

Model Adolescents

Society tends to view adolescents as amoral and as lacking in concern or respect for other people (Youniss & Yates, 1997). Although statistics offer a complicated picture of the reality of adolescent life, much research supports the negative view of adolescents' basic orientation to society. Compared to the several decades prior to the 1980s, for example, adolescents clearly have reneged on their role as political idealists who challenge tradition and seek a better society through political and social reform (Boyte, 1991; Flacks, 1988). Likewise, adolescents increasingly place themselves at risk for behaviors that contribute to their own and others' difficult circumstances. Many adolescents experiment with socially inappropriate behaviors—especially those related to alcohol and drug use, violence, and sexual activity—that they will not practice in adulthood but that nevertheless place them and society at risk for negative outcomes (Arnett, 1999). Even adolescents who do not engage in problem behaviors disapprove of them much less than other age groups do (Cohen & Cohen, 1996). These generally disturbing findings, though, frequently emerge with important contrary evidence suggesting that the vast majority of adolescents essentially do not manifest excessive self-interest and do not exhibit moral decline beyond that observed in previous generations or in adults (e.g., Youniss & Yates, 1997; Yates & Youniss, 1996; Arnett, 1999). In some domains, such as violent crimes and risky sexual activity, rates of adolescents' problem behaviors seemingly have peaked and exhibit downward trends (Jenson & Howard, 1999; Levesque, 2000a). Although adolescents may not disapprove as much of certain problem behaviors, they are indistinguishable from other age groups to the extent that they actually do place high priority on achieving very

positive goals (Cohen & Cohen, 1996). Despite more favorable evidence and persistent efforts to paint a more realistic picture of adolescents, society still seems unwilling to embrace a more favorable view of adolescents (e.g., Males, 1996).

Much debate surrounds explanations for emerging findings suggesting that society has countered some of the apparently negative shift in adolescents' morality and prosocial concerns (Jenson & Howard, 1999; Levesque, 2000a). Few, however, suggest that positive shifts result from systematic educational efforts to address them (Damon & Colby, 1996; Levesque, 2000a). Although some educational programs demonstrate promise and long-term benefits may accrue for some adolescents (e.g., Durlak, 1997), research pervasively documents the ineffectiveness rather than successes of currently implemented programs. Schools pervasively remain unable to respond to the adolescent period's apparent commitment to resistance, defiance, and lack of interest in prosocial activities; to adolescents' apparent amoral, anti-intellectual, and dangerous behaviors; and to perceptions that adolescents' apparent self-interest and hedonism renders them unable to adopt responsible adult social roles in an ever-changing society (Levesque, 1998c). To exacerbate matters, schools actually may be contributing to declines in adolescents' responsible behavior (Elliott, Hamburg, & Williams, 1998).

This chapter examines the pedagogical and legal tensions surrounding the extent to which schools must, can and should enhance the development of prosocial values and more exemplary orientations to society. To do so, the chapter presents the current social science understanding of adolescents' values and social development and schooling's place in fostering such development as a background to evaluate current legal mandates that both require yet limit schools' attempts to inculcate prosocial values in students. The analysis focuses on the manner adolescents reveal a commitment to others and contribute to community life. The review focuses on developmental topics such as identity, values, volunteerism, morality, and intergroup relations to frame them as issues of adolescents' positive social engagement. That analysis then serves, along with the previous chapter and the one that follows, as a springboard for Chapter 6's proposals for school law reforms to foster adolescents' healthy development and social responsibility.

MODEL ADOLESCENT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Polls consistently reveal that the general public, educators, political and religious leaders, and students themselves support public schools'

efforts to instill proper social values (DeRoche & Williams, 1998). Although schools' roles in instilling values in students still may remain highly controversial, commentaries increasingly concur on the broad contours of values deemed worth fostering in adolescents. Examining the nature of values deemed worth inculcating, coupled by the current understanding of the nature of adolescent social and moral development, serves as a foundation for examining schools' efforts to provide opportunities and foster environments for students to express, experience, and internalize values critical to fostering and sustaining a civil society.

NATURE OF SOCIAL VALUES DEEMED WORTH DEVELOPING

Public schools necessarily confront a central paradox: They must ensure freedom while restraining it. Schools must both impose and oppose the inculcation of values. Although schools must deal with numerous and often conflicting values, their efforts fundamentally involve the need to promote the highly regarded value of individual students' self-determination (as well as that of their families and communities) while simultaneously denying that determination. Schools do so as they shape and constrain present and future choices to ensure a smooth functioning society in which adolescents (as well as their families and communities) take their social responsibilities seriously. Thus, adolescents must submit themselves to the yoke of educational demands in order to develop their own capacity for autonomous actions. The submission is not at all unusual, social institutions typically ask individual citizens to yield some degree of short-term personal freedom for the sake of long-term communitarian values. Although ubiquitous and necessary, the balancing undoubtedly poses many challenges as educational systems seek to support both individualistic and communal concerns and as they consciously indoctrinate and create values so that individuals, groups and communities will be capable of doing the opposite.

