among individuals are marked by the degree to which a person identifies with any or all of the key traits of a moral person (caring, compassionate, generous, fair, friendly, helpful, hard-working, honest, and kind), organizes a self-schema around them, and acts on the basis of them. Development of a moral identity, like the development of other schemas as understood within a social-cognitive framework, would be contingent on an individual's exposure to these traits and would grow in proportion to the number of opportunities a person has to act in accordance with them (chances to practice care, compassion, generosity, etc.), which will make them more chronically accessible. The only aspect of development that Aquino has addressed is how parenting may influence moral identity development during adolescence. He and his colleagues (Hardy, Bhattacharjee, Reed, & Aquino, 2010) found that the parenting dimensions of responsiveness, autonomy-granting, and demandingness positively related to adolescents' moral identities.

The question of moral identity's stability is most intriguing given the evidence from Aquino and colleagues' experimental studies. As described earlier, Aquino argues that moral identity is a cognitive schema that is a central part of one's self-definition *if* it is readily accessible. Aquino and colleagues have shown that various activities can increase or decrease the accessibility of one's moral identity. Their priming techniques offer interesting clues for educational purposes, for they show how easily influenced one's accessibility of their moral identity schema can be. Effective priming techniques in their studies included (a) writing nine different moral words and then telling a brief story about him/herself using each word at least once (Aquino et al., 2007; Reed et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2014); (b) simply writing nine different moral words (Aquino et al., 2009); (c) listing as many of the 10 commandments as possible (Aquino et al., 2009); and (d) completing a word search puzzle containing 10 moral words (Aquino et al., 2011). Each

of these tasks led to increased accessibility of participants' moral identity schemas that, in turn, was related to greater morally desirable interpretations, evaluations, intentions, and behavior. The situational influence that decreased moral identity accessibility was providing a financial incentive for performing well during a negotiation (Aquino et al., 2009). In the interest of educational applications, the next step in extending these findings is determining how long the priming technique lasts. Even if educators do not yet have this information, they should realize, based on the low stability of moral identity across situations, the importance of establishing and maintaining an environment that consistently emphasizes or highlights its moral dimensions.

Schlenker's Integrity

An increasingly popular construct of moral identity is Schlenker's notion of integrity. Integrity is defined as having a personal commitment to a *principled* ethical ideology. This ideology is conceptualized as a schema that varies in the degree to which the individual believes moral principles should guide one's own conduct in all situations regardless of personal consequences or self-serving rationalizations (Schlenker, 2008). A person high in integrity is one who believes that commitment to one's moral principles is not only valuable but also a defining quality of who he or she is, an important aspect of moral identity. In assessing integrity, Schlenker uses a self-report questionnaire that asks participants to rate, using a standard Likert scale, the extent to which they agree with 18 statements about valuing principled conduct, being committed to principles despite temptations, and avoiding rationalizations of unprincipled conduct.

Schlenker's empirical investigations of integrity have relied primarily upon correlational designs. In one of his first integrity studies, Schlenker (2008) examined its relationship to a wide range of variables. Integrity was negatively related to self-report antisocial activities even after controlling for a variety of

individual differences; positively associated with self-reported, nobly intentioned helping and volunteering; and positively related to several qualities representing good mental health, psychological well-being, and interpersonal effectiveness. Schlenker and colleagues (Schlenker, Weigold, & Schlenker, 2008) also examined integrity and judgments of other people, including participants' own self-described heroes. Individuals higher in integrity described their heroes as being more principled, honest, spiritual, and benevolent. In judging decisions that had conflicting principles and outcomes, participants higher in integrity were guided by ethical principles regardless of the outcome. In their most recent study, Miller and Schlenker (2011) investigated integrity and preferences for interpersonal relationships. Individuals with higher integrity were more likely to prefer others with principled ideologies and have friends who (a) perceived them as principled and (b) had strong principled orientations themselves.

