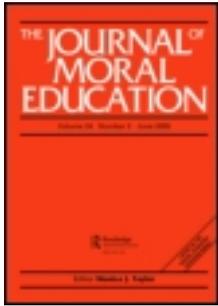


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### The future of research in moral development and education

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## EDITORIAL

# The future of research in moral development and education

Darcia Narvaez\*

*University of Notre Dame, USA*

The editorship of this prestigious journal was not one I sought, but I feel honored to have been invited to take on the challenging role of transforming the editorship to a part-time position. In fact, it may be a stressful transition period for some readers who have known and admired the exiting editor for many years. Monica Taylor did a marvelous job shaping the journal to its international status today. Along with Monica, I would also like to thank the editorial board members who recently have rotated off the board after many years of service.

I think it would be helpful for the readership to know a little more about me, as many may have only a limited exposure to my background. My background should be helpful in taking on an interdisciplinary, international journal. Those who are uninterested can skip to the next section.

### Personal story

I grew up as a bilingual/bicultural child, living in different Spanish-speaking countries with Minnesota, USA, as a home base. I was a music major in college and became a church organist and music teacher subsequently, including teaching for a year in the Philippines. I also earned a Master of Divinity degree (Lutheran) and decided to pursue graduate education. However, first I had my own business for several years teaching Spanish to adults using Superlearning techniques (relaxation, visualization, music, drama, games). I was invited to a Spanish-teaching position at a Minnesota preparatory school (The Blake School). In the middle of my four years there, I found out about the field of moral development and was elated to find Jim Rest's four-component model which to me, as a practitioner, made so much sense. I applied to work with Jim and after we fell in love, I switched advisors to a generous man, Paul van den Broek, who studied text comprehension—hence my dissertation and subsequent work on moral text comprehension (Narvaez, 1998; Narvaez & Gleason, 2007; Narvaez, Gleason, Mitchell, & Bentley, 1999). Jim and I married in 1992. I received my PhD in 1993 and was hired by the University of Minnesota. As

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most know, Jim had a degenerative disorder (Machado–Joseph’s disease) for 10 years and died in 1999. Subsequently I accepted a position at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, while simultaneously meeting Daniel Lapsley to whom I am now married. I still enjoy playing the church-sized organ we have in our living room.

My orientation is naturally interdisciplinary. I have worked in the arts, the humanities and social sciences. Although I was raised a fundamentalist Christian, my worldview has shifted many times over my lifetime. So I think I see things more broadly than some. I have worked in empirical psychological science, curriculum and instruction, ethical theory, neuroscience and development. I have published over 100 articles and chapters, edited or co-authored 7 academic books, including *The handbook of moral and character education* with Larry Nucci, and several moral education curriculum books (Narvaez, 2009; Narvaez & Bock, 2009; Narvaez & Endicott, 2009; Narvaez & Lies, 2009). My present work on moral development integrates anthropological and neurobiological theory and research with cognitive and developmental sciences (Narvaez, Panksepp et al., 2013). I am especially interested in how childrearing culture, especially in early life, influences moral capacities and worldview later. I am just finishing a book called *The neurobiology and development of human morality* (W.W. Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology).

### **The editorial team**

The editorship is now a team effort. Along with a managing editor, Meleah Ladd, there are three associate editors. Please welcome them.

*Associate Editor for Psychology and Empirical Studies in Moral Education: Tobias Krettenauer*

Tobias Krettenauer studied psychology and philosophy at the Free University in Berlin during the ‘velvet revolution’ in Eastern Germany. He received most of his training as a developmental psychologist at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development and Education in Berlin, Germany, when he was working at the Center of Development and Socialization with Wolfgang Edelstein. After finishing his PhD he spent a postdoctoral fellowship in Vancouver Canada, but then accepted a position at Humboldt University in the former eastern part of Berlin. He is Professor for Developmental Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada. As a frequent traveler between continents and a European living in North America, he is keenly aware of how political and cultural systems shape the discourse in moral psychology and moral education.

Since completing his PhD in 1996, Tobias has been continuously engaged in externally funded research projects on moral development (several grants from the German Research Foundation and the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council). He has published in internationally renowned journals on a variety of topics (meta-ethical reasoning development; self-, ego- and identity development; development of moral emotions). His current research focuses on

moral identity development across the life span. He served on the editorial board of the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* from 1999 to 2006 and is currently a board member of the Association for Moral Education (AME). In his free time, Tobias enjoys being with his two children, who have been teaching him a lot about moral development.

