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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ETHICS OF EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Research supports emotional social learning in schools that show many benefits for students, including academic achievement improvement and social and emotional competence. Advocates of social and emotional learning often characterize the narrow and narrow edges of basic and secondary education. While research that supports the adoption of social-emotional learning does not have a clear concept on ethical competence. The lack of clarity of the problem for two reasons. First, contribute to the incorporation of social, emotional, and ethical competencies. Second, as a result, not enough attention only in the field of payments to related parties. But in social-emotional and ethical education, supporting emotional social learning, we critique the assumption of uniformity between social-emotional and ethical literacy and argue in the importance of educational programs to support ethical competence in social-emotional learning, including educating children to develop orientation autonomous ethics. Doing so will advance the efforts of educators to provide education for all children.

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INTRODUCTION

Advocates of social and emotional learning often characterize the ends of primary and secondary education as narrow in focus and overly reductive. Federal and state education mandates inform an educational process that primarily measures students, teachers, and schools by their collective performance on standardized tests. Commenting on current priorities in our nation's schools,

Jonathan Cohen writes

On many levels the classroom, school, district, and state reading and math scores constitute the only information that is recognized. Educators are being pushed to raise reading and math scores without focusing on the skills, knowledge, and dispositions that provide the foundation for school and life success… the current overemphasis on test scores is inadvertently retarding academic achievement and preventing future generations of young people from developing the ability to be active, engaged members of a democracy (Cohen 2006, 223). According to social and emotional learning advocates, the purpose of education goes beyond intellectual achievement as measured by standardized tests. We need an expanded conception of education, one that includes the development of social, emotional, and ethical competencies as a 'vital dimension' of educational aims (Cohen 2006, 227).[1] To this end, educators and policy-makers must move away from a 'dramatic overemphasis on linguistic and mathematical learning' and begin to pay greater attention to social, emotional, and ethical learning (Cohen 2006, 228, 207; Devaney *et al*., 2005, 107; Elias *et al*., 1997, 1). Social and emotional learning is an essential component of education insofar as it helps children to become healthier, happier people, as well as active and engaged citizens (Bar-On, 2005, 52; Cohen 2001, 3, 17; Cohen 2006, 202; Elias *et al*., 1997, 6, 7). Research shows that children learn and retain social and emotional skills most successfully in early childhood (Denham and Weissberg 2004, 16) and, in response, educators and psychologists have developed a number of social and emotional learning programs for use in early childhood learning environments (Elias *et al*. 1997, 143–151; Elias 2010, 47; McCabe and Altamura 2011, 517, 527). These programs, along with the body of research that supports social and emotional learning, make significant contributions to re-envisioning the purpose and practice of

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education in schools. However, though the development of social and emotional competencies in schools presents many benefits, the research supporting the wide adoption of social and emotional learning lacks a clear conception of *ethical competence*.[2] This lack of clarity is problematic for two reasons. First, it contributes to the conflation of social, emotional, and ethical[3] competencies in social and emotional learning literature. Second, as a result of this conflation, insufficient attention is paid to the related, yet distinct, ends of social-emotional and ethical education, including best practices for combining these ends and approaches in the classroom. Arguments for including and usefully combining social-emotional and ethics education in primary and secondary schools will ultimately be strengthened, we argue, if these distinct ends and their respective importance are better understood and, in turn, made the subject of pedagogical research. In section one of this paper, we discuss social and emotional learning and its personal, social, and academic benefits for children. In section two we turn to some prominent conceptions and implementations of social and emotional learning programming.

While supporting an expanded conception of education we critique the assumption of uniformity between social-emotional and ethical literacy in education and highlight specific ethical competencies that are missing from social and emotional learning research. In our final section we argue for the significance of adding educational programming to support ethical competencies alongside or within social-emotional learning programs. We argue that schools would benefit from devoting greater attention to the related, yet distinct, end of ethics education including a focus on educating children to develop and adopt an autonomous ethical orientation with a personal investment in ethical values, motivations, and actions with current social and emotional education efforts. Doing so would advance the efforts of educators and social and emotional learning advocates to promote education for the whole child.