The developmental progression of integrity is not explicitly addressed by Schlenker, nor does he offer any age range that might be more or less sensitive to the development of integrity. He does imply that a developmentally mature integrity would be having a principled ethical ideology that is "a dominant schema for interpreting events and for guiding conduct" (Schlenker et al., 2009, p. 316). However, not knowing the developmental progression leaves educators with little guidance for constructing developmentally sensitive activities aiming to build in students a dominant principled ethical ideology schema. Schlenker et al. (2009), to their credit, discussed what might influence one to become more committed to their moral principles, which could be construed as developmental influences. He posits any of the following processes could lead to greater moral principle commitment: (a) acting in a virtuous manner that was intentional, done by freedom of choice, and memorable and then seeing it as important to one's sense of self, (b) observing and modeling a moral exemplar, (c) being verbally persuaded to adopt or strengthen a princi-

pled orientation, and (d) producing various emotions in response to one's own morally relevant behaviors (e.g., feeling happy after helping another or feeling guilty after harming someone). These four possible influences of moral commitment development have not been empirically examined, though some are similar to effective educational strategies for other aspects of moral development (like moral reasoning).

On the question of integrity's stability, Schlenker defines a principled ideology as consisting of moral principles that have a "transsituational quality" in which they are followed regardless of the temptations or personal consequences of the situation (Schlenker et al., 2009, p. 317). In further explaining integrity, however, Schlenker states there might be contexts in which one's principles may *not* be consistent with one's actions. He states that discordance between one's principles and actions is a result of the individual's self-system not being engaged by the task at hand. He predicts less discordance occurs when

(a) a clear, well-defined set of prescriptions is seen as applicable in the situation (*prescription clarity*); (b) the actor is perceived to be bound by the prescriptions (*personal obligation, duty, or commitment*); and (c) the actor appears to have control over relevant events (*personal control*). (Schlenker et al., 2009, p. 333; italics in original)

By acknowledging the influence of context, Schlenker allows for the possibility of educating for integrity. For example, teaching an individual to engage the self-system by consistently using these cognitive filters would increase integrity's stability.

Summary of the Three Constructs

Before considering the implications for moral education, it will be helpful to summarize these constructs according to how they each give specific shape to the more general concept of moral identity, the developmental

pattern of each, and the relative stability of moral identity in each construct. Each construct posits that the formation of moral identity is the process of linking an individual's identity to a set of goals, values, beliefs, commitments, and standards that are in the service of human welfare and justice. For Frimer and Walker, the link comes when one's own goals of benevolence and universalism are the terminal motive, and agency acts to serve the realization of these goals. Each set of values (agency and communion) has developed separately according to their theory and adolescence through early adulthood is the time when integration becomes possible. Once integrated, the resulting moral identity is fairly stable, at least as evidenced from their research of moral exemplars.

For Aquino, the link is a gradual process of individuals coming to value widely accepted moral traits and to align their own self-understanding with these traits. Aquino's theory does not postulate a sensitive period for this process of valuation, but other developmental theories point again to adolescence. Erikson (1968) theorizes that fidelity is the outcome of the successful resolution of the developmental task of that age (identity achievement vs. identity confusion). Aquino's results show moral identity to be unstable and susceptible to situational influences, especially compared to the other constructs.

For Schlenker, the link to a specific content of certain goals, values, beliefs, and standards is not as important as acting in accordance with some set of general ethical goals and values. Given the suggestions Schlenker makes regarding how one might become more committed to their moral principles (above), the link comes in the practice of acting in accordance with principles. In that way the inculcation of the ethical principles precedes the action. Though Schlenker suggests potential developmental processes, he does not identify sensitive periods of development in which these processes might be most effective. Schlenker implies that the moral "self-system" (once in place) is fairly stable, but certain situ-

ations might either inhibit or enhance its accessibility.

All of these constructs, or models, of moral identity have been primarily tested on participants for whom the link is fairly well established: when the identity of a person has been grounded—to a greater or lesser degree—in a set of ethical goals, values, beliefs, and standards. How personal identity becomes linked to a set of goals, values, beliefs, and standards has yet to be determined by these models, much less tested. Yet, such linkage may be at the very heart of what it means to educate for moral identity.

THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS OF MORAL IDENTITY FORMATION

In the second half of this article, we explore how moral identity might develop in different educational contexts through a review of the broader literature guided by the general principle we derived from the three constructs as well as highlight the relevance of the three constructs within these educational contexts.

