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Analysing the Child Development Project Using the Moral Work of Teaching Framework

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Abstract

This inquiry applies the Moral Work of Teaching (MWT) framework to analyse the psychological, moral and educational assumptions, and the contingent factors, that explain the basic features of the Child Development Project's (CDP) approach to moral education. The analysis, it is suggested, not only illuminates the CDP's approach, but the virtues and implications of using an appropriately complex, theoretically descriptive framework, such as the MWT framework, as a tool for understanding, comparing, developing and applying approaches to moral education.

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Introduction[1]

In our 2005 essay in the *Journal of Moral Education*, we proposed a theoretical framework for analysing approaches to moral education, seeking to move beyond the limits of the most common, simple analytic frames (e.g. indirect vs. direct, autonomous vs. heteronomous, traditional vs. progressive, care-based vs. justice-based). Given the complexity of morality, moral psychology, and education, along with the diversity of approaches to working within these overlapping domains (collectively referred to here as 'moral education'[2]), we argued for a framework that appropriately reflected this complexity, and that tracked meaningful sources of explanation for any approach. We sought a framework that would support inquirers in being able

> to trace the characteristics of any approach to moral education back to their theoretical and contingent determinants or influences, to understand why they are the way they are, whether or not they make sense, if and how they relate to other accounts of moral education, and what reasons we have for endorsing or applying one versus another. (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2005, p. 60)

While we claimed to find value in the analytic frames that we criticised, and the analyses those frames helped produce, we argued for a framework that could occupy

> a middle ground between the binary distinctions that have the benefit of simplicity, but that we find limited and misleading, and an exhaustive listing of possible approaches and all of their particular characteristics and determinants, or narrative accounts of each approach, which would be so unwieldy as to also be of limited theoretical value. The goal here is to categorize and explain in a way that identifies and maintains important sources of theoretical and contingent explanation. (*ibid*, p. 60)

The idea was to develop a framework that could be applied to the wide variety of philosophical, psychological, historical and pedagogical approaches to the practice, empirical study, and theorising of the many facets of moral education, to elaborate or uncover their underpinnings. The hypothesised pay-off of using such a framework, we proposed, was a deeper, more critical, and comprehensive understanding of the nature of, and differences among, the wide variety of approaches within the complex domain of moral education. Such a resource, we argued, could serve to not only facilitate analysis, comparison, understanding and critique of extant approaches to moral education, but also guide the development of practical, theoretical, and empirical research programs.

These benefits, however, were left untested in our original essay. Therefore, we attempt to demonstrate them here by using the framework to analyse an actual approach: the Child Development Project (CDP). We chose the CDP for a number of reasons. First, it is a contemporary approach that is currently being used in schools. Second, it is one of the most well researched approaches in use today. Third, it has been extensively elaborated in the academic literature. In sum, its influential status and the availability of scholarly resources to analyse guided our decision.

Importantly, our intention here is not to evaluate the efficacy of the CDP, nor is it to provide an extensive critique of its theoretical and empirical underpinnings (although we do discuss a few questions raised by our analysis). Rather, our primary purpose is to test our framework for its analytic value. We begin by briefly reviewing that framework, followed by our analysis of the CDP. We conclude with an analysis of our analysis, which evaluates the process and products of our work, and addresses its implications.

The Moral Work of Teaching Framework

The framework that we originally proposed consists of a set of categories intended to track the factors behind any approach to moral education which serve to *explain* its key characteristics. These categories are as follows:

A. Psychological assumptions
- regarding what the salient features of our moral psychology are; and
- regarding the nature of those features, how they develop, and/or how they are likely to respond to various environmental variables.

B. Moral assumptions
- regarding the nature and scope of morality (metaethical assumptions);
- and regarding what is good/right/virtuous/caring (normative assumptions).

C. Educational assumptions
- regarding nature and scope of teaching and education in society; and
- regarding the aims of education.

D. Contingent factors
- personal
- historical
- social
- political
- institutional (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2005, p. 63)

Given the framework's function of guiding efforts to provide an explicit explanation of why an approach is the way it is, we occasionally refer to it as a 'theoretically descriptive'. Doing so relies upon the broadest sense of 'theory', as a more or less systematic explanation. But the framework is not limited to analysing the bases of extensively developed and researched approaches, like the CDP. It can also be applied more generally to guide thinking about what we call the 'moral work of teaching' (MWT) (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2008). Therefore, we will most often refer to the 'MWT framework' throughout the rest of this essay.