*Associate Editor of Ethics and Philosophy: Nancy E. Snow*

Nancy Snow is a Professor of Philosophy with research interests in moral psychology and virtue ethics. She is currently working on two books—one on hope and one on virtue ethics and virtue epistemology—as well as invited papers on virtue ethics. She is editing an anthology for Oxford University Press entitled *Cultivating virtue: Multiple perspectives*, and co-editing, with her colleague Franco V. Trivigno, an anthology for Routledge Press entitled *The philosophy and psychology of virtue: An empirical approach to character and happiness*.

Nancy grew up in Belleville, a small town in southern Illinois. She attended Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1980 with majors in Spanish and philosophy. She received a Master of Arts degree in philosophy from Marquette in 1982 and a Doctorate in philosophy from the University of Notre Dame in 1987. During her time at Notre Dame, she worked on her dissertation at Oxford University under the supervision of Joseph Raz. After two years as an assistant professor at Arizona State University, she returned to Marquette. Now in her 23rd year at Marquette University, she enjoys traveling, loves to read, do crossword puzzles and play chess and go (an ancient Chinese game) online. Most of all, she enjoys her dog and two cats.

*Associate Editor for Curriculum and Education: Wiel Veugelers*

Wiel Veugelers is Professor of Education at the University of Humanistic Studies and the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He studied developmental psychology at the University of Amsterdam in the 1970s and was an active participant in Dutch youth culture and emancipatory practices at that time. This resulted in an interest in how education can support young people in becoming both autonomous and socially engaged.

He publishes on networking of schools, educational change, youth culture, critical pedagogy and moral and democratic education. He is the founder and director of the School Network of the University of Amsterdam and coordinates several international academic networks: Education for Democratic Intercultural Citizenship (EDIC) and the International Networks for Democratic Education (INDE). Dr. Veugelers is a member of the expert group on indicators for citizenship and citizenship education of the European Commission. He was founder and president of the EARLI SIG Moral and Democratic Education. He is president of the Division Education and Society of the Dutch Educational Research Association (VOR) and chair of the SIG Moral Development and Education of the American Educational Research Association. He is editor and founder of the book series

Moral Development and Citizenship Education (SensePublishers) and a member of the editorial board of *Compare. International Journal of Leadership in Education, and Pedagogy*. He is the Netherlands scientific advisor for citizenship education of the Dutch Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO), the National Pedagogical Centre (LPC) and the Organization of Public Schools (VOO). His recent books in English are *Teaching in moral and democratic education* (Peter Lang, 2003), *Network learning for educational change* (Open University Press, 2005), *Getting involved. Global citizenship development and sources of moral values* (SensePublishers, 2008) and *Education and humanism* (SensePublishers, 2011). He loves to listen to all kinds of western and non-western music, to watch soccer, and to cook and to travel.

### Editorial team goals

The editorial team has several goals. First, we want to build on the strengths of the journal. We want to maintain *JME*'s broad view of research with excellent quantitative, experimental (laboratory and site-based) and qualitative studies, as well as cutting-edge theory and application. We would like to continue *JME*'s strong tradition of interdisciplinary and international research. Further, we are working with AME to figure out how best to support young scholars around the world.

Second, we would like to increase *JME*'s theoretical and empirical leadership in the fields of moral development and education. One strategy is to expand the fields represented on the editorial board and we have done so by including an anthropologist on the new board. Another strategy is to broaden our published articles beyond the three basic areas and invite contributions from top scholars in anthropology, economics, evolutionary sciences, political science and sociology. This would be especially worthwhile when new research findings or theoretical advances in these fields offer new perspectives on morality.

Third, we would like to increase the journal's visibility and appeal. We want everyone to think of *JME* when they consider research in moral development and education. One strategy here is the addition of a subtitle to the journal title, a common tactic by new editors. As you can see, the new subtitle is 'Ethics, Society and Development'. We have adopted this subtitle because to the naïve outsider, 'moral education' implies that the journal addresses only schools and classrooms and/or has a didactic, pedagogic focus on instilling morality (e.g. through indoctrination). In fact, the editorial team has noticed that those who are unfamiliar with the journal often have these reactions. The new subtitle makes clear *JME*'s broader focus. We will also explore using new technologies to enhance the journal's online presence such as blogs.