While each construct provides a clear idea of the mature form of moral identity, none of them provide any clear developmental pathway to that mature form, a problem that has plagued moral identity theory (Nucci, 2004). We might, however, discern a developmental process by examining the *contexts* in which moral identity formation takes place. This approach is informed by two theoretical perspectives that take seriously the role of context in youth development. The first is Lerner's (2004) developmental systems theory and subsequent research, which posits that it is the integration or fusion of internal factors and external setting that promotes positive development in youth. The second, with a more particular moral focus, is Kohlberg and colleagues' ideas of moral atmosphere (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989), which refers to a community's "moral climate" or "moral culture," by which they primarily meant a community's shared expectations and normative

values. Their key realization, based in part on Durkheim's insights into socialization, is that the primary context for the education of a moral person is the group. Applying this insight to school climate, they concluded that change in the school's moral culture and atmosphere would have a profound impact on an individual's moral formation (Snarey & Samuelson, 2008). We intend to extend this idea to other groups as well: family and peer interest groups.

Though the three constructs of moral identity highlighted above do not explicitly address the role of context in moral identity development, each in their own way implies that it plays or could play a key role. Aquino and colleagues have the most robust account of the influence of context on moral identity formation. In their experimental studies in which they prime one's moral identity, context is the most salient factor whereby one's moral schemas are more or less accessible (Aquino et al., 2007; Aquino et al., 2009; Reed et al., 2007). Moreover, social cognitive theory, shared by both Aquino and Schlenker as a theoretical basis for moral identity formation, focuses on the formation of moral schemas through the practice of moral action. Under the influence of the moral atmospheres of family, peer group, and school, the child practices integrity (acting in accordance with a set of ethical goals and values, even if those goals and values are as of yet external to the self). Through such practice, the child forms moral schemas. For Frimer and Walker, the influence of context (i.e., family, peer group, interest group) is most explicitly seen in the development of communion as a motivational system, which is apprehended by the child through exposure to communal values and later integrated with agency in mature moral identity. Two principles emerge from these models which have implications for educating for moral identity: moral identity formation would require (1) *exposure* to the goals, values, and beliefs that shape moral identity; and (2) opportunity to *practice* operating out of a set of goals and val-

ues in the service of human welfare and justice.

From these perspectives we will propose that the moral atmospheres of families, peer interest groups, classrooms, and schools could have a sizable impact on the formation of moral identity. Moreover, participating within these groups in the conscious and explicit practice of acting out of the set of goals, values, commitments, and standards that adhere to the group will aide in the development of moral identity. There is an implied developmental progression here in that families are the first context in which moral identity formation occurs. As the child matures, peer interest groups and school become more salient contexts for moral identity formation. In the following analysis, we will examine studies that have looked at the influence of family and peer interest groups on the moral formation of children and draw some implications from that analysis for educating for moral identity in the schools. Specifically, we will examine how exposure to the goals and values of the group (family, peer interest group) and the opportunity to practice moral action out of a particular set of moral goals and actions has influenced moral development and may inform moral identity formation. We will also draw on Tomasello, Kruger, and Ratner's (1993) cultural learning theory to help inform the processes of educating for moral identity within these contexts through the use of imitation, direct teaching, and collaboration.

Educating for Moral Identity in the Context of Family

The idea of a "moral atmosphere," defined as a community's shared expectations and normative values, can naturally be extended to families. Insofar as parents express their values and commitments to human welfare and justice clearly and make them transparent, they are creating a "moral atmosphere" in the family. Moreover, moral identity development may also be enhanced via processes of modeling by parents who act consistently and in

accordance with expressed ethical goals, values, and beliefs (i.e., parents who model strong integrity). The positive relationship between adolescents' moral identities and the parenting dimensions of responsiveness, autonomy-granting, and demandingness (seen in the study by Aquino and his colleagues, Hardy et al., 2010) may have roots here. Many more general studies show authoritative, responsive parenting positively relates to prosocial behavior in children of all ages (Calderón-Tena, Knight, & Carlo, 2011; Carlo, Vicenta Mestre, Samper, Tur, & Armenta, 2011; Farrant, Devine, Maybery, & Fletcher, 2011; Laible, Eye, & Carlo, 2008).

