LYNN E. SWANER

Educating for Personal

A Review of the Literature

There is an emerging consensus that personal and social responsibility can no longer be viewed as a simplistic, one-dimensional, or discrete construct

WITH ITS NATIONAL REPORT *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College* (2002), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) highlighted the need for higher education to develop "responsible" learners, whose "sense of social responsibility and ethical judgment" (xii) is marked not only by intellectual honesty, but also by "discernment of . . . ethical consequences" of personal actions and "responsibility for society's moral health and for social justice" (24). Students' personal and social responsibility is thus identified as essential to the "learning students need to meet emerging challenges in the workplace, in a diverse democracy, and in an interconnected world" (vii). In considering how colleges and universities might answer this specific call, a review of the literature—conducted under the aegis of AAC&U's Educating for Personal and Social Responsibility project—examines current understandings of personal and social responsibility at the college level, and also identifies unanswered questions that might be explored through systemic inquiry. The findings of this review are discussed here in brief; the full review is available for download from the AAC&U Web site (see www.aacu.org/templeton).

In *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility,* Colby et al. (2003) assert that "before going further we need to address the question: What do we mean by moral and civic education? What is it that we are calling for?" (11). These questions are not easily answered. There is a lack of consensus in the literature about the meaning of terms like morality, responsibility, and character—let alone how to develop and educate for them. This is not an issue of semantics; rather, these

LYNN E. SWANER *is assistant professor of counseling and development at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University, a National Certified Counselor, and an educational consultant.*

various terminologies are reflective of distinct moral "languages" (Nash 1997) in the literature, which generally arise from three perspectives of moral development: that of moral cognition, moral affect, and moral behavior. Although limited in number, there are also a few integrative perspectives that attempt to incorporate these and other personality dimensions in a holistic view of the moral self. An overview of the literature on personal and social responsibility, therefore, must address the divergent strands of theory, research, and pedagogy arising from these four perspectives.

Moral cognition

Theories of moral cognition, which focus on cognitive processes such as reasoning and judging, comprise the predominant conceptual framework in the literature for describing moral development. Representing the foremost theory of this framework, Kohlberg's (1984) model depicts a progression in moral reasoning from a centeredness in the needs of the self (preconventional reasoning), to a growing awareness of community norms and expectations (conventional reasoning), and then to the development of universal moral principles such as justice (postconventional reasoning). Several other theories of moral cognition have arisen as critiques of Kohlberg's model. First, Gilligan (1977, 1982), in modifying Kohlberg's theory to be more descriptive of women's experiences, views an ethic of care (rather than of justice) as the focus of moral development; thus, moral reasoning attempts to balance the needs of—and avoid harm to—both self and others. Secondly, domain theorists of moral development such as Turiel (2002) differ with Kohlberg and assert that individuals "do not hold global conceptions of social right and wrong, but reason very differently about matters of morality, convention, and personal choice" (Nucci 2001, 6).

These theories of moral reasoning—among the most commonly cited in the literature—were primarily developed with children and

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early adolescents. In contrast, Perry's scheme of ethical and intellectual development was among the first examinations of college students' cognition. Through the positions of the Perry scheme, students move from a dualistic world-view that endorses absolute right and wrong, to a recognition of multiple and potentially valid perspectives, and then to a contextually relative approach to judging the adequacy of moral stances. The developmental path described by Perry is echoed in the work of Belenky et al. (1997), who describe women's development of increasingly complex ways of knowing and views of self, and King and Kitchener's (1994) reflective judgment model, which details development in students' justifications of their beliefs about ill-structured problems.

The majority of empirical evidence for moral development during college arises from the moral cognition perspective and from these theories in particular. In their meta-analysis of research on the effects of college attendance, and with specific reference to the prolific research on Kohlberg's model, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) state that increasing complexity in moral reasoning is "a major (if not the major) change that takes place during college" (343). Research on the Perry scheme also shows that students generally develop more complex ways of thinking and valuing during college (Mentkowski, Moeser, and Strait 1983), and King and Kitchener (1994) also report development in reflective judgment during the college years.

Educating for personal and social responsibility, from the perspective of moral cognition, involves promoting students' cognitive development. The literature suggests several approaches as successful in promoting cognitive development. Though Kohlberg views this development as primarily facilitated by dialogue with individuals in more advanced stages of moral reasoning, Berkowitz (1984) found that such discussions—termed "sociomoral discourse"—are particularly effective if students are required to analyze, extend, or logically critique the arguments of others. Additionally, Kohlberg's "just-community model" (though designed for secondary school settings) involves students in democratic self-governance as a means of "promoting individual development through building a group-based moral atmosphere" (Reimer, Paolitto, and Hersh 1983, 237). Finally, Knefelkamp and Widick (Knefelkamp 1999) describe four "Developmental Instruction Variables"—providing structure, experiential learning, diversity, and personalism (collaboration and application of learning), in both course process and content—that can be used in crafting educational contexts facilitative of development along the Perry scheme. Each of these approaches suggests that the primary cognitive task of college is not simple content mastery (the traditional focus of most courses) but, rather, meaningful engagement with content that facilitates development of complex moral judgments and understanding of self as part of larger social contexts.