Social Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (henceforth SEL) is described as 'the process through which we learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors' (Zins *et al*. 2004, 32).[4] Many SEL advocates build on the conceptual and educational foundations set by Howard Gardner and Daniel Goleman,[5], emphasizing the developmental importance of both cognitive and affective forms of intelligence and, in turn, the need for educational programming capable of fostering these multiple forms of intelligence. For example, Jonathan Cohen, an educator and researcher in the SEL movement, emphasizes *self- awareness* and *emotional organization* as skills that contribute to a broader 'intelligence,' and, ultimately, lead to success in life. As understood by Cohen, SEL is the process of acquiring the self-awareness, self-mastery, and 'decoding' skills necessary to negotiate the social and emotional landscape of our world. Thus, Cohen argues that these skills should be promoted by K-12 schools and early learning programs (Cohen 2006, 207). Doing so promotes the development of key social and emotional skill sets: Social emotional intelligence involves decoding of others and ourselves. That ability provides the foundation for problem solving, as well as the means by which we are enabled to grapple with a wide variety of learning challenges: how to modulate our emotional experiences; how to communicate; how to generate creative solutions; how to form friendships and working relationships; how to cooperate and, at the same time, become self-motivating. (Cohen 2001, 6) SEL programs more generally are designed to encourage healthy *emotional expression* and *emotional organization* in young children (Denham and Weissberg 2004, 14; McCabe and Altamura 2011, 515). Children develop emotional intelli- gence through emotional organization by learning to '(1) pick up real relevant, helpful messages; (2) ignore real but irrelevant messages; and (3) somehow deal with real and relevant but not helpful messages' (Denham 2003, 1009). Many SEL programs focus on young children (3–5 years of age) as they are beginning to recognize and understand their feelings a skill referred to as *self-awareness* during this developmental period (Denham and Weissberg 2004, 19). Children with high self-awareness are better able to regulate the intensity of their emotions and have also been shown to perform better academically (Denham 2003; 1013, 1015; Denham and Weissberg 2004, 19; Devaney *et al*. 2005, 109; Durlak *et al*. 2011, 417; Zins *et al*. 2004). Taken together, emotional expression, emotional organization, and self-awareness combine to constitute what SEL advocates refer to as *emotional competence* (Cohen 2006, 202; Denham 2003, 1014; McCabe and Altamura 2011, 515). Alongside emotional competence, SEL programming supports the develop- ment of *social competence*, the ability to make use of emotional competence to achieve goals within a social context (McCabe and Altamura 2011, 515; Rose-Krasnor 1997, 112). Social competence is comprised of *social awareness* and *relationship management*, skills that allow children to make and keep friends, understand social situations, and appraise the 'value' of their relationships with peers and adults (Denham and Weissberg 2004, 19; McCabe and Altamura 2011, 516; Rose-Krasnor 1997, 112). *Responsible decision-making*, an additional element of social competence, enables children to evaluate their relationships and resolve differences among peers by generating solutions to conflicts through the use of emotional and social competencies (Denham and Weissberg 2004, 20).

Students with high social competence often have more and stronger peer relations, are described more positively by peers and teachers, and perform better academically and socially in school (Denham 2003, 1013, 1015; Denham and Weissberg 2004, 19; Devaney *et al*. 2005, 109). In arguing for the greater introduction of SEL programs advocates point to the relationship of these social and emotional competencies to academic, ethical, professional, and interpersonal success. For example, research shows that SEL can lead to an improved focus in school that, in turn, leads to better academic per- formance (Cohen 2006; Denham 2003, 1010; Denham and Weissberg 2004, 14). In a meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL programs, Durlak *et al*. (2011) found that, compared to controls, SEL students showed a significant (11-percentile-point) improvement in academic achievement across grade levels (primary, middle, and high school). Furthermore, improved competence in social and emotional skills can give young people more confidence in social situations which enables the formation of successful peer relationships (McCabe and Altamura 2011, 514; Rose-Krasnor 1997, 112). SEL, then, is presented as an essential component of education for the *whole child*, focusing on numerous social and emotional skill sets important for

