NARNIAN VIRTUES
C.S. Lewis as Character Educator

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This article argues that C.S. Lewis is a highly relevant but largely neglected character educator for 21st century schools characterized by diversity. We make the case for the objective reality of Lewis's *Tao*, the moral law recognized in the moral precepts of a wide range of cultures and traditions. We show why these universal precepts are foundational for character education, whether in the school or home, that help young people understand what is truly good and right and live accordingly. The article describes the Narnian Virtues character education research project, which tested a curriculum based upon 3 novels in Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* and was implemented over a 6-week period with 160, 9–14 year-old students in 5 socially and ethnically diverse United Kingdom schools. We report our findings, consider implications, and make recommendations for further research, most notably for increasing parents' engagement with the Narnian Virtues project and their children's character education.

Remarkably, C.S. Lewis offers us both the educational resources—such as his bestselling Narnia novels for young readers that have sold more than 100 million copies in 47 languages—and a philosophical basis for character education underpinned by his wide literary and cultural scholarship. Here we suggest that his theoretical contribution to the ethical basis of character education in *The Abolition of Man* (1943) and his *Chronicles of Narnia*, which exemplify the development of good character, warrant more attention from character educators and researchers than they have received so far.

Lewis's Narnia novels are excellent examples of literature's ability to illuminate how events are shaped and character is formed by the moral choices we make. Yet contemporary character education may have neglected the Narnia novels because they are perceived, too narrowly, as Christian allegory, when they are in fact "part of the great moral tradition of

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Journal of Character Education, Volume 11(2), 2015, pp. 71–86 ISSN 1543-1223

humankind that Lewis in *The Abolition of Man* (1943) calls the *Tao*" (Tankard, 2007, p. 72). The *Tao* is a Chinese term for the path and the order of the universe: "It is Nature, it is the Way, the Road" (Lewis, 1943, p. 15). Lewis argues that the *Tao* is innate and universal; it is a law like gravity in the physical sciences but with one important difference: we have a choice as to whether we obey it—and have harmonious lives—or not.

Lewis's *Tao* draws extensively upon the great texts of different religions, cultures, and traditions as diverse as the ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, Old Norse, Chinese, Indian, Roman, Greek, Australian Aboriginal, and American Indian. The breadth of Lewis's scholarship (MacSwain & Ward, 2010) is evident in his recognition of virtues affirmed by classical works ranging from the *Iliad* to *Beowulf*. For Lewis (1967/1995), "the same indispensable platitudes will meet us in culture after culture" (p. 53).

Table 1 provides a brief description of the "8 Laws" of the *Tao* identified by Lewis (1943, Appendix).

UNIVERSALITY AND OBJECTIVITY IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

The universality of core ethical values—those that we have a moral obligation to recognize and respect—is a central tenet of character education and of Lewis's thinking about schooling. Indeed, he declares: "The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary color, or, indeed of creating a new sun and new sky for it to move in" (Lewis, 1943, p. 30).

In *The Abolition of Man,* Lewis cites the cross-cultural affirmation of the Laws of the *Tao* as evidence of their universality. In addition to considering this empirical evidence, he asks us to try to imagine a completely different sort of morality "where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him" (Lewis, 1952/1981 p. 17). That we do not approve of such behavior is taken as an indication that human beings have a shared sense of right and wrong. Lewis points out that selfishness is never admired wherever you are in the world and that even when a child says, "It's not fair," he or she is appealing to an innate sense of justice. Lewis (1952/1981) argues that "there would be no sense in saying that a footballer had committed a foul unless there was some agreement about the rules of football" (p. 16) and that in the "game of life" we instinctively recognize behavior that "breaks the rules" when we see it.

It is notable that Lewis's belief in the universality of virtues is congruent with contemporary discussions of character education. For instance, Lickona (2004) argues that the "10 essential virtues" he proposes as aims of character education are "found in cultures and religions around the world" (p. 8). Similarly, the Character Education Partnership (2010), in explicating its "11 principles of effective character education," asserts that "the core values promoted by quality character education" must "meet the classical tests of *universality ... and reversibility."*

Although Lewis (1952/1981) uses the term "law of nature" for the *Tao* to indicate that everyone knows it "by nature" (p. 17), he acknowledges "though I myself am a theist, and indeed a Christian, I am not here attempting any indirect argument for theism … Whether [there is] a supernatural origin for the *Tao* is a question I am not here concerned with" (Lewis, 1943, p. 32). Of course, the existence of a "moral sense" in human beings is consistent with an idea central to both Christian teaching and character education (Pike, 2009). Since the time of Paul it has been acknowledged that, "there is a 'natural moral law' written on the human heart that enables us to know right from wrong" (Lickona, 2013, p. 10). Significantly, at the same time that Paul was writing that those who are not Jews "show the work of the law written in their hearts" (Romans 2: 15), the Roman statesman Cicero was writing that there is a "true law" that is "unchangeable and eternal" (1942 *De Republica*, 11:33). This emphasis on what is