The literature also displays a clear relationship between families who hold strong moral values (i.e., the moral atmosphere of the family) and the prosocial activity of the children of those families. The values of these families appear to be communicated and reinforced through two main mechanisms: parental values and parenting style. Parents share their values with their children by modeling those values in action (Collins & Steinberg, 2008). Chan and Elder (2001), in a study of family's civic participation, found that parent involvement in civic activities predicted adolescent involvement. A Hart and Fegley (1995) study comparing adolescent care exemplars to their peers showed that care exemplars were more likely to incorporate "parentally related selves" and representations of their parents into their current self-concept, meaning there was little distance between the way the adolescent care exemplars currently viewed themselves and the way they viewed themselves when with their parents. Moreover, their self-concept hewed closely to the way their parents expected them to be. If moral identity motivates moral action (Blasi, 1983), these studies demonstrate that the moral identity that motivates youth to show exemplary civic and prosocial behavior appears to be nested in the moral identity of their parents. How children learn moral identity from their parents—whether through observation and imitation, or through direct teaching of prosocial values, or

both—is not precisely known. Expecting and enforcing prosocial behaviors is one possible mechanism. Adolescents who perceive the prosocial values and expectations of their parents are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors (Calderón-Tena et al., 2011).

Cultural learning theory (Tomasello et al., 1993) posits three ways children effectively learn appropriate knowledge and values: imitation, direct teaching, and collaboration. Collaboration is the latest to develop and comes more fully into play in late grade school and early adolescence. The importance of collaboration with parents in the formation of moral identity is illustrated in Hart et al.'s (1999) study showing that adolescents who were more involved in voluntary service activities reported more joint activities with their parents than those less involved. This held regardless of the adolescent's perception of harmony or love and intimacy with parents. In a different study, the Iowa Youth and Family Project measured joint participation in civic activities and found similar results (Chan & Elder, 2001). When parents were engaged in civic activities children were also more likely to be engaged. However, even if the parents were not engaged, parents' endorsement of the child's civic activities made a significant impact on the level of those activities. This, coupled with a warm, responsive style of parenting, strengthened community involvement by the children (Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000).

Parents may help set a moral atmosphere in a family by endorsing prosocial activities of their children. A longitudinal study of the development of personal values and moral self-ideals of adolescents by Pratt, Hunsberger, Pancer, and Alisat (2003) reveals the importance of parental endorsement of their teens' prosocial activities. Adolescents who helped in community activities reported closer agreement with parents than their less involved counterparts regarding the importance of moral values for the self 2 years later. Pratt et al. (2003) also found a relationship between a warm, responsive (authoritative), parenting

style and agreement between parents and adolescents on moral and nonmoral values. In their view, community involvement precedes the formation of personal values. It is the subsequent endorsement by the parents of such activities that shape adolescents' personal values that make up their moral identity. Community involvement becomes the context for the development of agreement around shared values between the adolescent and the parent(s). Another view is that community involvement is the result of parental expectations that are then successfully reinforced in a warm, supportive family environment (Reimer, 2009).

The studies cited all point to the importance of a nurturing family environment in shaping moral identity, specifically, the key role that the warmth, support, trust, and parental expectations that characterize authoritative parenting plays. Educating for moral identity in the family context might then involve (1) creating an atmosphere of security and trust, (2) modeling and directly teaching prosocial values, (3) monitoring behavior with clear expectations, and (4) providing opportunities for activities that reflect moral values through joint participation and/or supporting the child's own engagement in such activities. Specifically, this research suggests that parents who (a) transmit their values through the means of supportive parent-child activities, (b) encourage prosocial activity, and (c) respond appropriately to prosocial and antisocial behavior, promote both identity achievement (Sartor & Youniss, 2002) and the acquisition of prosocial values (Hardy, Carlo, & Roesch, 2010) in their children. From the point of view of the broader scholarship we have reviewed, the practice of putting moral values into action in the family context could be a key component in the formation of moral identity. It forms the foundations for moral identity schemas (important to Aquino and Schlenker) and sets the shared values of communion firmly in place for later integration into a mature moral identity (Frimer and Walker).