Analysing the CDP with the MWT Framework

Working with extensive, and extensively researched, approaches to moral education, presents a challenge to identify and delimit the approach's background assumptions, simply due to the sheer amount of material. Such has been the case with our analysis of the CDP, which has been operating in some form for nearly three decades (Battistich, 2008). The scholars who have led the work of the CDP (henceforth 'members') have produced numerous journal articles, reports, books and book chapters (Battistich, 2008; Battistich, 1998; Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson & Schaps, 1995; Battistich, Solomon, Watson & Schaps, 1997; Battistich, Watson, Solomon, Schaps & Solomon, 1991; Schaps, 2003; Solomon, Battistich, Kim & Watson, 1997; Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps & Lewis, 2000; Watson, 1998; Watson & Battistich, 2006). Further, under the auspices of

the Developmental Studies Center (which developed and evaluated CDP), members have also contributed to curriculum and organisational materials available to educational institutions (Developmental Studies Center, n/d). But due to the constraints of time and access, we limited our analysis of the CDP primarily to its scholarly publications. The process we used involved applying the main categories of the MWT framework as a coding scheme as we read and reread CDP publications. Those codes served to flag passages that explicitly or implicitly revealed central theoretical assumptions of the CDP's approach within one or more of the framework's categories. The categories not only flagged passages to review, but also provided a range of critical questions, or themes, that structured our ongoing analysis, and thus structured our writing as we worked to make our own assumptions explicit, along with those of the CDP.

Psychological assumptions
Given the fact that psychology is the primary disciplinary background of the CDP members, it is no surprise that psychological assumptions form the most pervasive, explicit and well-developed theoretical element of the CDP's publications. Therefore, we present the bulk of our discussion of the approach using this first theoretical lens (even though it involves introducing or implying other categories of assumptions from the MWT framework).

As Battistich *et al.* describe it, the CDP is 'a comprehensive longitudinal intervention project designed to enhance the social and moral development of children through systematic changes in the classroom, school and home environments' (Battistich *et al.,* 1991). As such, it involves the empirical study, theorising, and practice of moral education in schools. While the CDP's approach to moral education has evolved over its substantial history, it remains consistent with its original, and most fundamental, theoretical roots. On our reading, the central theoretical assumption of the CDP is that children have a biologically based need for belonging, competence and autonomy (Battistich *et al.,* 1997; Battistich *et al.,* 1991; Watson & Battistich, 2006). This *psychological assumption* is grounded in work on motivation by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 1985; see also Baumeister & Leary, 1995), the attachment theory of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Watson & Ecken, 2003), and Nel Noddings' care theory (Noddings, 1992, 2002; Watson & Battistich, 2006).

Given that children naturally have a need for belonging, autonomy and competence, the CDP posits the further psychological assumption that satisfying these needs contributes to the formation of a bond between children and the people and institutions satisfying their needs. The development of such bonds in turn leads to a variety of what the CDP labels as 'important' things, including children's motivation to maintain the bond by internalising the goals and values of those to whom they are bonded (Battistich *et al.,* 1997; Battistich *et al.,* 1991; Watson & Battistich, 2006). Here we come full circle, in that the group (i.e. the 'caring school community') ideally works to satisfy the needs of students, which in turn leads them to bond to the group, and internalise, and thus perpetuate, the group's goals and values, behaving in ways that are consistent with them. The goals and values that are consistent with the satisfaction of students' relevant needs (and a caring school community) include engaging in caring relationships, personal responsibility and integrity, justice, democratic citizenship and academic engagement (Battistich *et al.,* 1997; Battistich *et al.,* 1991). These values are supported in practice, and perhaps constituted…

> …by providing students with numerous opportunities to: (a) collaborate with others in the pursuit of common academic and social goals; (b) provide meaningful help to others and receive help when it was needed; (c) discuss

and reflect upon the experiences of others to gain an understanding and appreciation of others' needs, feelings, and perspectives; (d) discuss and reflect upon their own behavior and the behavior of others as it relates to the fundamental prosocial values of fairness, concern and respect for others, and social responsibility; (e) develop and practice important social competencies; and (f) exercise autonomy, participate in decision making about classroom norms, rules and activities, and otherwise take on responsibility for appropriate aspects of classroom life. (Battistich *et al.,* 1997, p. 138)

As suggested above, the CDP has used the concept of a 'caring school community' as the overarching construct encompassing this suite of features of classrooms, schools, and homes (Battistich *et al.,* 1997; Schaps, 2003; Solomon *et al.,* 1997). Thus, in a caring school community

students' needs for competence, autonomy and belonging are…met when they are able to participate actively in a cohesive, caring group with a shared purpose; that is, a community…when these conditions are met and a community is established, students' needs are most likely to be satisfied, resulting in their becoming affectively bonded with and committed to the school, and therefore inclined to identify with and behave in accordance with its expressed goals and values. (Battistich *et al.,* 1997, p. 138)

This rough outline of the psychological assumptions of the CDP is further fleshed out by the elaboration of the classroom, school and family components of the program (Solomon *et al.*, 2000; Developmental Studies Center, n/d). Classroom components include the use of developmental discipline as a general approach to classroom management, which emphasises non-coercive means of developing internal sources of motivation for responsible, pro-social behaviour, group identification and academic engagement (Watson, 2008).