TABLE 1
The 8 Laws of the Tao, From Lewis's The Abolition of Man

Lewis' 8 Laws of the Tao	*Examples in The Abolition of Man*
1. The Law of General Benificence	"Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you." (Chinese, *Analects of Confucius*)
Refraining from murder or bringing any sort of misery and suffering upon one's fellows; not being greedy, cruel or telling lies. Showing kindness and goodwill, doing one another good not evil, enjoying society and human companionship and loving others as oneself.	"Love thy neighbor as thyself." (Jewish, *Leviticus*)
	"By the fundamental Law of Nature Man [is] to be preserved as much as possible." (Locke, *Treatises of Civil Govt.*)
2. The Law of Special Benificence	"Be blameless to thy kindred. Take no vengeance even though they do thee wrong" (Old Norse, *Sigrdrifumal*)
Specifically refers to the duties of brothers, sisters, wives, husbands, children as well as rulers. As human beings we have special obligations and owe particular duties of care to those of our closer and wider family.	"If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith." (Christian, *New Testament*)
	"Natural affection is a thing right and according to Nature." (Greek Epictetus)
3. Duties to Parents, Elders, Ancestors	"For him who fails to honor [father and mother] every work of piety is in vain. This is the first duty." (Hindu, *Janet*)
Honoring one's father and mother by supporting them, caring for them and fulfilling one's obligations to them by showing proper respect, even when they are dead.	"To care for parents." (Greek, Epictetus)
	"You will see them take care … of old men." (American Indian)
4. Duties to Children and Posterity	"The Master said, Respect the young." (Chinese, *Analects of Confucius*)
Providing for the education of the young and respecting children.	"The killing of … the young boys and girls who are to go to make up the future strength of the people, is the saddest part…." (American Indian)
	"Children, the old, the poor, etc. should be considered as lords of the atmosphere." (Hindu, Janet)
5. The Law of Justice	"If the native made a 'find' of any kind (e.g., a honey tree) and marked it, it was thereafter safe for him…." (Australian Aborigines)
Sexual justice, honesty and justice in court. One must be faithful to one's spouse and not commit adultery. One should not steal and should render to each person his rights. The legal system should not be partial and treat the poor worse than the rich.	"Justice is the settled and permanent intention of rendering to each man his rights." (Roman, Justinian)
	"Whoso takes no bribe … well pleasing is this to Samas." (Babylonian ERE)
6. The Law of Good Faith and Veracity	"I sought no trickery, nor swore false oaths." (Anglo-Saxon. *Beowulf*)
Keeping good faith and keeping promises. Fraud, lying, falsehoods are prohibited. Perjury is condemned as is saying one thing and doing another.	"Hateful to me as are the gates of Hades is that man who says one thing, and hides another in his heart." (Greek, Homer, *Iliad*)
	"I have not spoken falsehood." (Ancient Egyptian, Confession of the Righteous Soul)

(Table continues on next page)

"unchangeable" is especially germane in the 21st century, as we shall see.

It has been contended that for many educational theorists today, "Education is no longer understood in terms of training that enables us to pursue a true conception of reality" (Spears & Loomis, 2009, p. 69). In fact, there are "indications that the education community as a whole … has bought into the idea that the traditional conception of knowledge, that is,

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Lewis' 8 Laws of the Tao	*Examples in The Abolition of Man*
7. The Law of Mercy *The poor, the sick, the disabled, the weak should be cared for. It should be possible for a prisoner to be set free. Widows, orphans and old men should be looked after. We must always be tender enough to weep.*	"In the Dalebura tribe a woman, a cripple from birth, was carried about by the tribespeople in turn until her death at the age of 66 … They never desert the sick." (Australian Aborigines) "When thou cutest down thine harvest … and hast forgot a sheaf … thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow." (Jewish, *Deuteronomy*) "Nature confesses that she has given to the human race the tenderest hearts, by giving us the power to weep. This is the best part of us." (Roman, Juvenal)
8. The Law of Magnanimity *Not only should we not injure, but we should protect others from being injured—death is not to be feared.*	"The Master said, Love learning and if attacked be ready to die for the Good Way." (Ancient Chinese, *Analects of Confucius*) "There are two kinds of injustice: the first is found in those who do an injury, the second in those who fail to protect another from injury when they can." (Roman, Cicero). "Men always knew that when force and injury was offered they might be defenders of themselves; they knew that howsoever men may seek their own commodity, yet if this were done with injury unto others it was not to be suffered, but by all men and by all good means to be withstood." (English, Hooker, *Laws of Eccl. Polity*)

knowledge in the sense that the vast majority of mankind has conceived it for thousands of years, is no longer valid" and that educators today do not now believe in "an objective reality to knowledge" which was "taken for granted, especially prior to the twentieth century" (Loomis & Rodriguez, 2009, p. 101–102). Choosing only to acknowledge a range of subjective interpretations of what is true and right does not provide an adequate basis for character education, as Lewis (1943) points out:

> In the older systems both the kind of man [sic] the teachers wished to produce and their motives for producing him were prescribed by the *Tao*—a norm to which the teachers themselves were subject and from which they claimed no liberty to depart… It was but old birds teaching young birds to fly.… Values are now [regarded as] mere natural phenomena. Judgments of value are to be produced in the pupil as part of the conditioning. (pp. 37–38)

The rise of moral relativism has had a profound influence on education and schooling. In much of the world, "values appear to be constantly changing" so that "children are presented with and exposed to all kinds of opinions about right and wrong" (Arthur, 2005, p. 249). By contrast, Lewis's vision of the *Tao* stands in direct opposition to the notion that morality is just a matter of opinion or is determined by majority vote. What he asserts is summed up as "the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are" (Lewis, 1943, p. 16). Taylor (1989) reminds us that for the ancients, "The good we love is in the order of things, as well as in the wise soul, aligned with nature" (p. 255). Higgins (2010) calls attention to the gulf between this ancient view (rooted in the *Tao*) and modern values talk:

> moderns are apt to say that something is good because we value it … whereas in classical ethics, the good is importantly outside and independent of our will, and it is this very independence that compels our

> allegiance and helps shape our lives. (p. 221)

Lewis (1952/1981) compares natural moral law to New York City existing quite independently of what people happen to believe about it and regards the recognition of this natural law as foundational for schooling in general and the education of character in particular:

> This thing which I have called for convenience the *Tao,* and which others may call Natural Law or … the First Principles of Practical Reason … is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgments. If it is rejected, all value is rejected. If any value is retained, it is retained. (Lewis, 1943/1978, p.29)

The basis of virtues in character education is of critical importance. Acknowledging that moral values stand outside of us and must be independent of our subjectivities is vital because, as Lewis (1967/1995) pointed out, "unless the measuring rod is independent of the things measured, we can do no measuring" (p. 73). To put it another way, I can only recognize certain virtues in character education if I have already accepted particular moral claims:

> This thing that judges… that decides which of them [instincts] should be encouraged, cannot itself be [one of those instincts]. You might as well say that the sheet of music which tells you, at a given moment, to play one note on the piano and not another, is itself one of the notes on the keyboard. (Lewis, 1952/1981, p. 20)

Moral relativism and subjectivism make it impossible to provide meaningful character education. College professor Christina Hoff-Sommers (1985) came to that conclusion when she tried to find an act that her first-year philosophy students would universally condemn as morally wrong:

> Torturing a child, starving someone to death, humiliating an invalid in a nursing home. Their reply is often, "torture, starvation, and humiliation may be bad for you or for me, but who are we to say they are bad for someone else?" (p. 164).

Parents tend to take a more traditional, less relativistic view of values. For instance, Jean Bethke Elshtain (2008) was dismayed to discover that her fifth-grade daughter, attending a school in a New England college town, was being taught that values were simply "subjective opinions." When she asked her daughter if slavery (which entailed torture, starvation, and humiliation) was "wrong," her response was, "I think slavery is wrong … but that is just my opinion" (p. 88). The importance of parents in character education should not be underestimated, and no doubt the dialogue in the home following such teaching would illustrate what Lewis (1943) meant when he hoped that "real mothers" would preserve "the sanity of the human race" in stark contrast to "the plans of Educationalists" (p. 60). The mother whose daughter had been taught that her views of slavery were only "subjective" shrewdly observed that it is a serious matter "in an age of human rights par excellence" that there are such "forces at work in our world that undermine the ontological claims of human dignity" (Elshtain, 2008, p. 91).

Recent evidence that ontological claims regarding morality are in fact being undermined also come from Smith's (2011) study of a national sample of 230 young American adults, aged 18 to 23. He found that 60% were "moral individualists" who believed that a value such as honesty is a personal choice rather than a moral obligation. Half of these moral individualists were "strong moral relativists" who believed that "there are not definite rights and wrongs for everybody" (p. 27).

By contrast, "in its underlying philosophy, character education rejects moral relativism and reasserts the idea of moral objectivity" (Lickona, 1996, p. 299). Indeed, Peterson and Seligman's (2004) *Character Strengths and Virtues* offers fresh evidence of universal virtues that challenge the assumptions of relativism. They present a framework of six virtues that are affirmed throughout history and across

cultures: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. This research confirms what Lewis asserted when he described the *Tao* and offered it as an objective basis for the education of character across cultures.

