Making the Case for Values/Character Education:
A Brief Review of the Literature

Introduction

"Rooted in the Greek word 'Charakter', the term character has come to mean the constellation of strengths and weaknesses that form and reveal who we are.... Assessing our character means taking an inventory of our dominant thoughts and actions."

(Templeton Foundation, 1999).

How do character and values develop?
Do our values develop in stages like some experts have thought?
Can school experiences facilitate the development of values?
What is the relationship between values and behavior?
Why is it important to teach values?
What approaches are used to teach values? How effective are they?

These are some of the research questions that psychologists and educators have sought to answer during the past century. This paper highlights relevant theory and research that form the bases for teaching values.

It looks at some of the concepts (aspects about behavior or mental processes) and principles (relationships between concepts) that support the need for values education[1]. The summary chart at the end of this paper lists major research questions that educational psychologists and teaching practitioners have sought to answer, along with summaries and relevant findings.

Although Character Education is "broad in scope and difficult to define" (Otten, 2000), character education is as old as education itself. The two broad purposes of education in virtually every society are to "help people become smart, and to help them become

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[1] For example, Intelligence is a concept, while the idea that students with high intelligence tend to achieve more is a principle that expresses the relationship between intelligence and achievement.

good" (Lickona, 1993). From the earliest days of Western civilization, character education took the form of stories and mentorship. Plato learned from Socrates not only through their engaging conversations, but also by traveling and living with Socrates and embracing the qualities he observed in his teacher. Previously, stories have formed the bases for transmitting culture and history, as well as providing examples of positive traits and moral lessons (for example, Aesop's fables, and a variety of fairy tales). Today, while stories are still powerful vehicles for character education, the process is intensified in schools, where the majority of children spend the greater part of their days.

Knowledge Base for Values/Character Education
The modern roots of character education in the USA can be traced to the works of educational philosophers such as John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead, and psychologist E. L. Thorndike. In the early part of the 20th Century, both Dewey and Whitehead argued for the education of the "whole person" (Dewey, 1916), and for education to be useful (Whitehead, 1929). Thorndike, a behaviorist, presented the classic Stimulus-Response framework. He noted that learning results from the associations formed between stimuli and responses. In 1926, Thorndike conducted a five-year character education inquiry to evaluate moral education and construct an inventory of useful values.

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1932/1965) is most notable for posing cognitive, intellectual, and moral development in stages. Moreover, he believed that "schema" were necessary for cognitive development, and that those structures changed over time through the processes of assimilation (i.e. interpreting events in light of existing schema) and accommodation (constructing new schema to make sense of the environment). Kohlberg's (1969/1984) theory of moral development also posed stages through which children must pass in order to move to a "higher stage" of development (See Appendix A). He also popularized the use of "moral dilemmas" as one method for fostering increasingly higher levels of moral development. Carol Gilligan (1982), a student of Kohlberg, noted that the generally accepted stage theories of moral development were derived solely from research on men. She proposed that men and women have different orientations toward moral development (See Appendix B). For women, morality is concerned with caring and responsibility, while men have a "justice orientation" (i.e. determining what is/is not allowable). For example, when boys have a disagreement on the playground, they are apt to resolve it based upon the rules that have been established, while girls will often quit playing in order to preserve the relationships.

Living Values Activities promote cycles of empowerment and excellence, through a

values-based atmosphere, which allow students to move to increasingly higher levels of moral development. Using values stimuli (reflection, games and stories, as well as content lessons), even young children can exhibit the highest levels of development described by both Kohlberg and Gilligan: i.e. Kohlberg's idea of a "principled conscience" and Gilligan's principle of a nonviolent "responsibility orientation".

Current theory and recent research has led to new understandings about moral development, knowledge, and learning, and their relation to the teaching of values/character education. Stage theories of development have yielded to theories that acknowledge the multifaceted nature of human development and learning. Howard Gardner and Robert Sternberg have gained notoriety with their notions of multiple inteligences and the triarchic nature of the mind respectively. Gardner's work identifies several distinct forms of intelligence, including "inter-personal" (social skills) and "intra-personal" (insight, metacognition) intelligence, both of which are central aspects of values/character education. Sternberg's work brings to light several information processing sub-processes which interact to determine behavior, particularly the ability to adapt to and shape the present environment, an important consideration for creating a values-based atmosphere in a school.

Vigotsky highlighted the importance of social interaction in learning. According to Vigotsky (1978), "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later, on the individual level." His notion of the "zone of proximal learning" is another of his contributions, explaining the importance of a certain time span during which learning can occur. The social skills children need to function effectively are often developed and refined within the context of a character education program.

Subject Matter that Matters
The conventional way of viewing the problem school subject matter goes like this: There is a huge and growing mountain of things to know. Therefore they must select what is most important to learn and what will provide the best foundation for going on and learning more. Everything beyond that is pedagogy--the art of ensuring that students master and retain what has been presented. (Bereiter, 2002).