A fourth and final goal, and a culmination of these several strategies, is to improve *JME*'s citation index rating. All the prior actions will contribute to this end.

### Frontiers and calls for research

In my view, there are a number of intriguing directions we should pursue in future issues that run from philosophical to psychological and application, all with

bearing on moral education. So I encourage readers to submit papers, and perhaps even special issue proposals, in these areas. I will refer to some of my own work so that readers become more acquainted with it as well.

### *Moral dispositions*

What is a moral disposition? How does it relate to other aspects of personality? What comprises moral personality and how does it function across situations? We know that personality has multiple aspects (McAdams, 2009) and that situations shift a person's behavior in unique patterns (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009). However, the details of how and what is shifting bears investigation.

How does a child come to have a moral disposition? Kochanska (e.g. 2002) has mapped the importance of responsive parenting for compliant and empathic moral disposition, but what brings about the development of a compassionate, proactive moral disposition, evident in World War II rescuers? My suspicion is that attending to the components of humanity's evolved developmental niche (EDN) for young children, when brain and body systems are being established, may be an important factor (Narvaez & Gleason, 2013). The EDN includes breastfeeding, touch, responsiveness, multiple adult caregivers, free play, natural childbirth and social support (Konner, 2010). My team's work is showing that each characteristic of the EDN contributes in some fashion to child empathy, conscience and behavior regulation at age three and that effects start early (Gleason, Narvaez, Cheng, Wang, & Brooks, 2013; Narvaez et al., 2013). We need to know much more about parenting effects and how culture influences parenting for morality (Narvaez, 2013b).

Educational settings also influence moral dispositions. Although considerable work has been done with developmental discipline, classroom climate and so forth, if we want to make a science of it we need much more detail about what is important for any developmental system—timing, intensity and duration of particular educational strategies for particular students. Our evolved heritage used natural pedagogical approach of mixed-age children playing together as they mimicked and practiced adult tasks, an approach that minimizes competition and promotes cooperation (Gray, 2013). So one might ask: are one-room schools, which are more like natural pedagogies, better at fostering moral growth?

### *Neurobiology of morality*

There are an increasing number of studies showing brain activation during cognitive tasks, including moral decision-making (e.g. Moll, Zahn, de Oliveira-Souza, Krueger, & Grafman, 2005). This work is preliminary to what might be more useful to scholars in moral development. What we need to know is how particular experiences shape the brain for particular types of morality. Are there ways beyond what we already know through mindfulness and psychotherapy to help people alter

their own mind/brains in ways that facilitate compassionate morality (Hanson & Mendius, 2009)? How do educational environments affect neurobiology? We need to integrate social neuroscience into moral education as others have done for education generally (e.g., Cozolino, 2013).

### *Genetics and epigenetics*

Although genetics is much in the news, very little of psychological importance is explained by a gene (Abdolmaleky, Thiagalingam, & Wilcox, 2005). In one case, a gene was correlated with aggressive behavior in a Danish family. However, the gene itself, like most genes, requires environmental triggers to be deployed; that is, only when a child is abused in early life does having the gene correlate with aggressive behavior (Caspi et al., 2002; Frazzetto et al., 2007). We are learning now how genes are really a small part of the story of who we become. Instead, particular experiences turn genes on and off ('epigenetics': Rossi, 2002). Human exceptionality may be mostly concerned with the extensive plasticity in early life and the length of maturation to adulthood (20 years), making long-term mentoring and attention to environments key to optimal development, including moral development.

However, we also know now that genes are turned on and off throughout the day depending on one's activities. Much of the cutting edge in science is concerned with epigenetics and the plasticity of the organism during sensitive periods when lasting effects are established but also in ongoing ways. Perhaps classrooms have epigenetic effects as well.

### *Optimal moral capacity*

Can we identify what optimal moral functioning looks like, or should look like, beyond platitudes about virtues? In every area of schooling, knowledge is considered a matter of expertise development, knowing what knowledge to apply in the right way at the right time (Sternberg, 1998). Moral virtue can be viewed in this manner as well (Annas, 2010; Narvaez, 2006). However, we have not mapped the trajectory of moral development in this fashion. For example, do virtues and capacities develop piecemeal, as particular strengths, or grow together as a whole (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)? Is there a particular order of virtue or moral character development, or does it vary by individual and culture? Do moral intelligence and practical wisdom develop together? There still is much to examine regarding what parenting and educational practices work to facilitate particular types of growth in virtue.