Existing efforts to understand moral development that is both healthy for individuals and for society constitutes an appropriate starting point to discuss the model social values deemed worth developing. Despite numerous potential controversies that can emerge (as we will see in the following section), scholars of morality and moral development increasingly concur on what constitutes model moral development and moral identity worth fostering. Researchers and commentators generally view effective moral identity as constituting a sense of self marked by empathy, altruism, and cooperation committed to promoting and respecting others' welfare (Hay, Castle, Stimson, & Davies, 1995; Berkowitz & Grych, 1998). This view implies a concern for society's well-being and a

sense that one can make a difference in society—moral maturity involves the willingness to grasp the moral aspect in everyday events and take action on its behalf. Thus, despite the tendency to distinguish socially focused morality and self-interest as separate and orthogonal orientations, individuals deemed moral exemplars and model citizens define others' welfare and their own self-interest as inseparable in that their socially-oriented moral goals constitute their very identities (Colby & Damon, 1995).

The values deemed worthy of developing generally involve those that allow individuals to develop and exhibit moral identities that fuse self- and socially-oriented interests (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1998). From this view, there actually may be numerous values worth fostering so long as individuals exhibit, and eventually end up exhibiting, concern for themselves and others. These values derive from different dimensions of personality, intellectual style, temperament, and other dimensions that influence individuals' general approach to their social world. These dimensions allow for the existence of many different types of individuals deemed "of good character." From this view, character involves ways by which individuals pursue a consistent yet flexible path around social and ethical dilemmas; character involves the manner individuals mesh their ability to make moral judgements and their tendency to engage in prosocial behavior.

The type of moral identity deemed mature and worth developing emerges during adolescence. The moral identity that unifies the self's basic orientation to society requires individuals to combine complex cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements. Given the need to combine these elements to achieve a coherent sense of one's social orientation, researchers aptly argue that developmental and social transformations that occur across the threshold into adolescence allow, for the first time, for the development of a moral identity integrated into adolescents' sense of self (Blasi, 1995; Davidson & Youniss, 1991). Moral judgments and behaviors are tied intimately with strong judgments of self-worth and values. A strongly articulated self-identity, concern for that concept and the individualism that gives rise to it, provides the basis for moral action (Hart, Yates, Fegley, & Wilson, 1995). Thus, although it is important to emphasize that even infants exhibit moral behavior (Trevvarthen, 1993), researchers increasingly view the adolescent period as one of changes that lead to moral identity construction. Coupled together, research on adolescence and moral identity allows researchers to understand better the socialization that leads to the development of positive moral development and productive engagement with communities. The next section examines these changes and understandings.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOLESCENTS' SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND MODEL SOCIAL ORIENTATIONS

The adolescent period constitutes a time of remarkable changes in thinking, development and action. The transition fundamentally impacts both adolescents' current and future orientation to society. As with any other fundamental transition in human development, the changes in basic orientation to society emerge as part of other critical social, biological, and psychological developments. Although profoundly interrelated, five domains of development critically impact socio-moral development during adolescence.

The first critical transformation involves rapid and sweeping developments in adolescents' cognitive abilities that profoundly impact adolescents' orientations to their social environments. The cognitive transition allows adolescents to think conditionally (by using "if" and "it depends") and in terms of uncertainty. The transition also allows adolescents to be less egocentric and to engage in sociocentric functioning: unlike children, adolescents are better able to understand others. Thus, the period generally involves a move away from a focus on concrete information and personalized attributions of responsibility for certain actions and a move toward a focus on abstract conceptions of systems, ideologies, institutions and values. These critical changes allow adolescents to consider alternative possibilities, to engage in thinking about thinking, and to explore different value systems, political ideologies, personal ethics and religious beliefs. As a result of these changes, adolescents experience a heightened interest in ideological and philosophical matters, such as conceptions of individual freedom, civil liberty and social justice, and more sophisticated ways of looking at those matters.

The above cognitive developments are actually important to consider. They challenge negative views of adolescents' concerns for society and confirm adolescents' concern with social, political, and moral ideologies. Rather than selfish concern for themselves, adolescents exhibit a need to link themselves to communities and evaluate society's moral foundations. Adolescents' cognitive developments in perspective taking—the ability or tendency to understand internal and external states of others, including their social context—clearly benefits moral development and behavior. Overall, research suggests a positive relationship between the ability to engage in perspective taking and prosocial behaviors, all of which are associated with levels of moral reasoning. That is, higher levels and states of moral reasoning and other-oriented modes of moral reasoning relate positively to prosocial behaviors (Fabes, Carlo, Kupanoff, & Laible, 1999) and higher levels of moral reasoning relate negatively to



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