The idea of helping students understand their world is a generally accepted aim of education. However, this has a different meaning depending on the part of the world one comes from. Cultural differences exist in the purposes of education and in the importance of values/character education. In many societies, especially Eastern societies, the moral dimension of education is the top priority. This may be traced to those societies' emphases on the collective vs. the individual, "…one may even say that

the social or moral dimension is the primary aim of Chinese and Japanese education. Cognitive knowledge is respected only when it serves the moral aim." (Cheng, 1998). This is in dramatic contrast to the pre-occupation with individual rights and freedoms seen in the USA. Examples of this can be seen throughout Western systems of education: Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for special needs students in the USA; small class sizes predicated upon the notion that smaller classes mean that teachers can give individual students more attention, and discipline as a classroom management tool to control unwieldy students, as opposed to a trait to be cultivated for its own sake. Increasingly, teachers in both the East and West are feeling the pressure to instill in students large amounts of information, leaving less time for values/character education. Bereiter (2002) notes however, that "what we call knowledge is only belief that has gained acceptance…..there is no value-free knowledge."

Another cultural distinction which makes values/character education seem to be less important among Western, industrialized nations is the emphasis on the external physical world (best represented by science and abstract knowledge) as opposed to the social world (which emphasizes the internal, moral domain).

> "For example, Western culture places a great deal of importance on explicit knowledge about the physical world, and indeed this knowledge is central to much of the educational system…..However, at the same time, in such cultures as Japan and India, knowledge about the social world and how one negotiates one's way within it is valued much more and harnesses far more energy than does knowledge about the physical world." (Gardner, 1984)

Even when values/character education is deemed important in Western school systems, it is often mistakenly thought of as just enabling students to better understand and function in their immediate surroundings: school, home, family, society. It is deeper than that according to Bereiter: "The progression is not from the home out into a wider and wider world. It starts with the whole world and the progression is to deeper levels of understanding" (Bereiter, 2002). It is in this respect that values/character education, when done well, fosters both higher order cognitive skills and deeper intra-personal and emotional intelligence.

In a landmark study of American undergraduate education, Ernest Boyer (1987) sums up the need for values/character education:

> "Education for what purpose? Competence to what end? At a time in life when values should be shaped and personal priorities sharply probed, what a tragedy it would be if the most deeply felt issues, the most haunting questions, the most creative moments were pushed to the fringes...."

Approaches to Values/Character Education
Rather than values/character education being something "added to the plate" of teachers, values/character education may be the <u>plate itself</u>, supporting everything else.

Most psychologists, educators, and policy-makers, concur with the general public that a universal set of values must exist, although differences are expressed as to the origin of those values – coming either from the natural or spiritual realm. Thus, various approaches to teaching values have been developed, depending upon the cultural view of the aims of education, and assumptions about the source of values, as well as how people learn.

Superka, Ahrens and Hedstrom (1976) outlined five basic approaches to teaching values:
1. Inculcation (having students incorporate the standards and norms of his/her referent group or society primarily through modeling, rewards, and sanctions)
2. Moral Development (having students move through the stages of moral reasoning based on higher sets of values, using primarily discussions of "moral dilemmas")
3. Analysis (helping students use a rational, scientific investigation to decide issues of values and ethics, often using case studies)
4. Values Clarification (helping students identify their own and others' values, often with role playing, games or simulations as well as discussions and self-analysis)
5. Action Learning (using values clarification and/or other approaches, providing students with opportunities to put values into practice with social action)

According to Thomas Lickona (1993), all of these approaches are necessary, but none is sufficient, to instill lifelong adherence to high principles. Good values/character education must draw from each of the approaches above: "Schools must help children *understand* core values, *adopt* or commit to them, and then *act upon* them in their own lives."

Each of the three aspects of values/character education (understand, adopt and act) requires specific qualities that must be present for values/character education to be effective:
1. Attention to the emotional side (self-respect, empathy, self-control, humility, etc.), what Lickona (1993) describes as the "bridge between judgment and

action."
2. Competence in skills such as listening and communicating.
3. Will (i.e. mobilizing the judgment and energy to act).
4. Habit (a reliable inner disposition to respond to situations in a good way).

Therefore, a comprehensive, holistic approach to values/character education is recommended, based upon the assumption that everything that goes on in and around students affects their values/character.

Many examples of values/character education programs exist. Most promote a comprehensive framework that involves students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community[2]. Lemming (1993) found that the most effective programs were those that involved the widest range of adults.

Lickona, Schaps, and Lewis (1996) have outlined "Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education" which can be used either to plan or assess a values/character education program (See Appendix C). These principles address the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of values/character development, and also emphasize the importance of a "caring community" in the school. Leming (1993) also found significant gains in student achievement where there was a positive climate for learning.