human development and life success, yet currently outside the scope of traditional academic curricula. Ethical development is also commonly discussed as a positive result of SEL (Cohen 2006; Devaney *et al*. 2005; Zins *et al*. 2004). However, in the research we cite there is little direct evidence of distinctly ethical training in SEL programming (as opposed to training for social and emotional competencies). We suspect that SEL advocates, though well intentioned and accurate in their estimation of the benefits of SEL for young children, often conflate social-emotional and ethical competence. Indeed, research and literature on SEL tends to either (1) assume SEL includes ethical learning (thereby conflating SEL with ethics education) or (2) claims ethical benefits of SEL training without sufficient discussion or research to support this claim.

The (missing) Ethical Dimentions of Social-Emotional Literacy

Following the work of Gardner and Goleman, SEL advocates call for an educational curriculum for the whole child, one that includes not only cognitive, but also, social, emotional, and ethical training. Jonathan Cohen articulates this expanded conception of education in terms of additional forms of *literacy*: Historically, literacy has referred to our ability to read and write. In recent years the usage of the term literacy has expanded to include a number of additional forms of 'reading' and expression … Solving problems, functioning on the job and in society, achieving our goals and developing knowledge and our potential necessarily rests on another form of literacy: social and emotional literacy (Cohen 2001, 195). Cohen defines social and emotional literacy as the ability to 'decode others and ourselves and to use this information to solve real social-emotional problems' (Cohen 2001, 195). Promoting this form of literacy in education is essential, Cohen contends, as social and emotional illiteracy is the cause of numerous societal problems (including increased violence, conflict, and environmental destruction). Other SEL advocates, such as Maurice Elias, argue that educators must take seriously the aim of producing a socially, emotionally, and ethically literate population:

According to the emerging SEL theory young people equipped with skills, and the corresponding prosocial attitudes and beliefs, would be more likely to make healthy, caring, ethical and responsible decisions, and to avoid engaging in behaviors with negative consequences such as interpersonal violence, substance abuse and bullying (Elias *et al*. 2007, 170). By focusing on social, emotional, and ethical literacy in schools educators can contribute to the development of persons with greater self-awareness, emotional understanding and, in turn, the capability to act ethically and successfully interact with others in a democratic society. This expanded conception of education possesses the potential to impact students well beyond the classroom, fostering the development of life-long learners equipped with the skills for successful interpersonal engagement and intrapersonal understanding. Devaney *et al*. (2005) argue that these social, emotional, and ethical, skills are attainable through a variety of SEL programmatic approaches:
[If] our schools, after-school programs, and youth development agencies work together to help young people to be self-aware, manage their emotions, be aware of others, have good relationships skills, and solve problems effectively, we have equipped them with the skills they need to live ethically and responsibly.