Moral affect

Affective theorists view emotions—rather than cognition—as the building blocks of moral development. Many critique the relative absence of affect from other theories of moral development, and from Kohlberg's theory in particular, for which "cognitive competence has been the core concept . . . and affective processes have only been dealt with as cognitive arguments" (Villenave-Cremer and Eckensberger 1985, 192). Hoffman (2000) argues that empathy is the primary moral emotion, and that empathic capacities— "psychological processes that make a person have feelings that are more congruent with another's situation than with his own" (30)— are the focus of developmental change. Hoffman portrays empathy development during

late adolescence as culminating in the ability for long-term perspective taking, or understanding that individuals and groups have histories of suffering beyond the present situation. Although they provide a broader psychosocial theory of college student development, Chickering and Reisser (1993) posit that, during college, empathy develops through the formation of mature interpersonal relationships, and they describe the college years as a time of learning to manage and balance emotions, moral and otherwise.

Not much is known empirically, however, about the development of moral affect in college. In their analysis of thirty years of higher education research, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) do not identify any studies related to the development of moral affect or empathy. Yet, there is some promising evidence that it is possible to educate for empathy during the college years. Specifically, Hatcher et al. (1994) report significant gains in empathy scores (as measured by the Interpersonal Reactivity Index) among behavioral psychology students also enrolled in a peer-facilitated curriculum to promote the development of empathy-related skills.

Along these lines, the literature is far more extensive in the area of how to educate for moral affect. Noddings (2002) proposes that moral emotions can be developed through the act of caring for others. Because Noddings (1992) claims that caring "is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors" (17), she views educating for moral development as fostering morally healthy relationships with others who care about the individual. Through the processes of "modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation" (148), authorities and peers provide students with important moral lessons regarding community membership. This is particularly true for formal and informal conversations, both of which "are part of moral education because when they are properly conducted, we learn through them how to meet and treat one another" (146).

The notion of caring as a basis for moral education is applicable to higher education in a number of ways. Many residence halls and other student-life forums already seek to provide caring environments for students as well as personal connections with the campus community. And the number of academic and residential learning communities on campuses is growing steadily, consistent with Noddings's

(1992) assertion that relational continuity is critical for moral development. Although faculty traditionally shy away from addressing emotional content, Noddings's recommendations for both structured and informal conversation can potentially help promote a sense of care and empathy in the classroom. And on a broader level, the affective perspective suggests that a caring campus environment helps students develop not only their own empathic capacities, but also the ability to care for themselves and others.

Moral behavior

A third dimension of personal and social responsibility, moral behavior, attracts the most concern and attention in higher education. A wide range of student behaviors in college are troubling. Wechsler and Wuethrich (2002) report that over 70 percent of traditional-age college students binge drink, and approximately 1,400 students die each year from alcohol-related injuries. Levine and Cureton (1998) provide a menu of other behavioral problems, including a rise over the past two decades in eating disorders (by 58 percent), classroom disruption (by 44 percent), drug abuse (by 42 percent), gambling (by 25 percent), and suicide attempts (by 23 percent). Beyond statistics, Schrader (1999) reports that college students often fail to engage in decisive behavior when facing moral dilemmas involving drugs, cheating, stealing, infidelity, disobeying authority, or peer pressure; in Schrader's research, most students "resolved [such] dilemmas by letting the issue drop, by doing nothing, by going along with the situation or with others in it, and by letting the problem resolve itself somehow" (48).

While there is almost universal concern about these behaviors, it bears mentioning that there is substantial disagreement as to whether and how they may be defined as moral issues. This is true not only for theorists but also for individual students, who often differ on whether they view a given behavior as a moral issue or as a matter of personal choice. For example, Levine and Cureton describe the issue of safe sex—which, they report, 51 percent of sexually active students fail to practice—as one for which students evidenced an "ambiguity

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about the dividing line between health risks and issues of morality" (113). Similarly, Berkowitz (2000) found that a majority of adolescents view self-harm and substance abuse as personal, rather than moral, issues. (Most interestingly, Berkowitz reports that these adolescents tend to use substances more frequently than teens who consider such use a moral issue.)

Regardless of whether a particular behavior is viewed as moral or amoral, social learning theory is the principal framework offered in the literature for understanding how behavior develops. Bandura (1977), who holds that all behaviors are learned through the observation of others, views adults as teaching, modeling, and reinforcing desirable moral behaviors for children. Sieber (1980) extends this development into adolescence, where adults shape behavior (by rewarding behaviors that approximate those desired) and substitute behaviors (by demonstrating how to exchange prosocial for antisocial behaviors). As young adults then move into new settings like college, the environment and peer groups continue to provide reinforcement for previously learned behaviors.