Lewis saw the danger of schooling that seeks to persuade young people that morality is merely a matter of taste or opinion. The message of *The Abolition of Man* is that education will not do justice to our humanity if it is based upon subjective, personal feelings. Lewis would certainly have agreed with Hunter's (2000) view:

> The problem is that character cannot develop out of values "nominated" for promotion, "consciously chosen" by a committee, negotiated by a group of diverse professionals, or enacted into law by legislators. Such values have, by their very nature, lost the quality of sacredness, their commanding character, and thus their power to inspire and to shame. (p. 225)

According to Hunter (2000) in *The Death of Character*, the social and cultural conditions for the cultivation of good character have been eroded, and "what we think of as 'innate' in our moral sensibilities derive from cultural resources that are dwindling" (p. 227). According to Lewis, our knowledge of virtue—of the *Tao*—really is innate, but that knowledge needs to be nurtured, brought to maturity, and translated into the virtuous habits that make up good character. It seemed to us that nurturing young readers' ethical responses to the Narnia novels would be a viable way to deepen their understanding of virtue and aid their progress on the road to character.

THE NARNIAN VIRTUES RESEARCH PROJECT

The Narnian Virtues research project developed from the premise that universal virtues such as courage, humility, and gratitude—virtues exemplified in Lewis's Narnia novels—offer common ethical ground for character education in the schools of increasingly pluralistic societies. We undertook to design a character education curriculum based on three books in the Narnia series and to study its impact on how young readers come to understand and act upon the virtues embodied by the characters in these novels.

The Narnian Virtues research is informed by the design and findings of the Knightly Virtues character education project based at the University of Birmingham's Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, which developed a literary curriculum and program of activities based on four stories. To date the program has been experienced by nearly 30,000 nine to 11 year olds in schools across Britain. The Jubilee Centre's encouraging findings from a trial conducted to assess the impact of the program are reported by Arthur, Harrison, Carr, Kristjánsson, and Davison (2014) and recently explored in detail in the context of delivering character education through literature by Carr and Harrison (2015). The Narnian Virtues project seeks to build upon the Jubilee Centre's Knightly Virtues, and is also informed by previous research and scholarship on the importance of Lewis as a character educator (see Pike, 2013, Chapter 1) and of literature in character education (Bohlin, 2005; Carr, 2005; Edgington, 2001; Leming, 2000; McCulloch & Mathieson, 1995; Pike, 2013, 2014). The Narnian Virtues project expands previous literature-based character education interventions in two ways: (a) by developing a curriculum based on literary protagonists (the Pevensies) who are children, of an age similar to that of the students reading the novels, and (b) by extending the curriculum beyond the 9 to 11 age range of the Knightly Virtues project to include middle (or, in the United Kingdom context, secondary) school students up to 14 years of age. While every developmental period is significant and formative in its own way, the middle and early secondary school years are a time when young people must make the transition to young adulthood and negotiate increasing social and peer pressures. Therefore, we wanted to include this age group in the

Narnian Virtues project to see what positive contribution the curriculum might be able to make to moral growth during this important period.

The three Narnia novels we selected as the basis of our curriculum were *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (Lewis, 1950/1989a), *Prince Caspian* (Lewis, 1951/1989b), and *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* (Lewis, 1955/1989c). In these three novels, we see 12 universal virtues consistent with the *Tao* that are, at critical moments in the stories, displayed—or not displayed—by the characters.

The land of Narnia itself is a world which, despite the changes since the books were written, young readers can still enter. The heroes of the Narnia novels are the same age as those young people for whom the Narnian Virtues curriculum is designed (Peter is believed to be in his early teens in the novels, Susan entering her teens, Edmund is 10 in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* and Lucy 8). They experience and grapple with sibling and familial dynamics that evolve through the three novels. Significantly, the Pevensies, and their cousin Eustace in the last of the three novels, are "educated" in a schooling system that is under scrutiny by Lewis, who has Professor Kirk in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* repeatedly question what the children are actually taught in school (see Pike, 2013 for an application of Lewis's thought to 21st century schooling).

The Narnia novels are generally marketed for readers between 9 and 13 years of age, corresponding with the scope of our Narnian Virtues project. In the United Kingdom, when the

TABLE 2
The 12 Narnian Virtues

Wisdom (including prudence)	Exercising good judgment; discerning what is true and good and choosing the best course of action.
Love (including kindness)	Acting selflessly for the good of another, without seeking recognition or reward; putting the interests of others ahead of our own; willingness to sacrifice for the sake of another; doing good for others by being kind, caring, generous, and loyal.
Fortitude	Doing what is right and necessary in the face of difficulty; the mental and emotional strength to handle hardship, deal with disappointment, overcome obstacles, and endure suffering; exhibiting qualities such as confidence, courage, patience, perseverance, endurance, and resilience when challenging circumstances demand them.
Courage (an aspect of fortitude)	Overcoming fear when facing physical danger or social pressure to do what's wrong.
Self-Control	Self-restraint; the mastery and moderation of one's desires, emotions, impulses, and appetites; resisting temptation; delaying gratification in order to achieve a higher goal.
Justice	Treating others as they deserve to be treated; fairness; being impartial.
Forgiveness	Letting go of anger or resentment toward others who have caused one injury of some kind, even while holding an offender accountable for his action.
Gratitude	Feeling and expressing thanks for benefits received.
Humility	Being aware of one's strengths and shortcomings; admitting and correcting flaws and failures; being free from pride and arrogance.
Integrity (including honesty)	Sticking to and standing up for moral principles; following one's conscience; being honest with oneself and others.
Hard Work (including diligence)	Making a strong or determined effort to get a job done or achieve a goal.
Curiosity	Being inquisitive; exhibiting the desire to learn or know something.