The goal of developmental discipline is for students to act responsibly because they feel committed to the community – not because of the prospect of rewards or punishments…The intent is to help build students' interpersonal skills and understanding, their commitment to democratic norms, and their sense of connection to the teacher, the other students and the school. (Solomon *et al.,* 2000, p. 6)

The avoidance of rewards and punishments emphasises the psychological assumption that the best way to motivate sought after behaviour is to develop students' attachments to their community and its members. As the empirical research of the CDP and others suggest, the cultivation of the bonds that are hypothesised to serve as the motivational basis for pro-social and academically engaged behaviour, can indeed promote these ends in schools (Battistich, 1998; Battistich *et al.,* 1995). On this view, using rewards and punishments as the key motivational lever in classrooms is seen to counterproductively reinforce the notion (typical of dysfunctional attachment histories) that relationships are essentially coercive/manipulative in nature, rather than being based upon caring for the interests and respecting the value of others as individuals. Thus, *the* essential step in fostering

pro-social behaviour and effective classroom learning for the CDP's approach, is establishing in the mind of each student that they are indeed cared for and valued as a member of a group, opening the door for motivated pro-social and academically engaged activity. The CDP assumes, based in part upon members' own empirical research, that more teacher-centred approaches that rely upon rewards and punishments, can influence behaviour and even result in a strong sense of community, but fail to effectively support pro-social development that includes higher levels of autonomous moral reasoning and other-directed motivation (Solomon *et al.,* 1997).

Building on the above psychological assumptions, the CDP's approach to moral education advocates cooperative learning that focuses on developing both academic learning and pro-social skills and values, along with literature-based reading instruction emphasising high-order understanding and reading fluency (Solomon *et al.,* 2000). Both components are consistent with the generally constructivist psychological assumptions that learning is more effective if designed to integrate students' interests, providing opportunities for them to build meaningfully upon prior knowledge and experience in a social environment in and to which they can successfully operate and contribute (supporting competence, belonging and autonomy) (Solomon *et al.,* 2000; Watson & Battistich, 2006). These classroom components are further complemented by program components designed to further connect students in caring and democratic relationships throughout their school, integrate parents into the school community, and foster constructive and caring parent-child and family-school bonds (Solomon *et al.,* 2000).

As implied in the above analysis, the CDP assumes a complex and integrative view of moral psychology. It draws from cognitive developmental theory, incorporating reasoning and the practice of reason giving in the development of autonomous judgement and motivation, while also relying strongly upon what have been called personality-based psychological views (Kurtines and Gewirtz, 1995) that emphasise the importance of affect in determining behaviour, along with assumptions about the importance of affect in the context of personal relationships that have roots in feminist psychology and ethics. While the approach explicitly takes a stance against heavy reliance upon rewards and punishments, and seeks to develop autonomous reasoning, it acknowledges the importance of substantive and developmentally gauged external guidance for children. Taken together, these assumptions limn the elements of human psychology that the CDP assumes are morally salient features of students, classrooms and schools.

In drawing our initial analysis of the CDP's psychological assumptions to a close, it is worth noting one of the distinct virtues of this body of work. The CDP's scholarly publications commonly feature *clear and explicit explanations* of the psychological assumptions they make, the intellectual lineage of those assumptions, and an explanation of how the assumptions being made might differ from those of other common approaches and/or relevant schools of thought. We cannot heap enough praise on the CDP for its relatively frequent use of the phrase 'we assume', to make their position and its origins clear. Thus, despite the extent of the material, and the complexity of the subject matter, using this theoretically descriptive category to code, analyse, and synthesise the psychological assumptions of the CDP was a fairly straight-forward and informative task.

Moral assumptions

The assumptions addressing the nature of morality and moral value that undergird the CDP's approach are not as clear and well developed as the psychological assumptions discussed above. This is especially true of those pertaining to the nature and source(s) of normativity within the CDP's approach. While the CDP's publications commonly excel in the philosophical work of explaining the meaning of the key concepts employed (e.g. community, Solomon *et al.,* (1997)),

one often finds ambiguity, vagueness, or silence, when it comes to assumptions about the sources and functioning of moral value within this approach.

Given this situation, perhaps the best place to begin addressing this issue is to examine what the CDP claims as its ultimate purpose or aim:

> Our specific aim was to encourage the development of prosocial characteristics in children, generally defined as attitudes, motives and behaviors that reflect consideration of others' needs and feelings, concern for others' welfare, and a willingness to balance one's own legitimate needs and desires with those of others in situations where they conflict. (Battistich *et al.,* 1991, p. 2)

This articulation of the project's aims clearly suggests something that is of fundamental value, insofar as it defines what the authors are trying to bring about. Later in this same piece, the authors continue that their aim . . .