Research on college student behavior generally provides support for this social learning perspective of moral development, as evident in Astin's (1993) findings that peer groups are "the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" and that "students' values, beliefs, and aspirations tend to change in the direction of the dominant values, beliefs, and aspirations of the peer group" (398). Extensive research on academic dishonesty provides further confirmation; McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield report that the perception of peer behavior is the most powerful influence on cheating and identify social learning theory as the "most important" means of explaining this relationship (359).

When considered from a social learning perspective, educating for personal and social responsibility primarily involves shaping a moral campus environment. McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield suggest that, "From a social learning standpoint . . . [colleges] should do more to ensure that their students have suitable peer role models," because "if students see

their peers engaging in prosocial behaviors" (373) they themselves may be less likely to engage in negative behaviors like cheating. Since faculty also serve as powerful models of moral behavior, faculty selection, training, and support are critical. There is also positive evidence that institutional policies like honor codes and student conduct codes can reinforce morally desirable behavior, as McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield found that "the level of academic dishonesty is highest at colleges that do not have honor codes . . . and is lowest at schools with traditional honor codes" (368). Through these kinds of efforts, institutions can create communities that model, teach, and reinforce personally and socially responsible behavior.

Integrative perspectives

In the literature, there is a growing discussion of the inadequacy of current theory for describing the complexities of moral development; Rest (1984) suggests that the tendency to "divide the field into behavior, affect, and cognition . . . is deficient for many reasons," principally that it "leave[s] us dangling about how behavior, affect, and cognition are related" (25). There are a few perspectives in the literature that attempt to integrate these domains. For example, Lickona (1991) proposes a tripartite model of moral development that integrates the "habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action . . . [as] all three are necessary for leading a moral life" (51).

Rest et al. (1999), in acknowledging that "morality is a multiplicity of processes" (100), propose a four-component model that adds moral sensitivity, motivation, and character to moral cognition. Moral sensitivity entails both interpreting a situation for its moral content and understanding how one's actions in the situation will affect others, while moral motivation involves the "degree of commitment to taking the moral course of action . . . and taking personal responsibility for moral outcomes" (101). Moral character, a function of ego strength and locus of control, is developed by "persisting in a moral task, having courage, overcoming fatigue and temptations, and implementing subroutines that serve a moral goal" (101). Since individuals have strengths and weaknesses in these four areas, Rest (1984) posits that "the production of moral behavior involves all four component processes and

that deficiencies in any component can result in failure to behave morally" (35–3).

To the triumvirate of moral reason, moral emotion, and moral behavior, Berkowitz (1997) adds moral character, moral values, moral identity, and meta-moral characteristics, for a total of seven components comprising the "moral anatomy," or the "psychological components that make up the complete moral person" (Berkowitz 2002, 48). Berkowitz (2002) explains that moral character refers to an individual's moral "personality . . . the unique and enduring tendency of an individual to act in certain ways" (15). Moral values are "affectively laden beliefs concerning the rightness and wrongness of behaviors or end states" (18), though individuals may differ on whether they view a given value as moral. For individuals who have a mature moral identity, "being moral is critical to their sense of self" (21), and they strive to behave in ways that are consistent with their self-concept (Blasi 1984). Finally, meta-moral characteristics are elements of personality that "are not intrinsically moral but may serve moral ends" (23), such as self-discipline, which is equally necessary for engaging in moral action (e.g., academic honesty) as in immoral behavior (e.g., criminal activity).

There is evidence of developmental change along some of these dimensions. In terms of Rest's integrative model, Bebeau and Brabeck (1989) have empirically established moral sensitivity as a distinct construct. And while there is a lack of consensus regarding the meaning and constitution of "moral values," a component of Berkowitz's moral anatomy, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) cite research indicating "relatively modest" shifts during college toward "greater altruism, humanitarianism, and sense of civic responsibility and social conscience" (277) as well as "social, racial, ethnic, and political tolerance and greater support for the rights of individuals" (279)—though the underlying causes for these shifts are unclear. The developmental trajectories of the remaining dimensions identified by Rest and Berkowitz are not as well documented in the literature and, therefore, remain largely theoretical. Furthermore, both Rest and Berkowitz concede that very little is actually known about relationships between the various dimensions of morality they identify. Clearly, these are generative areas for future research.