### *Unconscious and conscious processes; intuition and reasoning*

Although psychology is undergoing a paradigm shift away from an emphasis on conscious reasoning and towards a greater emphasis on unconscious processes, it is their interactivity that may be critical in moral functioning (Narvaez, 2010). When do gut feelings prevail over principles? Goals over impulses? How do

intuitions and reasoning interact? How should they interact? We know from Piaget (1932/1965) that active experience builds intuitive schemas which are transformed (sometimes) into explicit understanding. How does conscious decision-making influence and benefit from tacit understanding built from experience (Polanyi, 1958)? How can moral education take advantage of how we best learn, through apprenticeship—immersion in meaningful experience (for intuition development) with simultaneous purposeful mentoring (for development of attention, perception and explicit understanding (Hogarth, 2001; Narvaez, 2010, 2012)?

### *Moral perception*

Might attention be a central feature of moral personhood as Iris Murdoch has suggested? She proposes that attention guides desire and action, that the moral life is continuous and ‘not something that is switched off in between the occurrences of explicit moral choices’ (Murdoch, 1989, p. 37). Instead, between behavioral choices attention shapes desire and lubricates action possibilities. Neuroscience is demonstrating that the brain/mind learns from neurons firing together, which occurs during attentional states (Melloni et al., 2007). Think of what types of desires are shaping children’s minds through where their attention is drawn. In the USA, children are immersed in media environments that draw attention primarily to consumption and self-aggrandizement. What methods can educators use to shape children’s attention? In a 2005 chapter I drew on social psychology and suggested that moral educators ‘market morality’ with several techniques such as drawing children’s attention to moral aspects of situations, making moral processing of events so familiar that it becomes automatic. Educators can prime students with prosocial narratives about who they are and what they can do for others. These types of cross-disciplinary ideas need to be brought into moral education and tested. Lest this sounds like mere posters and slogans, an approach for which some character educational programs are criticized, let me clarify that it means explaining and laying out the landscape of issues and working through them as guided problem solving (apprenticeship). It means that teachers need to learn how to do this.

### *Embodiment*

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) pointed out how reasoning, like intuition, is an evolved capacity shared with other animals. It is shaped and bounded by our unique bodies and brains. Because we think in and through our bodies, our reason is primarily unconscious, imaginative and metaphorical. How can we expand these ideas in morality scholarship? Capacities for reflection are influenced by early experience, specifically, the development of emotion co-signaling with caregivers (Greenspan & Shanker, 2004). These experiences shape the embodied concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999) and sensorimotor foundation used for inferences and imagination (Piaget, 1936/1963). However, there is so much we do not know. For example, what is the sensorimotor foundation for compassionate morality? We

know that rough-and-tumble play fosters social and cognitive skills, that multi-age play groups facilitate cooperation and decrease competition (Pellis & Pellis, 2009). How else might play facilitate moral functioning? How can we foster moral character through whole-body education? Much more work needs to be done on how the arts, music and humor facilitate morality distinguishing between self-protective and compassionate morality (Narvaez, 2008). Does the rigid thinking on the political right wing have anything to do with a lack of play at critical periods? (Spinka, Newberry, & Bekoff, 2001).

### *Thinking outside the usual boxes*

We must be bold and explore new paradigms, as John Gibbs (2013) has done in acknowledging aspects of reality (e.g. our connectedness) that the scientific method is unable to access and yet form part of our moral foundations. Has science become too dominant in our views of the world, as Mary Midgley (1992) suggests? Science uses a very left-brain approach to examining reality these days, dismissing alternative paradigms even though such paradigms are accessible to the right brain and brought about health and flourishing before settled societies (Martin, 1999; McGilchrist, 2009; Taylor, 2008). We may need to consider alternative cultural paradigms and perspectives outside of dominant cultures, such as those of foraging hunter-gatherers, whose social life and development were much more sustainable and supportive of virtue than ours (Fry, 2006; Ingold, 1999; Narvaez, 2013a, 2013b). Can we integrate brain function, culture and moral development? Further, we must discern, beyond theological arguments, why humans are the only animals that purposefully mistreat one another.

These are just a representative handful of areas that bear more exploration especially in terms of their relation to moral education. Please send in your ideas for special issues and initiatives the journal might undertake.

### **Conclusion**

The new team is happily in place, working out the final aspects of the transition. Please email us with your suggestions.

### **Acknowledgments**

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