Educating for Moral Identity in the Context of Peer Interest Groups

The moral atmospheres of peer interest groups (e.g., extracurricular activities, youth development programs) are created through the shared ethical goals, values, and commitments that are forged through the mutual relationships inherent in these groups, which, in turn, may become part of one's moral identity insofar as one is a participant in the group. The difference here from the context of family is that the children have more of a stake in the formation of the goals, values, and commitments of the group and they are forged in a greater mutuality than in a family. The difference from mature moral identity is that these goals, values, and commitments are still not yet appropriated independent of others. In a study of peer group norm sharing, Barber, Stone, Hunt, and Eccles (2006) found that an adolescent's choice of extracurricular activities largely conformed to the social crowd with which the adolescent identified (e.g., "jocks," "brains," etc.). They concluded that extracurricular activities allowed adolescents opportunities for connection to others with similar values and to act out of those values. Adolescents use participation in group activities for identity exploration—"trying on" the values of the group to see if there is a mutuality—and, if so, committing to joint action based on group goals (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003). Here it is possible the schemas formed in the family context are both strengthened and modified, and new schemas are formed (per social cognitive theory of Aquino and Schlenker) while both agency, in the sense of learning to advance the self within the group through social power and achievement, and communion, in the sense of operating out of a set of shared group values, are enhanced (per Frimer and Walker).

The role that extracurricular activities and youth development programs—especially that involve community service and civic participation—play in the formation of identity in adolescence is a well-studied phenomenon

(Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Lerner et al., 2005; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000; Youniss & Yates, 1999). The identity formation that results from participation in these activities and programs can have a decidedly moral quality. For example, adolescents involved in youth development programs placed a higher value on making a contribution to society and were more involved in activities that made a difference in the world around them (Lerner et al., 2005). Much of this research is grounded in Erikson's theory of human development that views adolescence as a period of identity formation in which the adolescent is searching for a worthwhile ideology and "way of life" (Barber et al., 2005; McIntosh, Metz, & Youniss, 2005). Researchers have focused on participation in community service and youth development organizations as a place where youth can experience an ideology that is put into practice. This gives them a chance to practice acting out of a set of goals, values, commitments, and standards that is characteristic of a strong moral identity (Barber et al., 2005; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997).

Participation in youth development programs, extracurricular activities, and civic engagement seems to promote a moral identity formation in adolescence that has lasting effects. Youniss and Yates (1999) cite a dozen studies that demonstrate a connection between activities in youth and political-moral behavior in adulthood. For example, students who did service in high school were more engaged in community service years later. Those who practiced political action in high school were more politically active as adults. Those involved with youth development programs were more likely to be active in volunteer organizations as adults. What creates these lasting effects? We contend it could be the moral atmospheres of these groups, organizations, and programs that make a difference. Youth development programs work, according to Lerner et al. (2005), because they

promote youth contribution by assuring that the young person has a sustained relationship with at least one committed adult, who provides skill-building opportunities to the youth and acts to enhance the young person's healthy and active engagement with the context. (p. 57)

From our point of view, moral identity might be best developed in those contexts in which a set of goals, values, and commitments in the service of human welfare and justice are clearly expressed and participation means, not only a mutuality with those goals, but an understanding that those goals motivate a particular action in the world.

Youniss and Yates (1999) have researched identity development in communities with a clear set of values and commitments based on their religious traditions. They believe their work shows that

because service allows youth to practice moral behavior, they have the opportunity to experience themselves as effective moral actors within a particular religious-political tradition.... Moral actions lead to a moral identity, which in turn leads to further moral actions and solidification of moral identity. (p. 372)

The focus on acting in accordance with group values may reinforce budding moral identity schemas, which will later be expressed in mature form (according to Aquino and Schlenker). The evidence reviewed may also suggest that there is more than just learning community values at play here, but that agency may be modeled for and developed in the youth in a way that serves the larger communitarian goals of the group, which could pave the way for a subsequent full integration of these two components in moral maturity (per Walker and Frimer). In that sense it could be said that these adolescents are, in fact, acting out of a moral identity—an immature form of moral identity—in which the goals, values, and commitments that define a moral identity are embedded in the groups with which the youth are involved and with which they have a sense of mutuality.