The good news is that these skills can be taught, and many excellent evidence-based [SEL] programs that help children develop such skills are available. (Devaney *et al*., 2005). Although we support the greater inclusion of social-emotional literacy efforts in schools, the SEL discussions under consideration include problematic assumptions. For one, advocates like Cohen, Devaney, Elias, and even Goleman imply that social and emotional education which is intended to lead to the development of socially and emotionally literate individuals is also sufficient to produce ethically literate individuals. But consider again the key features of the socially and emotionally literate individual: this is an individual that can 'decode' herself understand her own motivations, emotions, abilities, and desires and 'read' others such that she can form successful relationships and work cooperatively with others (Cohen 2006, 202; 2001, 3, 6, 14, 15, 195, 196). With these and related abilities in tow SEL advocates argue (or assume) that the socially and emotionally literate individual will likewise be motivated to be caring, cooperative, and helpful in respect to others (Cohen 2001, 9; 2006, 203, 204; Devaney *et al*. 2005, 109; Elias *et al*. 1997, 6; Zins *et al*. 2004, 4). In making these claims SEL advocates are conflating distinct forms of social, emotional, and ethical literacy. While it may be true that educating students to 'decode' themselves and others *could* lead them to take on ethical motivations, be helpful, or demonstrate greater respect and care for others, this is not a foregone conclusion. It is just as likely that the socially and emotionally literate individual could 'read' others in order to better manipulate them for his own selfish ends.

To illustrate this point, consider the following hypothetical example

Timothy is a socially and emotionally literate person. He considers and understands his motivations for action and, further, he is skilled in articulating these motivations and associated emotions and desires to others. Timothy also manages his emotions well. He is able to strategically work toward important life goals, while marshaling his emotions toward the achievement of these goals. In addition, Timothy possesses excellent social skills – he successfully forms and maintains relationships with others. In large part, this is because Timothy is expert at reading others; he understands what others are feeling and is capable of using this information to work toward the solution of various problems in social interactions. *Timothy is also extremely manipulative and views others as mere tools for use in achieving his life goals.*[6] If we follow the criteria set by the SEL movement, Timothy possesses essential qualities of the socially and emotionally literate individual, including social com- petence and emotional regulation and management. And, yet, Timothy does not demonstrate ethical concern for or ethical behavior toward others. Nor is Timothy motivated by ethical principles or values as he acts in relation to others. In virtue of this example, we can begin to see that one can be socially and emotionally literate and still lack important forms of ethical competence. That is, it is quite possible for an individual to be *both* socially and emotionally literate and ethically illiterate.[7] SEL advocates devote insufficient attention to this problem.[8] While they do discuss the need for children to develop 'ethical dispositions,' they often maintain or implicitly assume that these dispositions can be formed through social and emotional learning programs alone (Cohen 2006, 202, 209; Zins *et al*. 2004, 4).

However, in the discussion of the actual implementation of social and emotional learning programs in schools consideration of these ethical dispositions largely goes missing. To better identify this lack of explicit consideration of ethics education and related competencies we can turn to a few examples of prominent SEL programs. Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) uses formalized curriculum that 'supports educators and counselors in creating a Preschool/Kindergarten envi- ronment that helps children (3 to 6 years of age) develop self-control, positive self-esteem, emotional awareness, basic problem-solving skills, social skills and friendships' (PATHS Education Worldwide 2015a). Students who complete PATHS show 'increased emotional understanding' and 'decreased % of violent/aggressive solutions to social problems' which are mediated by 'improvements in inhibitory control' (PATHS Education Worldwide 2015b). Similarly, the FRIENDS program[9] promotes self-esteem, resilience, healthy lifestyle choices, and improved cogni- tive functioning through classroom training focused on making positive changes in a child's thinking. Children who take part in FRIENDS learn how to 'cope with stress,' 'communicate with adults,' and generally, improve their social skills (The FRIENDS Programs International Foundation, 2015; McCabe and Altamura 2011). Both PATHS and FRIENDS are admirable for their focus on improving the lives of children, decreasing stress, and promoting a healthy lifestyle in early childhood.

While there is no doubt that the intentions of these programs are sound, these programs suffer from a lack of emphasis on ethical competence. Without this emphasis, children lack a distinctly ethical education, an important component of education that is often claimed by SEL advocates. For example, after complet- ing both PATHS and FRIENDS (and related programs) students might be capable of better following school rules, might be less disruptive in the classroom, make friends with greater ease, and resolve social conflicts. However, it is not at all clear that these students will, on the basis of SEL training alone, begin to develop greater ethical awareness regarding their own motivations for action (e.g. by beginning to see a difference between actions taken for ethical as opposed to self-serving or manipulative reasons) or reasoning skills to adjudicate between value conflicts (e.g. between valuing a friendship and obedience to school rules). Without additional training in ethics education and discussion of ethical values students will make a transition to adult life (where ethical dilemmas can take on even greater weight and consequences) difficult indeed. The addition of training for central ethical competencies would help students fill this gap and, thus, would be an important addition to a well-rounded education.