> . . . is not the enhancement of social understanding or moral reasoning per se, but rather the development of prosocial character. Our concern…is with moral conduct, and while reasoning processes often may be involved in moral action, we believe that affect, particularly feelings of concern for others, provides the basic motivation for prosocial behavior. Similarly . . . we do not regard justice as the ultimate moral principle, but believe that justice must be tempered with compassion, and feel that the aim of moral education should be the development of a moral system that integrates principles of justice and caring. (ibid, pp.7-8)

This quote not only helps to flesh out the psychological assumptions of the CDP, discussing the relationships among cognition, affect and behaviour, but it also provides a rare, explicit articulation of what appears to be a basic source of normativity for the CDP, namely, a moral system integrating principles of justice and caring. Philosophically, the questions we must ask here involve what constitutes this moral system, and where moral value resides and how it operates within the system. The problem is that there is just not enough explicit moral theorising to answer these questions clearly.

That said, based upon the claims above, one could attempt to construct a rough sketch of the normative structure of the CDP's approach. The CDP's writings suggest that a moral system integrating principles of justice and caring (and one that is explicitly concerned with moral conduct) would reasonably take acting in ways that are consistent with such principles as the central source of moral value. If that is the case, the CDP's aim of pro-social character development can be seen to have moral value in two possible senses. First, insofar as that developmental process involves engaging in morally valuable acts, as defined by principles of justice and caring, the process itself would manifest moral value. The process of moral development would also have instrumental moral value due to its contribution to students' character, which in turn serves as a determinant of further, moral goods (i.e. just and caring conduct). If this explanation is on track, we might also assume that caring school communities inherit moral value to the extent that they are constituted by morally valuable acts, and contribute to the development of the pro-social character that helps to determine, or bring about, those acts.

Insofar as this analysis reveals actual moral assumptions of the CDP, those assumptions raise important questions. First, locating moral value within principles of moral/pro-social behaviour, and conduct consistent with those principles, appear to be in tension with some of the CDP's key sources of theoretical justification. In particular, any claim that the moral system that we should seek is based upon principles that guide action is antithetical to the cited writings of Nel Noddings' care theory, which reject the idea of such a moral system (Noddings, 1984, 1992, 2002). Noddings grounds her normative theory in the value of caring relationships (and the particular individuals in those relationships and the ideals those relationships embody), rather than general principles, or acts that such principles pre/proscribe. Hence, 'An ethic of care is thoroughly relational. It is the *relation* to which we point when we use the adjective "caring".' (2004, p. 14). While the objective here is not to provide a comprehensive critique of the CDP, we explore this tension because it reveals why it is so important to understand just what moral assumptions are being made within an approach to moral education, even one that is primarily grounded in psychology. But before we proceed, it would be well to examine briefly the apparent nature of the value of caring relationships in the CDP's approach.

If there is support for the idea that caring relationships are valuable in themselves, rooted in the particular people involved, we have yet to find that claim made explicitly in the CDP's work. What we have found are instrumental, psychologically based accounts of the value of caring relationships, and associated constructs. For example, in their study of teacher practices associated with students' sense of community, the authors begin . . .

> The importance to human well-being of feeling connected to others has long been recognized . . . The feeling of belonging has been seen as crucial for providing children with the stability and security that are essential for optimal social and emotional development. (Solomon *et al.,* 1997, p.235)

In our view, this passage suggests that the value of human connection, and/or the feeling of belonging and being connected to others, stems from its instrumental contributions those things make to social and emotional behaviour and development. Such statements can be found throughout the CDP's work, as in the following recent essay:

> Ultimately, the effectiveness of developmental discipline requires mutual trust and respect, and thus is dependent upon the quality of the teacher-child relationship. Misbehavior is considered to be as likely to result from misunderstanding or lack of skill as from antisocial intent, and is regarded as an opportunity for problem-solving and developing self-control rather than punishment . . . Establishing a positive relationship with children who have come to see adults and the world as uncaring or even hostile is difficult and time consuming for teachers, but is considered necessary for effective socialization, and may play a critical role in the social and moral development of 'difficult' students . . ." (Battistich, 2008, p. 332)

At this point we must be careful to point out that we are not making any claims about how the *members* of the CDP (or anyone else) actually value relationships or individuals, or suggest a lack of 'real caring' on anyone's part. Rather, it is to analyse the role of value in the CDP's approach as defined by its publications. The general issue of whether some aspect of moral education is of instrumental or inherent value may appear to be an esoteric, technical issue that only a philosopher need bother with. However, we view it as essential to question the idea that caring relationships have value insofar as they foster socio-moral development by establishing bonds and a sense of belonging, which in turn serve as a motivational lever to get children to internalise the goals and values of the classroom and exhibit pro-social behaviour. If this is all there is to their value, those relationships are fungible instruments, susceptible to being replaced by some other instrument that research may come to show has similar, or more desirable effects. This reflects the basic nature of instrumental value, in that the value is inherited from its effects, and the CDP's account of the role of relationships is again unpacked in psychological terms that focus on effects, neglecting consideration of the value relationships have in themselves (see Korsgaard, 1996; Zimmerman, 2007).