Educating for optimal moral identity achievement in peer interest groups might therefore include these elements: (1) involvement in groups with a clear sense of mission and purpose that focuses on the service of human welfare and justice, (2) a sense of mutuality (i.e., that involvement with the group is voluntary and a reflection of shared interests, needs and desires within the group's members) and attachment to the group, and (3) taking action with others in the group in accordance with the mutual goals, values and commitments of the group. These elements focus on the collaborative nature of learning. Imitation and direct teaching, important to earlier moral identity development, would still have influence. Group leaders also serve as examples of moral identity achievement that youth can emulate (Lerner et al., 2005). Clear expectations for group membership and participation, and the moral traditions of the group taught directly to group participants, would also aide in the key practice of moral identity formation: acting out of a clear set of goals, values, and commitments for the service of human welfare and justice.

Educating for Moral Identity in the Context of Schools

The principles from the three constructs of moral identity, along with what we have learned from how moral identity formation plays out in families and in peer interest groups, can be applied to the formal educational setting of the classroom. We will explore the implication of moral identity formation in schools in terms of content (what to teach), context (atmosphere of classroom), and conveyance (how to teach).

Content. Of the three constructs, Aquino gives us the clearest idea of how the content of classroom instruction should be shaped in order to help in moral identity formation. Since his measure of moral identity asks participants to rate themselves by the extent to which a group of moral traits is important to them (caring, compassionate, generous, fair, friendly, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind), it

stands to reason that teaching what it means to act in those ways would be important to the formation of moral identity. Giving examples of people who exhibit those traits and explicitly teaching how those traits are actualized in the lives of those people could be one important method. This method has been promoted by many moral educators, including Kohlberg (Snarey & Samuelson, 2008), and as far back as the Confucian scholar Mencius. From Frimer and Walker's point of view, an exploration of how individuals embody communitarian values and how they participate and belong to communities (civic, religious, common interests) might help develop the communal motives of mature moral identity.

Exploring the meaning of classical virtues, many of which are included in Aquino's list, would also be an important component of the content of teaching for moral identity formation. The analysis of film and other storytelling media (novels, plays) in terms of moral content could be a chance for students to critically engage in the content of moral behavior and might open the question of what it means to have a moral identity for students (or to lack one). Finally, explicit teaching of what it means to act with integrity, especially giving examples in history and literature of those who act with integrity, would be an important aspect of teaching for moral identity formation according to Schlenker.

Context. From our examination of moral identity formation in families and in peer groups, it is clear that creating a warm, caring atmosphere in the classroom in which the students trust the teacher and that the students are free to question those teachings and to explore their own ideas of moral behavior, would likely enhance moral identity formation. This trusting, caring atmosphere allows students to identify with the teacher, and with their classmates as members of a group, with shared goals and values. It is essentially a process of the students' attachment to both teacher and groups, a crucial element in moral identity formation (Lapsey & Stey, 2014; Kohlberg & Diessner, 1991).

If, as we have argued, moral identity is formed when a person acts from a set of goals, values, and commitments, then students should practice acting them out in the school context. It would be important, then, that schools in general—and classrooms in particular—have a set of goals, values, and commitments to which they ascribe. And their goals, values, and commitments should not only be explicitly taught but also act as a guide for one's conduct (per Schlenker), with teachers creating expectations that members of their classroom hold these goals, values, and commitments and act according to them. A school's or classroom's goals, values, and commitments should ideally be formed by consensus and students should have a say in what they will be. This also may forge identification with those goals, values, and commitments and solidify the student's identity as a member of that classroom or school.

The processes just described are largely reflected in the Just Community Schools' (Power et al., 1989) community meetings, in which a sense of community solidarity was achieved through the practice of democratic governance (i.e., coming to fair decisions, carrying out these decisions and, as necessary, to democratically changing their decisions). The sense of group solidarity created a "moral atmosphere" allowing the peer group to function as a moral authority for its members' behavior (Snarey & Samuelson, 2008). This group solidarity also creates a deep sense of mutuality, so critical during the teen years. While the Just Community Schools differ in significant ways from other groups and activities that adolescents typically are involved in, there are some important shared features from the point of view of educating for moral identity: an explicit articulation of shared norms and values, an expectation as a member of the group that those norms and values shape individual behavior, and a powerful sense of mutuality regarding the norms and values of the group.