The Significance of Ethics in Education

As we acknowledge the importance of social and emotional education for child development we also do well to recognize additional areas of education needed in schools. Without paying greater attention to educating for both social-emotional *and* ethical literacy we fail to educate the whole child. This expanded approach to childhood education is well supported by current research in developmental psychology. Over the past thirty years, research in moral developmental psychology in the area of social domain theory has revealed that children, from a young age, differentiate between social and moral concepts and actions (Nucci 2001; Nucci and Turiel 2009; Smetana, Jambon, and Ball 2014; Turiel 2014). Whereas social concepts are constructed from children's experiences of social interactions and corresponding rules and norms governing these interactions, moral concepts are generated from early experiences of harm and fairness that lead to 'prescriptive, generalizable understandings of how individuals ought to behave toward others' (Smetana, Jambon, and Ball 2014, 23). This distinction between social and moral concepts and experience in early childhood is perhaps most evident in early childhood judgments pertaining to social and moral transgressions. In response to hypothetical situations (e.g. one child hitting another child or a violation of a classroom rule) young children mark distinctions via different judgments pertaining to moral (issues of fairness, welfare, and rights) and social (issues relating to social conventions and group goals) trans gressions, believing that moral transgressions are wrong across social contexts (whether committed at school, at home, or somewhere else) and merit greater punishment than social violations (Nucci 2001; Smetana 1981, 1985). By contrast, social conventions are understood as 'consensually determined' and are contin- gent on the norms, rules, and expectations of authority figures within a given social setting (Smetana, Jambon, and Ball 2014, 24, 25).[10] On the basis of these and related findings psychologists posit distinct domains of moral, social (and personal) development that follow separate developmental trajectories (Nucci and Turiel 2009; Smetana 1985; Smetana, Jambon, and Ball 2014).

Child educators and researchers have begun to take these distinct, yet inter- related, developmental domains into account, marking distinctions between the method and ends of moral education and SEL. Addressing the distinction between moral and social-emotional learning, Elias *et al*. (2014) note that 'moral education focuses on values and social-emotional learning focuses on the skills and attitudes needed to function in relevant social environments.' While maintaining the impor- tance of social skill development Elias acknowledges that these skills can, taken by themselves, 'be used for good or ill' (Elias *et al*., 2014, 283). As we have seen, SEL competencies are skills that, though necessary for successful social interactions, academic success, and emotional management (among other areas), still 'require direction.' We contend that this 'direction' can come, in part, from distinct normative values (justice, fairness, etc.) that have a central place in ethics education. Appreciating these values can help students to understand ethically sound deployment of social and emotional skills; they place 'moral demands' on our social and emotional interactions with others and add a key ethical dimension to otherwise ethically neutral SEL skills and ends (such as social awareness, emotion organization, and social-emotional competence more generally) (Carr 2002; Kristjánsson 2006, 53).