If relationships are seen as basic moral goods—as care theory suggests—they cannot be substituted for, and will be sought for their own sake. Further (illustrating the overlapping nature of the moral and psychological), it seems that part of what makes caring relationships both valuable in themselves, and an effective means to other goods (e.g. pro-social character development and good conduct), is that *they are pursued for their own sake* (Blum, 1980; Noddings, 1992; Stocker, 1997). That is, truly caring relationships are engaged in and fostered primarily for the sake of the particular individuals we care about and care for, and the relationships of which caring is a constituent. The ones we care for, and our connection to them, provide the central reasons why we carry out caring acts.

To sharpen this point, consider a loved one presenting you with flowers on your birthday. You say, 'They're lovely, thank you, but you really didn't have to.' Your would-be loved one then responds, 'I know, I know—but I thought that bringing you flowers on your birthday would strengthen the bond between us and effectively contribute to desirable future behaviour on your part.' Given this instrumental justification, one would have strong grounds for questioning just how caring the relationship is (and putting that relationship in some danger!). If this is so, the nature of the value of caring relationships seems absolutely critical for the psychological, philosophical and pedagogical integrity of any approach to moral education that uses it as one of its bases, as the CDP does. One might respond by saying, 'Of course you have to care about particular others for real caring relationships, that is what forms the affective bonds discussed by the CDP, and is implied in its appeal to caring relationships in the first place.' We would concur, and would suggest that those *implicit* assumptions about value, along with their grounds and implications, be made *explicit*, particularly given the extensive instrumental justification that exists in explaining the (primarily) psychological role of relationships in the approach, which leave us with strong grounds for questioning the role that value does play.

However, we believe this need not be an either-or issue of instrumental versus inherent value, since moral value can have multiple sources, and our reasons and motives for pursuing moral goods can and do reflect that complexity (Herman, 1981; Nagel, 1979). We might take individuals and our relationships with them to have value in themselves, *and* for all the other goods they help to bring about. And while this might be the most reasonable reconstruction of how moral value operates in the CDP, it remains speculative.

Educational assumptions

There are two clear educational assumptions behind the CDP's approach to moral education. As mentioned above, the purpose of the CDP is to promote prosocial behavior, not only as a classroom management tool, creating a positive academic learning environment, but for the sake of the moral development of students, their character, and the behaviour that flows from it (Battistich *et al.,* 1997; Battistich *et al.,* 1991; Solomon *et al.,* 1997; Solomon *et al.,* 2000; Watson & Battistich, 2006). Thus, as one might expect from a moral education program, the CDP embraces the notion that moral development, and the strong, caring, supportive personal relationships and community that ground that development, should be a central feature of teaching and schooling.

Further, the CDP clearly shows the influence of a number of John Dewey's ideas. In particular, it assumes that schooling, along with life, is a fundamentally social endeavour, and that the experiences students have within schools should be congruent with their (social) lives outside of school, creating an integrated moral and intellectual life (Dewey, 1916, 1963). 'Like Dewey, [the] CDP's approach assumes that children will best develop the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active and effective participation as citizens in a democratic society through direct experience as member of a participatory, democratic school community' (Battistich, 2008, p. 333). Similarly, program components are designed to structure classroom experience in a way that builds upon students' prior knowledge and interests, integrate parents into the school community, and bring elements of that school community into the home life of students' families, in support of empathetic, responsible, caring character and conduct (Solomon *et al.,* 2000; Watson & Battistich, 2006).

These educational assumptions may seem blasé for those working in the field of moral education, but given the risk of taking them for granted, we think it is appropriate to reiterate the point that despite a great deal of interest in and support for moral education (and the CDP's approach) in the USA, the American system of public schooling and programs of teacher education and professional development often do not reflect these ideas substantively, and there remain significant obstacles to needed change (Berkowitz, 1998; Howard *et al.,* 2004; Jones *et al.,* 2003). Thus, like any comprehensive, systemic reform that attempts to implement an approach to moral education, the CDP faces challenges in widely implementing its most basic educational assumptions.