Conveyance. While there are many ways to teach for moral identity formation, there are a few principles that stand out. First, as evi-

denced by the role of parents as models to their children, a teacher also models moral behavior and shows students how to act in accordance with a set of goals, values, beliefs, commitments, and standards. In doing so, it would be important to articulate those goals and values so that students can observe when they are practiced. Evidence for the impact of teachers on moral identity formation is found in moral-self interviews conducted with adolescents in a Just Community School in the Bronx, New York where students reported teachers as examples as having a strong impact on making them the kind of people they are (Kohlberg & Diessner, 1991).

Another pedagogical principle is using action and reflection with students through service learning. Service-learning projects are no stranger to moral education (Brandenberger, 1998; Hart, Atkins, & Donnelly, 2006), though educators' explicit use of this type of project to help develop students' moral identity is distinctive. A community service project requiring one to act benevolently might be one way for the educator to induce moral behavior in students, though the educator may need to allow students to choose their own service activity in order to allow freedom of choice. According to Schlenker et al. (2009), in order for students' behavior to influence their attitude toward themselves their virtuous behavior needs to be intentional, done by freedom of choice, and memorable. The educator could then have students reflect on how their community service behavior relates to their sense of themselves. In this way, students may use their community service behavior to influence their perception of themselves, seeing the self as more virtuous and more strongly prioritizing moral principles.

CONCLUSION

In analyzing the three constructs of moral identity, we extracted a general principle of development that can guide educational processes in the formation of moral identity. Each

construct posits that the formation of moral identity is the process of linking an individual's identity to a set of goals, values, beliefs, commitments, and standards that are in the service of human welfare and justice. For Frimer and Walker, the link comes when communal and agentic motives are integrated, such that communion becomes the ultimate, driving motive with agency serving the communal goal. For Aquino, the link is a gradual process of each person coming to value widely accepted moral traits and to align their own self-understanding with these traits. For Schlenker, the link to a specific content of the goals, values, beliefs, and standards is not as important as acting in accordance with some set of ethical goals and values. From this we conclude that educational processes that give children the opportunity to take action for human welfare and justice from a set of goals, values, and commitments—even if those goals values and commitments are embedded in the developmental context and as of yet external to the self—will likely enhance the development of moral identity.

We suggest that intentional, thoughtful attention be given to the moral atmospheres of the contexts in which children are embedded in order to educate for moral identity since the contexts provide the goals, values, and commitments out of which a child takes moral action. There are other dynamics and mechanisms within those contexts that also have influence and many questions about the formation of moral identity remain unanswered. For example, why would a child take on the goals, values and commitments of the group in which they are embedded? We suspect that Lapsley (2008) is right to point to the role of attachment in connecting the goals, values, and commitments of the context (family, school, group) with the individual's desire to act on those goals. In addition to attachment, Kohlberg and Diessner (1991) highlight the role of identification with parents, teachers and mentors as a possible influence on moral identity development. Krettenauer (2013) has also

identified the increased capacity for self-regulation and volition as mechanisms at play in the formation of moral identity.

Each of the constructs of moral identity we reviewed has unique contributions to make in answering these questions regarding the development of moral identity. The sharp developmental distinction between agency and communion as motivational systems that Frimer and Walker (2009) propose may help us discover critical experiences in moral identity formation that we might have otherwise overlooked. Aquino and colleagues (2002) have clearly demonstrated that a particular set of values correlates with moral and prosocial action in those with a strong moral identity. How do children best acquire these particular values? Aquino and colleagues' insights into the extent to which and under what conditions a person's moral identity become situationally strengthened or suppressed can also inform our understanding of how moral identity best develops. Schlenker's (2008) insights into the importance of integrating values and action can point us to more effective methods of moral education and development. Although significant theoretical questions and more work on the developmental processes that contribute to the formation of moral identity remain, we are indebted to these three constructs for helping us to imagine more effective approaches to moral education.

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