BookTrust (2015) presented the best 100 books for children up to 14 years of age (split into four age categories), *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was selected as one of the best books for 9 to 11 year olds. In 2015, the novel was included in *Time* magazine's 100 best young adults' book list, as polled by the National Centre for Illustrated Literature, the Young Readers Center at the Library of Congress and the Every Child a Reader Foundation. On the basis of these indicators, we were satisfied that the Narnia novels are appropriate for readers as young as 9 and believed *Prince Caspian* and *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* to be appropriate subsequent reading for those in their early teens.

The three novels we chose, on the one hand, depict virtuous actions that are admirable and have beneficial consequences and, on the other hand, actions that are not virtuous and generally have negative consequences. In this way, the moral universe of Narnia is consistent with the educational philosophy Lewis (1943/1978) sets out in *The Abolition of Man.* There he points out that "the educational problem is wholly different according as you stand within or without the *Tao.* For those within, the task is to train in the pupil those responses which are in themselves appropriate" (p. 17), and approvingly refers to Aristotle's view that "the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought" (p. 14).

Yet, motives matter in character education (which is more ethically nuanced than approaches based on behaviorism) because "Right actions done for the wrong reasons do not help to build the internal quality or character called a 'virtue', and it is this quality of character that really matters" (Lewis, 1952/1981, p. 80). The Narnian Virtues project therefore sought not only to enhance students' understanding of the Narnian virtues but also their motivation for practicing these virtues. Berkowitz and Bier (2004) point out, character education "has long relied upon an Aristotelian principle that character is formed in large part through habitual behavior that eventually becomes internalized into virtues" (p. 80) and Lewis (1952/1981) appears to be distinctly neo-Aristotelian in this regard as his analogy of the tennis player demonstrates: "What you mean by a good tennis player is the man whose eye and muscles and nerves have been so trained by making innumerable good shots that they can now be relied on" (p. 73). While the premise of neo-Aristotelian-inspired character education is that the more you practice virtue, the better you get, it is also important to acknowledge that performing virtuous actions derive from holding what Snow (2006) calls "virtue-relevant goals" (p. 553). Automatic virtuous behavior, she says, is often goal dependent; there is an internal or personal goal behind the action. "Even though the goal is not present to my conscious awareness at the time of acting, it can be elicited and endorsed through reflection on why I act as I do" (Snow, 2006, p. 553).

There is certainly an important social justice dimension to both character education and the *Chronicles of Narnia*. For instance, in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (Lewis, 1950/1989a), the elder siblings Peter and Susan begin by thinking only of themselves and their family; they just want to rescue their brother Edmund from the White Witch and get back home. Yet, they end up taking their wider obligations seriously, accepting the challenge of battling against injustice and liberating the inhabitants of Narnia from the Witch's tyranny. They develop courage and determination as they pursue the honorable purpose of freeing the Narnians so they can thrive and prosper rather than live in fear. They learn about the importance of generosity of spirit and gratitude, and forgive Edmund for his disloyalty and betrayal. They learn to appreciate qualities of friendship, self-sacrifice and courage, and the importance of doing the right thing even when it costs. Clearly, there are lessons here for us all (Miller, 2010).

In *Prince Caspian* (Lewis, 1951/1989b), the pitfalls of pride are well illustrated and Edmund, for his part, reflects on his own humbling during the children's first visit to Narnia. In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* (Lewis,

1955/1989c) Eustace begins by taunting his cousins and wanting to smash the picture in the bedroom. He is selfish, sullen and surly aboard the ship, thinking of no one but himself and showing no gratitude whatsoever for what he receives. Even after Eustace becomes a dragon, initially he only thinks about how he will be able to lord it over his cousins. However, it is not long before he realizes that all he really wants is to be "friends" rather than being "better" than others.

METHOD

The Narnian Virtues curriculum was intended to help students:

1. Grow in their understanding of the 12 Narnian virtues;
2. Increase their application of those virtues in their own lives; and
3. Develop a personal ethical response to the novel they were reading.

Participants

In total 160 students from 7 classrooms in 5 schools in Yorkshire, United Kingdom, were selected to participate in the pilot study. All attended state (public) schools, no private or grammar schools participated. Although one school had an inclusive Christian ethos and served a largely secular catchment area, the 5 schools reflected the ethnic and economic diversity of the region. Two were located in areas of social priority, with low incomes and high unemployment; the participating primary school bordered this area but was located in a village. The remaining 2 schools educated children who came from the most ethnically and religiously diverse regions of Yorkshire. Two classes in an urban school in Huddersfield (Grades 6 and 8) particularly reflected the high ethnic and religious diversity of their region, with a significant number of Muslim students of mainly Pakistani origin.