One significant set of challenges we wish to highlight stems from stakeholders in the educational system making contrary psychological, moral, and/or educational assumptions, which might preclude the kind of widespread buy-in and consistent support that is associated with successful program implementation (Battistich, 2008; Fullan, 2007). While we do not have room to examine the specifics of such issues, we note that the MWT framework provides a systematic way of identifying, thinking about and discussing sources of conflict that are rooted in different background assumptions, so that they might be productively and responsibly addressed.

Contingent factors

Generally, these non-theoretical influences (e.g. the personal histories of the authors, the political conditions within the field and the organisations involved, etc.) are often not mentioned, let alone offered *as explanations* for why an approach is the way that it is. However, as we claimed in our earlier *JME* essay on examining approaches, it is important to attend to the

> . . . non-theoretical reasons behind those approaches, whether they stem from the contingent facts of the system of schooling we have, or other contingencies that may be involved. That way, we can develop a contextually informed understanding of approaches to moral education, not seeing [them] as the result of free-floating theoretical assumptions, but the product of people making assumptions, drawing inferences and living lives in particular contexts. (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2005, pp. 66-67)

While most of the CDP's publications follow the tradition of focusing on theoretical sources of explanation of their approach, there are a number of contingent factors that have been elaborated in accounts of the project and its evolution (Battistich, 2008; Battistich *et al.,* 1997). Even in the midst of explaining many of the theoretical assumptions analysed above, these accounts remind us that theory choice, along with all the other human choices involved in developing an approach to moral education, is contingent—upon people, context, experience, interpretation, meaning and perceptions of value. For example, we are told that during the project's initial demonstration trial, there were 'important conceptual and programmatic changes' that were backed by Marilyn Watson, who had assumed a new role as program director (Battistich, 2008, p. 331). Among other things, the members' experience in the project's field trial, Watson's leadership, and her view of socio-moral development, which was grounded in attachment theory, family socialisation studies, and constructivism, changed the nature of the CDP's approach. Clearly, these changes resulted from the interplay of evidence, theory, and human interpretation and judgement. Considering contingent factors, like the dynamics of the people working on the project, responding to each other in a particular context, keeps the human elements of interpretation, judgement, and social response on the table for us as possible explanatory factors in the CDP's approach. But even though the CDP's publications offer much more information about such factors than most approaches, we still lack the information needed to make further claims that provide meaningful explanation with any confidence. We discuss the implications of these limitations in the following section.

Analysing the analysis
In this section we reflect upon our use of the theoretically descriptive MWT framework, examining what difference it made in the analysis above, and its implications. The first difference we note is how the framework affected our experience reviewing materials related to the CDP's approach.

Both of us spent a great deal of time gathering and reading CDP publications, before and after deciding to apply the categories of the framework systematically. That decision to consciously apply the MWT framework forced us to focus our inquiries, and ferret out *evidence* within the texts that could be used to answer the questions the framework forced us to ask: What exactly are the assumptions made about moral psychology, its development, and how educators might influence it? What assumptions are made about moral value? How does moral education fit into education writ large? For both of us, such questions provided analytic guidance, and motivation, for developing a deeper, more sophisticated understanding of the CDP's approach and its bases.

Thus, our experience in applying the MWT framework suggests that it successfully supports our original goal of creating a framework that can serve as a tool to assist those working to understand approaches to moral education

> to trace the characteristics of any approach to moral education back to their theoretical and contingent determinants or influences, to understand why they are the way they are, whether or not they make sense, if and how they relate to other accounts of moral education, and what reasons we have for endorsing or applying one versus another. (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2005, p. 60)

While we have not addressed the relationship between the CDP's approach and others here, we found that using the MWT framework pushed us to go beyond simply locating textual evidence of the approach's theoretical assumptions. It directed us in substantively *interrogating* that textual evidence for the grounds that explain it, in order to provide a persuasive and coherent theoretical analysis. We repeatedly confronted challenges regarding just what aspect of psychology, morality, and/or schooling was being addressed and whether or how it answered the questions raised by the MWT framework. For example, in searching for answers regarding the normative moral assumptions behind the CDP, we ran into questions not only regarding what exactly those assumptions were, but also how they relate to the psychological assumptions of the approach, as we saw in our discussion of the value of caring relationships and how those relationships function. Sorting through those assumptions, and the relationships between them, enriched our understanding.