Silva and Gimbert (2001) reported the results of a two-year investigation of teachers' and interns' sensemaking of character education using the process of Teacher Inquiry (Hubbard and Power, 1993). They found that teachers' natural inquiries fell into four categories: 1) inquiry into self as teacher, 2) inquiry into curriculum/instructional strategies, 3) inquiry into context, 4) inquiry into children's thinking[3].

Teachers posed questions such as:
"How do the beliefs of a teacher impact the way he or she engages children in class meetings?"

"How can I implement a social studies curriculum to build friendships and a stronger classroom community?"

"What instructional strategies and/or curriculum concepts would help third graders

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[2] For example, see The Character Education Partnership, Character Counts, The Giraffe Project, The Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, and Living Values: An Educational Program.
[3] Training programs which focus on these natural inquiries of teachers will likely better prepare teachers to successfully implement the program in their classrooms.

develop respect for others and a sense of social justice?"

"How can I help a particular student gain self-esteem?"

Williams (2000) inadvertently provides these teachers with helpful methods for addressing their concerns by summarizing the suggestions from five major theorists writing for the National Commission on Character Education. All agreed that:
1. Educators must serve as role models.
2. School and classroom climates must be caring, collaborative, and civil.
3. Teachers must establish an interpersonal atmosphere where respect is continually practiced.

The Commission went on to emphasize the following teaching strategies in delivering values/character education:
1. Consensus building
2. Cooperative learning
3. Literature
4. Conflict resolution
5. Discussing and engaging in moral reasoning
6. Service learning

Parker Palmer (1998) has warned however, against reducing conversations about teaching to mere technique. "Our tendency to reduce teaching to questions of technique is one reason we lack a collegial conversation of much duration or depth. Though technique-talk promises the 'practical' solutions that we think we want and need, the conversation is stunted when technique is the only topic: the human issues in teaching get ignored, so the human beings who teach feel ignored as well. When teaching is reduced to technique, we shrink teachers as well as their craft--and people do not willingly return to a conversation that diminishes them."

Beyond the Classroom
Finally, values/character education, done well, can facilitate much needed school and system-wide reforms. Nothing has sparked more attention to school reform in the USA than passage of the "No Child Left Behind Act" (2001). This Act marked a significant shift in federal education policy, providing funding for programs designed to "close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind". An increasing number of public and private schools in the USA have chosen values to define purpose, priorities and outcomes. Schools such as Hyde School in Bath, Maine, also exhort parents: "If you want your children to be people of character, you need to be working on your own character on a regular basis" (Gauld & Gauld,

2002).

Whether the goal is improved achievement, greater accountability, fewer discipline problems, or a better public image, values/character education provides the skills necessary to address issues in a systemic way. Values/character education embodies the disciplines of a Learning Organization (Senge, 2000). Senge and others have shown the value of sustainable educational communities and their importance in societal change.

Summary
This paper discusses the knowledge base for values/character education in the USA. Important educational and psychological theories addressing the cognitive and moral development of children and adults have formed the foundation for most values/character education programs or initiatives. Programs that are comprehensive and holistic, involving multiple partners, show evidence of being more effective than either short-term or piecemeal approaches. Teachers in particular, have needs to understand themselves as teachers, as well as to understand the context in which they teach, and methods and strategies for effectively delivering instruction. Values/character education also has important implications for larger societal changes, by creating schools as learning communities.

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Appendix A
Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

LEVEL	STAGE	CHARACTERISTICS OF STAGE/LEVEL
Preconventional	Stage 1	Punishment - Obedience Orientation
	Stage 2	Instrumental Relativist Orientation (Satisfying one's own needs)
Conventional	Stage 3	Interpersonal Concordance "Good Girl – Nice Boy" Orientation (Behaviour that pleases others; "he means well")
	Stage 4	"Law and Order" Orientation (Authority and rules)
Post-Conventional Autonomous, or Principled	Stage 5	Social – Contract Legalistic Orientation (Individual rights and societal standards)
	Stage 6	Universal Ethical Principle Orientation (Conscience and self-chosen principles)

Source: Kohlberg, (1984) The Stages of Moral Development

Gilligan's Stages of Women's Moral Development

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3
Orientation To Self **(Reference is to self-interest and individual survival)**	**Morality of Care** **(Reference is to others; focus on social participation, self-sacrifice, and responsibility for protection of the dependent and unequal)**	**Morality of Nonviolence** **(Reference is to self and others; focus on independent arbitration of conflicts)**

Source: Gilligan (1982), In a Different Voice.

Appendix C
Eleven Principles of Quality Character Education

1. *Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.*

2. *Character is comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.*

3. *Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.*

4. *The school is a caring community.*

5. *To develop character, the school provides students opportunities for moral action.*

6. *Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.*

7. *Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation for developing good character.*

8. *The school staff is a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.*

9. *Staff and students demonstrate moral leadership.*

10. *The school recruits parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.*

11. *Evaluation of character education assesses the character of the school; the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.*

Source: Character Education Partnership http://www.character.org