Two elementary, or primary school classes (Grades 4 and 5, aged 9 to 11), and two sixth-grade classes (aged 11 to 12) studied *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*. The two sixth-grade classes were in social priority areas: one near Pontefract; the other, in Huddersfield, had the highest ethnic and religious diversity in the project. The Pontefract class was a high-ability class compared with the Huddersfield class, which was smaller (14 students) and of lower ability according to the national tests that ascertain attainment level. The primary school student population was a mix of local children and those who came by school bus from surrounding areas.

Two seventh-grade classes (12 to 13 years old) studied *Prince Caspian.* One was from the school with an inclusive Christian ethos, located in an area of social deprivation; the other, a school based in an affluent and rural village in the Yorkshire dales but one which has a diverse mix of students from the surrounding rural areas and also an urban population from nearby Bradford. Both of the seventh-grade classes were high ability. The final class, the eighth-grade (13 to 14 years old) in the urban and ethnically diverse school in Huddersfield, studied *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*; no educational attainment or socioeconomic data was provided about this class. Table 3 shows the breakdown of students' age and gender.

Procedure

In order to assess the curricula's impact on students' understanding and application of the "Narnian" virtues, the project team included a coinvestigator, Professor Leslie Francis of Warwick University, who drew upon previous work (Francis, 1996) to develop a test instrument that sought to measure the knowledge and application of the Narnian Virtues project on the students. Francis et al.'s development of, and findings from the test instrument (questionnaire #1) are explained in detail in two separate articles (Francis et al., 2016a; Francis et al. 2016b) which refer specifically to the Nar-

TABLE 3
Gender Breakdown of Narnian Virtues Participating Students

School Year	*Total Students*	*Male Students*	*Female Students*
Fourth grade (9–10 years)	21	11	10
Fifth grade (10–11 years)	20	11	9
Sixth grade (11–12 years)	35	16	19
Seventh grade (12–13 years)	56	25	31
Eighth grade (13–14 years)	28	11	17

nian Virtues project. Their development and findings are broadly outlined here.

Questionnaire #1 was developed specifically for the Narnian Virtues project by Francis et al. (2016a) and consisted of nearly 200 questions, a combination of Likert scale and multiple-choice items. Administered at the start and end of the curriculum, questionnaire #1 had three parts:

1. Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues. This tested students' ability to select from a list of various behaviors those actions that were examples of a given Narnian virtue (this was intended to provide a quantitative measure of students' understanding of the 12 target Narnian virtues);
2. The Narnian Character Virtue Scales. These items asked students to rate the extent to which each of the 12 Narnian virtues described them (this was intended to provide a measure of students' behavioral application of the virtues); and
3. Student self-ratings of eight personality and attitude characteristics, three of which were taken from Eysenck and Eysenck's model of personality (1975) and adapted by Francis (1996) for his studies of youth. These eight characteristics (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, the lie scale, self-esteem, empathy, happiness, and theistic beliefs) were not related to the virtue goals of the curriculum. As the project did not include a control group not exposed to the curriculum, these eight personality and attitude characteristics were intended to serve as control variables and were not expected to change between the pretest and posttest.

To provide an additional set of quantitative data, the project team, led by Professor Mark Pike at the University of Leeds, developed an "English teacher" type questionnaire testing understanding of what had been taught in lesson, to be delivered at the start and end of the project. Questionnaire #2 focused entirely on students' understanding of virtues and character. It asked them to:

1. Write definitions for each of the 12 target virtues;
2. When given a particular virtue or vice, name the opposite;
3. Explain what virtues and vices have to do with good character; and
4. Explain how a person develops good character.

The project team, in collaboration with teachers developed a curriculum for each novel. This was based upon a scoping of virtues in each novel, carried out by Lewis scholars Ward and Heck (see Heck, 2005; MacSwain & Ward, 2010). Every student participating in the Narnian Virtues project received a high quality student pack containing a copy of the novel, a student workbook and journal, and also highlighter pens and Post-It notes to use in the activities. The workbook for each of the three novels contained selected extracts, which depicted the 12 Narnian virtues and their corresponding vices. Students were

asked to identify, explain, and apply the virtue(s) or vice(s) in each extract. First, they were asked to highlight (yellow for vices, green for virtues) the virtues or vices they could identify in the extract. Next, they were asked to explain how the fictional character described in the extract had displayed the virtue or vice. The third stage of the activity asked the students to recall a time when they displayed the virtue or vice in question. The repetitive nature of the activities was intended to enable the student, over time, to become more comfortable and practiced in reflecting on virtues, vices, and character.