Following this point, we reiterate that other frameworks commonly used to analyse approaches simply do not function as well in systematically guiding readers to the key underlying assumptions, and facilitating a critical understanding of them. Some of those frameworks, like the popular binary category schemes reflected in the indirect/direct and autonomous/heteronomous distinctions, simply cannot accommodate the breadth and complexity of the determinants of any approach to moral education (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2005). Certainly, the CDP cannot be well explained by placing it in one of the categories of these popular frameworks. The CDP explicitly crosses the boundaries of those binary schemes in the theoretical assumptions that it makes and the practices it suggests. Similarly, following Noddings, the central moral and psychological assumptions of a care-based approach simply do not fit the autonomous/heteronomous framework (Noddings, 1984, 1992, 2002). Caring is *relational*, which is neither autonomous nor heteronomous. To apply that category scheme to an approach to moral education grounded in caring relationships is a category error, and provides a clear example of how such binary frameworks cannot track the key underlying assumptions of approaches, in part by inaccurately predetermining what the possible assumptions can be.

Extending our original discussion of this issue, we believe that part of the problem here is that while such simple frameworks do too little to accommodate the breadth and complexity of this domain, they also do too much, in terms of imposing the questions to be asked of any approach and limiting the possible answers. Asking whether an approach is either (or more or less) autonomous or heteronomous, constrains the analysis, and may be of little relevance in analysing some approaches (and may do no small amount of violence to approaches that do not fit either category). A more open, comprehensive, theoretically descriptive framework, like the MWT framework, provides direction in terms of the lines of explanation sought, and in doing so, loosely constrains the boundaries of the inquiry. However, it avoids the problems noted above by directing inquirers to the general theoretical questions that need to be addressed in understanding any approach, without constraining the answers to one (or a few) predetermined possibilities. Thus, this type of theoretically descriptive framework can be productively applied to any approach, while still providing analytic guidance and support. The more simple schemes understandably try to make it

easy to conceptually group approaches and provide a clear and easily understood map of the domain of moral education. But however admirable that goal, they sacrifice fidelity for simplicity. So while the analysis provided above is somewhat complex and extensive, *we believe that that is what it takes to explain, and understand, an approach to moral education.*

The descriptive and critical functions of the MWT framework may also help in comparing approaches. While a substantive comparison of the CDP with other approaches is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth very briefly noting what such a comparison would look like. Rather than working to justify lumping approaches into predetermined categories, the MWT framework would guide us in comparing particular assumptions about the nature of moral functioning and development, about moral value, about education and schooling, and other factors that may have influenced each approach. Again, this seems more illuminating, especially when working with approaches (like the CDP) that either do not fit into most simple category schemes, or might share one overly general category with other, very different approaches. On this note, if one wants a single label, we find Kurtines and Gewirtz's label of 'integrative', as an appropriate one for the CDP (Kurtines & Gewirtz, 1995). But placing the CDP in this category tells us nothing about the particulars of the approach, and simply begs the question of how to analyse, understand, and compare those particulars—a challenge that a more theoretically descriptive framework helps anyone to meet.

Despite our findings that this framework does indeed provide valuable direction and focus in analysing approaches to moral education, the process of applying the framework to the CDP has also highlighted a few potential problems. First, while coding the CDP's publications, we ran into seemingly important information that did not fit into the framework's category scheme. In particular, there was a great deal of information regarding the practice of moral education that begged to be included. However, we had to remind ourselves that the framework was designed to help identify and unpack the assumptions behind an approach to moral education, providing an account of the reasons why any practice, policy, or belief might be justified. We addressed this situation by flagging text describing recommended practices and made notes regarding the theoretical assumptions they might illustrate. While making such connections was a challenge that required both sleuthing and some speculation, we wonder whether it should be viewed as a problem, or as a virtue, in that it forces readers to pursue the assumptions underlying recommended practices and policies, and may provoke writers to provide clearer and more explicit explanations of the grounds of their practical recommendations.

A second possible shortcoming was the limited conclusions we could confidently draw regarding contingent factors that might help explain the CDP's approach. However, we continue to support the idea that, as a form of human action and interaction, the process of developing an approach to moral education is in an important sense determined by non-theoretical factors, a notion strongly embraced by many taking an interpretive approach to research (Erickson, 1986). And even though there was little we could say with confidence about the contingent sources of explanation for the CDP's approach, the process of seeking out and examining possible sources of contingent explanation served not only as a means of gathering information to support a better understanding, but also as a reminder of just how many contingent factors there are and how little we can know about their ultimate influence. We do not view this as grounds for scepticism, but rather, humility. Further, we believe that the process of disclosing and seeking out contingent sources of explanation is important both for readers and writers in developing a richer and more critical understanding the bases of approaches to moral education, including the role that formal theory plays (and its limits).