Examples of pedagogical approaches that use an integrative perspective are likewise few. One actual model in practice is the Sierra Project, a curriculum intervention and longitudinal research study initiated at the University of California–Irvine in the 1970s. Whiteley and Yokota (1988) describe the project's integrative goal of developing "ethical sensitivity and awareness, an increased regard for equity in human relationships, and the ability to translate this enhanced capacity and regard into a higher standard of fairness and concern for the common good" (12). As part of a freshman living-learning community, Sierra Project students resided together and attended a course on community building, conflict resolution, empathy and social perspective taking, race and gender issues, and experiential community service. Significant gains in moral reasoning and a greater sense of community among program students, along with closer relationships with faculty and higher graduation rates, are reported by Whiteley and Yokota, leading them to conclude that the project made "a moderate contribution toward furthering character development in college freshmen" (26).

More recently, Colby et al. (2003) describe a set of best practices arising from their study of twelve exemplar institutions, all of which established "moral and civic development [as] a high priority and have created a wealth of curricular and extracurricular programs to stimulate and support that development" (9). In addition to overall approaches that are "intentional, holistic, and designed to reach all of their students" (277), three basic principles were evident across the twelve institutions' efforts, in that they all targeted multiple dimensions of the moral self, including understanding, skills, and behavior; utilized multiple sites for education across the campus, as well as diverse pedagogical approaches (e.g., experiential learning and group work); and integrated moral and civic development as a priority throughout the campus culture, in elements like "physical symbols, iconic stories, [and] socialization practices" (282).

Finally, Berkowitz and Fekula (1999), who describe character education as the purposeful development of all elements of the moral self, make several recommendations for character education at the college level. In order to establish "a pervasive, multifaceted, institutional endeavor based on a clear vision of the moral person and core values" (18), institutions can teach about character by addressing ethics across the curriculum and providing special programs or publications related to character issues. In line with social learning theory, institutions can display character through the modeling of behavior by adults and peer leaders, demand character by setting and enforcing standards through honor and student conduct codes, and offer opportunities to practice character through democratic governance, service learning, and experiential learning. Students can reflect on character through mentoring relationships, service learning, journals, and academic discussions. Additionally, Berkowitz and Fekula recommend that institutions establish interdisciplinary centers for character development and conduct an "ethics audit" (22) to study campus impact on students' character development.

Future directions

Given the complexity of human personality, experience, and behavior, an adequate conceptualization of personal and social responsibility involves a convergence of multiple dimensions of the self. While extant literature falls short of this view, the integrative frameworks discussed are promising starting points

for a more capacious description of personal and social responsibility. Even these frameworks, however, do not move beyond cataloging moral dimensions to provide understanding of how these dimensions are interrelated, nor do they describe how these dimensions interact with larger moral environments in which the self is situated. Such understandings are likely essential to answering critical questions about how moral outcomes are produced and, in turn, can be enhanced through education.

This divided theoretical landscape has significant implications for research in the field. As Schrader (1999) explains, current "research enterprises stem from different paradigms and speak different languages" and will do so "until we as moral researchers can construct a new way of examining the field that transcends our current perspective on it" (52). Nowhere is this more evident than instrumentation, the bulk of which is univariate and based on Kohlberg's model of moral reasoning, with few instruments capable of examining dimensions like moral affect, behavior, character, values, and identity among college populations. Thus, although personal and social responsibility is decidedly a multivariate construct, there currently exists the capacity to systematically examine only a single dimension or variable—that of moral cognition. As a potential solution, Colby et al. (2003) identify the "need for a shareable toolkit that includes a wide array of valid measures of important dimensions of moral and civic development" (271). Such a toolkit would be most generative if implemented in a robust research design, accompanied by in-depth (qualitative) measures providing insight into underlying relationships between variables, and administered longitudinally to observe change in students with particular constellations of moral dimensions.

Finally, given the current state of theory and research related to personal and social responsibility, there is clear deficiency in the knowledge base necessary for informed educational design, as Morrill (1980) explains: "When we understand more fully what it means for the unified human person—not a mind in a body, or an organism in an environment—to be the subject of education, *then* the full possibilities of moral and values education will be manifest" (54–55, emphasis added). Integrative perspectives can provide starting points for this understanding, as well as for future institutional efforts at implementing broad-based pedagogical efforts in the area of personal and social responsibility. It is imperative that such efforts build in evaluative and research mechanisms, so that much needed data is generated about how personal and social responsibility develops within, and is shaped by, educational environments.

While the literature on personal and social responsibility in college has remained largely fragmented over the past three decades, there is an emerging consensus that personal and social responsibility can no longer be viewed as a simplistic, one-dimensional, or discrete construct. As Schrader (1999) explains, "we must begin to look at morality as a kaleidoscope in which the various issues, norms, elements, considerations, voices, or perspectives can be seen working together, ever changing, complementing each other, and providing a more complete view of the thoughts and actions of people as they struggle with moral issues in all their complexity" (45).

Those who will design future efforts for enhancing personal and social responsibility are themselves responsible for recognizing and embracing this complexity, as well as its full implications for theory, research, and practice in higher education. □

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