Additional activities were a thought-bubble empathy exercise, which asked students to write what they thought a given character in the story was thinking at a particular point in the action; a "hot-seat" exercise where a class member played the part of a character and had to answer classmates' questions put to that character; a "virtues tree" for the class to collaboratively build; and a newspaper article activity that asked students to write a newspaper report based on an extract of the novel. For example, a seventh-grade class wrote articles either from a Telmarine or a Narnian-perspective newspaper, recognizing the differences in how the characters' actions would be presented by the two narratives. The student journals offered a space for students' more personal reflections on what they were gaining from the curriculum and, in particular, how their new understanding of the virtues was affecting them in their day-to-day lives. Students were also asked to develop and follow a plan for making progress in three virtues at which they most wanted to improve.

Finally, the journal included space for a parent or guardian's comment and the student's own feedback on the project. Some parents took this opportunity to share their positive responses to a character education project delivered in school:

> This project has been a good opportunity for my daughter to reflect on virtues relating to herself—her own character traits and also virtues and vices within topics/books etc. that she is studying.
>
> Stories are a great way of helping children, and adults, think about their virtues and want to make improvements.

The parental response to the project, not least in terms of the capacity of literature to motivate so that students "want to make improvements," is an encouraging basis on which to build in future research.

Findings

Our findings are relevant to three questions:

1. Did the curriculum increase students' understanding of the 12 Narnian virtues?
2. Did it increase the extent to which they lived out the project's target virtues in their own lives?
3. Did it help students develop a personal, ethical response to the novels?

The quantitative-focused project subteam, Francis et al., utilized paired *t*-test routines to analyze the data returned in Questionnaire #1. This revealed:

1. A statistically significant increase in students' mean scores from pre- to post-test measured by the Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues instrument, which measured their ability to correctly identify those behaviors that expressed a particular virtue. The overall increase in mean score was 7.2%, $p < .001$. See the separate article by Francis et al. (2015b) for a more detailed analysis of this data as it relates to the test instrument.
2. No statistically significant change (that is, a negligible difference between the mean scores on tests one and two) in students' responses to the Narnian Character Virtue Scales, which assessed their self-ratings of the extent to which the 12 virtues described them; and

3. No statistically significant change (again, a negligible difference between the mean scores on tests one and two) in students' self-ratings on the eight personality and attitude characteristics used as control variables.

Encouraging data came from the shorter "English teacher" questionnaire (Questionnaire #2), testing students' ability to define the 12 virtues and explain how one develops good character. Table 4 indicates the increased mean scores (out of a possible 50) between the beginning and end of the project for all but the eighth-grade class (which did not return test two scores). In every class that did return pre-test and post-test scores, there was a considerable increase in students' understanding of virtues and how they relate to good character.

Analysis

Did the curriculum succeed in helping students to make a personal ethical response to the novel they read? In seeking to answer that question, we drew from focus groups, interviews, and students' journals.

A sample of student workbooks from each class was studied in depth. Samples were selected by consulting the student scores from the qualitative pre- and posttests and from the student data provided by the teachers. This was to ensure a representative sample of students in each class based on sex, ability and socioeconomic background (those in receipt of free school meals, and a mix of those whose test scores were noticeably high, or increased substantially between test one and two).

The journals revealed both commonalities and differences between the different age groups in the virtues that students chose as the ones they most wanted to develop. Since the students' chosen virtues were handwritten in their journals, the data were collected through a search of all the journals and entered into Excel, where total numbers for each virtue could be identified. The top three virtues chosen by the youngest two classes were self-control, hard work, and humility, in that order. The top three virtues chosen by the two sixth-grade classes were first, self-control; second, courage; and, tied for third, love, humility, curiosity, and fortitude. For the two seventh-grade classes, self-control and courage were tied for first place, followed by humility and hard work. The oldest class (Grade 8) selected, in joint first place, self-control and courage; in joint second, wisdom and fortitude; and in third place, hard work. Justice did not appear in the top three for any of the classes, and only a few students in the youngest two classes selected forgiveness.

These data take on greater meaning when we consider the environment in which the students are growing up. For example, an exercise for *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* invited students, following an extract about Edmund's betrayal of his siblings for more Turkish Delight and the Witch's promise that he will become a prince, to identify what their own "Turkish Delight" might be. A response that emerged repeatedly in the workbooks and

TABLE 4
Mean Scores by Class for Ability to Define the Virtues: Change Over 6 Weeks

Class Year	*Test 1 Class Mean*	*Test 2 Class Mean*	*Gain*
Fourth grade	1.7	15.4	13.7
Fifth grade	12.0	30.3	18.3
Sixth Grade (1)	3.1	21.5	18.4
Sixth Grade (2)	1.1	15.6	14.5
Seventh Grade (1)	5.6	24.0	18.4
Seventh Grade (2)	10.0	22.2	12.2

journals was the use of mobile phones and the Internet, particularly at night and, as a result, not getting enough sleep. The students demonstrated an ability to identify the vice of a lack of self-control exhibited by a character in their novel and then to recognize it in their own lives as stemming from peer pressure to be socially available and online at all times. One 12-year-old wrote:

> When I admitted my Internet addiction to my mum, she limited my time online for a week.… It was the right thing to do. Before I was worried and forgot to eat. I was that addicted.