Thus, in addition to the importance of recognizing and responding to the unique developmental needs of children (addressing both moral and social domains of development), educators also do well to develop curricula that advance SEL along with training for consideration and appreciation of ethical values and principles in social interactions. To understand this distinction we can consider 'prosocial' and 'moral' behavior (DeVries and Zan 1994). Prosocial behaviors such as sharing, helping, and comforting others are integral for successful social interactions in schools and society more generally. What is more, prosocial behaviors do generally

correspond to ethical ends. That is, ceteris paribus, we generally consider acts of sharing between children and related outcomes (happiness and social cohesion) to be ethically desirable. However, despite the close connection between prosocial and ethical behavior, education for prosocial behavior is not sufficient to satisfy the ends of ethics education. This is because ethics educators are also interested in the motivations that students develop and that come to influence behavior, or the 'cultivation of feelings of necessity for behaving in moral ways' (DeVries and Zan 1994, 29). For example, 'sharing' (an activity that is commonly introduced in SEL curricula) can stem from motivations ranging from self-interest and blind obedience to altruism and authentic care for the welfare of another person. If a child focuses on sharing as based exclusively on her own self-interest (say, because a teacher is watching) as opposed to consideration for fairness or the benefit of a peer we would hesitate to refer to this as an ethical action. Even so, regardless of the motivation, this act of sharing could satisfy basic standards of social and emotional competence (recognizing and acting on a social norm and managing emotions to avoid conflict). This is precisely why consideration and discussion of the multiple potential motivations for this action and, further, the ethical significance of motivations more generally, would be an important, distinctly ethical, addition to school and/or SEL curricula. Educating for consideration, evaluation, and development of ethical motiva- tions gains additional support as we consider the related need for children to develop autonomous (as opposed to heteronomous) ethical orientations (DeVries and Zan 1994; Killen and Nucci 1995; Piaget 1965). Describing heteronomous morality, DeVries and Zan (1994) write:

The child who lives a life dominated by obedience to the rules of others may develop a morality of blind obedience to authority. Such an individual may be easily led by any authority. Or, because of failure to develop a personal feeling about the necessity of moral rules, the obedient child may eventually rebel, openly or privately. Heteronomous morality means that the individual does not regulate his or her behavior by means of personal convictions. Rather, his or her activity may be regulated by impulse or unthinking obedience. (48) By contrast, the autonomously moral individual will be capable of self-regulation and possesses a 'personal conviction' regarding acting in accord with basic moral values (DeVries and Zan 1994, 46). It is essential that children develop this personal conviction in order to live ethical lives. Without this orientation (and without an ever-present authority figure) the individual will lack significant motivation to act ethically and to engage in critical reflection on her own convictions.

In identifying an important role for ethics education – namely, the importance of helping students to develop an autonomous ethical orientation with a personal investment in ethical values, motivations, and actions we still maintain the value of SEL. Indeed, by arguing for the combination and better specification of the ends of SEL and ethics education we are aiming for a holistic approach to educating students that will equip them with the good of both SEL and ethics education. Students will benefit from the skills needed to thrive socially and manage emotions, but also, from the possession of personal convictions and ethical values that help guide the use of social and emotional skills in ethical ways. Both dimensions of education and social experience are needed and, we contend, education is incomplete without their full representation.

Further, ethical and social-emotional dimensions of experience are already closely related in the social lives of children. For one, emotional recognition in childhood is a key building block of ethical awareness (Smetana, Jambon and Ball 2014). As developing ethical persons, young children are not fully capable of distinguishing intentions from outcomes in situations, nor are they capable of coordinating multiple perspectives of actors and recipients of action. As a result, it is common for young children to regard any instance of physical harm to be 'wrong' regardless of whether the perpetrator intended to commit the harm or not (Smetana, Jambon, and Ball 2014, 30, 31). Integral to children recognizing these situations as deserving of ethical consideration is the appearance of emotional distress in the one harmed (Smetana 1985, 27; Smetana, Jambon, and Ball 2014).