Conclusions

Despite the challenges discussed above, we find the use of this more complex, theoretically descriptive framework, to be a much needed tool for readers to use in developing a critical understanding of approaches to moral education. As we claimed previously:

> The framework presented identifies those parts that are central to a meaningful, well-rounded, critical understanding of moral education on a general level. One may intuitively grasp an approach, and/or be gifted in its practice, but being unable to identify and make sense of that approach's most basic assumptions and their implications does not constitute critical understanding, in our view. The ability to wrap language around an approach, not only allows for instructive elaboration (Shulman, 1986), but is likewise essential for effective and open criticism and debate. Without the kind of understanding upon which that ability stands, arguments that scholars and researchers make will likely remain partial and oblique, and prone to confusion and bias. (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2005, pp. 67-68)

We continue to believe that to have a critical understanding of an approach, one must not only know what it is like, but also why. Unlike other common analytic frameworks, the MWT framework does not force readers to decide (or simply memorise), into what category a particular approach fits. Rather, it provides a tool for developing a critical understanding of both the what's and the why's of approaches to moral education.

While the focus of our analysis has been on consumers or readers of approaches, there are equally important implications for writers developing and disseminating approaches, assisting them in thinking critically about the assumptions they make, and why they make them, which is precisely what they need to make explicit in their writing to assist readers in gaining a full and critical understanding of the approach. Certainly, the idea that we need to provide explicit and systematic explanations of our approach is not something new (Kohlberg, 1981; Wilson *et al.,* 1967), but the field remains woefully short of appropriate tools for doing so. We consider the MWT framework to be one such a tool.

In addition, we believe there are implications of such appropriately complex, theoretically descriptive frameworks for educators who are engaged in the practice of moral education in schools, who are not simply technicians applying established means to achieve predetermined ends. Practitioners must exercise judgement in unique contexts that (if only implicitly) make the same theoretical assumptions the MWT framework helps to illuminate. In our view, it would be of tremendous value if practitioners systematically queried their own practices, both from an academic and a moral perspective, with the same questions posed by our framework: What does/should my practice assume or imply regarding the psychological functioning and development of my students? What does/should it assume or imply about moral value? Why am I doing what I am doing in my classroom? These questions of what and why are a part of theorising practice (Sanger, 2007), a process of making explicit the underlying theoretical explanations behind any practice (in terms of both ends and means (see also Biesta, 2007; Dewey, 1933)). We view theorising practice as a hallmark of critically reflective and informed professional work, and suggest that the MWT framework is a valuable tool in theorising approaches to moral education, as a developer, reader, and/or user of those approaches.

Following this line of thought, we also believe that the process of teacher education and development is one that ignores, at its peril, what teachers and student teachers bring to it. As we argue elsewhere (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2008), this basic constructivist idea shows another aspect of the utility of the MWT framework, in thinking about teachers and student teachers, and the task of preparing them for the moral work of teaching, in productive ways. We conclude with a very brief consideration of this application to teaching and teacher education.

The MWT framework can not only guide teachers, student teachers, and teacher educators ('us') in understanding well developed and documented approaches, like the CDP's, but also in identifying, understanding and connecting two critical sets of resources that inform practice. First, it directs us to *teachers' own assumptions* that are central to the moral work of classroom teaching, guiding us to their beliefs about moral value, moral development and functioning, and the nature of purpose of schooling, so that those beliefs might be openly and productively addressed. Second, it also directs us to valuable philosophical and psychological resources that can inform educator's assumptions, found in theoretical and empirical literature from relevant fields.[3] In other words, the MWT framework:

> guides teacher educators in connecting what we know about moral value, moral psychology, and their places in the context of teaching and schooling to the candidates in our programs of teacher education . . . equipping them to think about, evaluate, plan, and carry out teaching that is in support of their own most basic beliefs and commitments (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2008, p. 20).

As the work of Berkowitz (1998) and Jones *et al.* (2003) suggest, the practice of teacher education lags behind the interest in, and support for, moral education practice in classrooms and schools. We suggest that the MWT framework might provide an important tool for thinking about how to close that gap, by not only guiding the analysis of approaches, but also by guiding thinking about the moral work of teaching in general. This seems particularly important for preparing and supporting practitioners who will be engaged in such work everyday, in better understanding their own basic assumptions and the practical implications of those assumptions, in understanding and responding to others who hold different assumptions, and in understanding and implementing programs, like the CDP's, in their classrooms, schools and communities.

Notes

1. This essay has benefitted a great deal from the thoughtful input of the journal's editor and reviewers. We would particularly like to note the very generous, incisive, and kind input we received from the late Victor Battistich, who has done so much to further progress in the domain of moral education, and whose work (in print and otherwise) we shall continue to benefit from tremendously.
2. Contra Althof and Berkowitz (2006), we use 'moral education' in its broadest sense (referring to education addressing aspects of morality, broadly conceived), rather than to refer to efforts to develop distinctively cognitive capacities, based in part upon the work of Piaget and Kohlberg.

3.   We do not wish to marginalise practice and experience as legitimate bases for belief in teaching, but rather suggest that the role of teacher educators is to offer up sound bases for belief (and action) for educators to consider as they construct their own practices, in the context of teacher education and development.

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