Here, parental engagement in the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum, in collaboration with the child, is seen to be especially effective—a finding that prompts us to work with parents more closely in the next phase of our research.

The delivery of the curriculum took place during the Ramadan period, which provided Muslim students with the opportunity to reflect on the virtue of self-control and its application to their lives. Another 12-year-old girl wrote:

> I did fasting so I didn't eat anything for a whole day. I do fasting to understand how poor peoples' life is like.

Journal entries such as this, considered side by side with the choices students made in selecting virtues they needed to foster to a greater degree, suggest to us a sincere desire to grow in the virtues they need to meet the moral challenges of their lives.

Focus groups and student interviews were conducted in each participating class. There was one focus group per class, with in-depth follow-on interviews with two of the students from each focus group. The focus groups were selected by teachers, with a request that we speak to a representative sample of students. Participation in the interviews was not compulsory, however, and it is likely that those students who volunteered or agreed to participate would be confident in speaking to visiting researchers, or have feedback on the project that they were keen to share. We talked with ethnically diverse students and an even mix of male and female students. With the exception of the two primary school classes, students were already in academic sets and therefore of largely matched ability in each class.

The focus groups and interviews were semi-structured, consisting of planned questions, which, to allow comparisons, were used across groups. We took a flexible approach to expanding or following up on the students' responses, to encourage their open and honest feedback and reflections on the project's impact on their lives. Interviews and focus groups were both video- and audio-recorded, and the audio files were professionally transcribed. The transcriptions were analyzed to identify notable responses and points of commonality across the different groups.

In the interviews and focus groups, students were asked how well they felt they could engage with the Narnia novel they had read. Again, the student response revealed an encouraging level of engagement not just with the specific Narnia text, but also with reading as an activity. One 12-year-old boy, reading *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, explained:

> I think it's been useful reading the book in class because I don't, well, don't read at all at home because I've never really liked reading … but now when we've read it as a class it's kind of made me want to read it a bit more than I would another book.

This student's female classmate added:

> I'd agree with [him] as well. I never used to read at home and then come to school, we read this book and it were different. And I'd never seen myself reading this book and then I took it home and read it and it's different, isn't it?

A 13-year-old girl, participating in the Narnian Virtues curriculum, said of the relevance of *Prince Caspian*: "I still feel like, even though it's written so many years ago, virtues and vices still exist now and it's still as important as it was then to show virtues."

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this classroom study of the Narnian Virtues character education curriculum demonstrated an increase in virtue literacy on both questionnaires. Most valuable, in our judgment, were the personal responses from the participating students, describing how they were trying to apply the virtues of Lewis's fictional characters to their own lives. Data collection over a longer period of time would enable us to collect important longitudinal data on young people's character building activities (see, i.e., Bamber & Pike, 2013). While further research is needed to demonstrate whether such responses will be representative of a larger sample of students, the Narnian Virtues research project and curriculum demonstrates that schoolchildren of this age—regardless of gender, sex, religion, ethnicity or socioeconomic status—have the capacity and willingness to reflect on universal *Tao*-based virtues and rise to the challenge of trying to practice them in their own conduct.

To build on this initial study, we are designing and implementing a 3-year research project to further test the Narnian Virtues character education curriculum. Students will have the opportunity to read three or four Narnia novels each year as they mature and progress through their schooling. We hope to see a cumulative impact from this 3-year engagement—a deepening of both virtue literacy and behavioral application. In the next phase of the research, we also plan to compare the character development outcomes for those students who work closely with their parents on practicing the Narnian virtues in family life, given the importance of parenting (Arthur, 2015; Berkowitz & Grych, 1998; Lickona, 2004, Chapter 3; Paterson, 2011) in the development of good character, with outcomes for those students who do not collaborate in this way with their parents.

Our future goals also include broadening the project beyond the United Kingdom. Inviting schools and students from a range of countries and educational settings—including secular schools, faith-based schools, and home-schooled students—will, we expect, deepen our insights into how the Narnia novels can be used to help children come to know, value, and act upon the virtues that are central to living life well. In doing so we hope that C.S. Lewis's contribution to the theory and practice of character education (Pike, 2013), which has gone unnoticed for so long, will come to be increasingly valued. Findings from this first phase of the Narnian Virtues project demonstrate the relevance and richness of both *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Abolition of Man* as character education resources and lend support to the view that Lewis is a character educator of seminal importance for teachers, young people and their parents.

Acknowledgment: The research informing this article was made possible by a grant from The John Templeton Foundation (Grant number 56369).

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