With the emotions evoked by acts of physical harm, along with a developing concern for others and awareness of ethical values, children eventually learn to assess and make ethical evaluations (Smetana, Jambon, and Ball 2014, 33). We can see, then, an important need for skill sets such as emotional recognition and awareness-as present in SEL curricula along with additional approaches to ethics education to build upon emotional recognition and solidify ethically relevant intentions and motivations for action. For this reason, it is a mistake to see SEL and ethics education as opposed or as aiming for completely separate ends; though distinct these approaches to education are intimately connected, as are the respective skills promoted in these forms of education. How can children be educated to develop ethical competence with an autonomous relationship to morality and an awareness of ethically relevant motivations? A full response to this question is beyond the scope of this paper and would require a lengthy discussion of ethics education curricula and practice.[11] But one key to helping children develop ethical competence lies in a cooperative as opposed to coercive or controlling approach to education. By respecting the child and her ability to exercise her will in important areas the adult can set a child centered foundation for 'constructing a confident self that values self and others positively,' capable of developing 'a stable system of moral, social, and intellectual feelings, interests, and values' (DeVries and Zan 1994, 50). By cooperating with children in the formation of classroom rules, in conflict resolution, and in other classroom decisions and activities, the adult teacher can provide emotiona approval and acceptance to children while also allowing children to act autonomously, to take an active (as opposed to passive) role in learning from mistakes, conflicts, and choosing responsible and ethical action (Mohr Lone and Burroughs 2016). In addition, engaging students in discussion around interpersonal conflicts or ethical concepts can help children to develop a 'critical moral perspective,' one that enables them to evaluate social norms, personal conduct, and ethical motivations in their own lives (Nucci and Powers 2014, 131). By discussing ethical dilemmas (both real and hypothetical) with children we can provide them with an awareness of moral com- plexity and ambiguity and the real challenges involved in leading an ethical life (Nucci and Powers 2014, 136). Research results in India always keep Research results in India always to maintain the quality of Indian educational system, keeping this large population of school teachers professionally up-to-date. (Chanchal Tyagi and Pradeep Kumar Misra, In-service education of school teachers in India: critical reflections, International Journal of Development Research, 2017, Volume: 7, Issue 12, pp. 17877-17883).

Conclusion

Although we agree that SEL is an important addition to the ends of contemporary education we contend that children also need to be given the opportunity to learn about the ethical dimensions of their lives in a supportive, educative environment. Without a doubt, it is essential for children to learn to navigate relationships with others, to be self-aware, and to acquire a better understanding of their own emotions. But these skills alone do not provide for a child's ethical education and development. As we have seen, while the socially and emotionally literate student will be capable of 'decoding' others in social settings, her social and emotional education alone does not prepare her to make ethical decisions. A student can be educated to regulate her emotions (e.g. by calming herself in a situation of high anxiety) or manage her relationships effectively (e.g. by adequately balancing time spent with friends and various other commitments) and still know very little, if anything, about how she ought to act or respond to ethical challenges present in relationships or underlying instances of emotional upheaval.

This is problematic as, like all of us, students are faced with ethical decisions on a daily basis. Students must make decisions about the (at times) competing values of honesty and the possibility of 'getting ahead' through various forms of academic dishonesty; students must consider and evaluate their responsibility (or lack thereof) to respond to pressing ethical issues in their school, in their families, and in their broader community; students are also engaged in formative interpersonal relationships that raise ethical issues, including their treatment of others and, in turn, the way they themselves are (or ought to be) treated by friends and partners. If we do not work with students and help them learn to recognize, consider, and respond to these situations, as well as many others, we are setting them up for ethical failure. At this point, then, more care needs to be taken in articulating a conception of ethical competence that can be operationalized in classrooms and, further, to consider potential avenues for educating for this distinct competence. In addition, rather than continue to conflate social and emotional competence (or literacy) with ethical competence, we call for greater collaboration between SEL and ethics educators to produce research and curricula for social-emotional and ethical literacy, for an education for the whole child.

Notes

- Social and emotional competence is generally understood as a set of abilities developed through social and emotional learning. On Cohen's account, social and emotional competence 'measures the ability to understand, process, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of our lives' (2001, 4). For related definitions, see Elias *et al*. (1997), 2, and Bar-On (2005).
- In response to this problem some social and emotional learning advocates have argued for the addition of character education to social and emotional learning programs (Elias *et al*. 1997). The relationship between character and social-emotional education programming is varied and often unclear.
  Although Elias et al. describe character education and SEL as sharing 'overlapping goals,' they are also distinct with the latter having a broader focus on the development of 'social decision-making and problem solving skills' (Elias *et al*. 1997, 2).
- Although various distinctions are proposed regarding the terms ethical and moral there is no commonly or uniformly accepted division. In this paper we use the terms ethical and moral interchangeably. We primarily use the term ethical but, in some parts of this paper, adopt moral to be consistent with cited literature.
- For related definitions see Coplan, Findlay, and Nelson (2004, 400), Dahl, Campos, and Witherington (2011, 148), Denham (2003, 1011), Elias *et al*. (1997, 2) and McCabe and Altamura (2011, 514).
- The advancement of the SEL movement and its expanded conception of education and child development take inspiration from two central figures in educational theory: Howard Gardner and Daniel Goleman. In Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences Gardner challenges classical views of intelligence, arguing that we must 'expand and reformulate our view of what counts as human intellect' (Gardner 2011, 4). Gardner critiques a monolithic conception of the human intellect as'general intelligence' and instead discusses the human intellect in terms of complex non hierarchical'multiple intelligences,' a range of autonomous human intellectual competences that underlie a wide range of human activities (Gardner 1993, 135, 77, 105, 217). Building upon multiple intelligence theory Daniel Goleman popularized the concept of 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman 1995, 40). According to Goleman, emotional intelligence includes two 'meta-abilities': self-awareness (the ability to recognize one's own mental states, emotions, and feelings) and self-mastery (the ability to master one's emotions and mental states). Goleman contends that emotions are a 'master aptitude' that can override or influence other abilities and, thus, must be understood and channeled for productive purposes (Goleman 1995, 79, 80). This conception of emotions and the related possibility of educating for emotional intelligence continue to inform SEL research and programming (Elias *et al*. 1997).
- For an additional illustration of the potentially 'amoral' ends of SEL training, see Kristjánsson (2006).
- For this reason Maurice Elias refers to social and emotional competencies as 'participatory competencies' (2007, 176). Social and emotional competencies are necessary conditions for ethical actions such as being honest or showing respect for others. However, by themselves, social and emotional competencies are not sufficient conditions for these and other forms of ethical action and motivation.
- In total, Cohen devotes one footnote on the distinction between social-emotional and ethical competencies. See Cohen (2006), endnote 1. Many others do not consider the distinction at all.
- There are three versions of the FRIENDS program, all based on SEL research. Fun FRIENDS is meant for children aged 4–7; FRIENDS for Life is meant for 8–11 year old children; and My FRIENDS Youth is meant for 12–15 year old adolescents. The letters in FRIENDS refer to the main ideas developed through the program content. The letters mean: F = Feelings, R = Remember to Relax, Have Quiet time, I = I can try my best (Inner Helpful Thoughts), E = Explore solutions and Coping Step Plans, N = Now reward yourself, D = Do it every

day, S = Smile! Stay calm, and talk to support teams (Barrett and Turner 2001).

- By contrast, the social intuitionist model of moral agency holds that moral judgments and distinctions primarily issue from moral intuitions and moral emotions (as opposed to cognitive reflection and rational decision-making). For more discussion on this point, see Haidt (2001).
- A lengthy discussion could also be devoted to the place and practice of ethics in schools more generally, particularly given potential and, in some cases, actual controversy in this area of education. Two points are central here: first, ethics education is not monolithic; it can be taught and implemented in several ways and, as we argue, can be compatible with and a useful addition to already accepted SEL programming. Second, ethics education is not a practice intended to indoctrinate children with a particular set of ethical beliefs, but rather, to help students develop the skills needed to critically evaluate ethical beliefs as a whole and develop moral reasoning and social decision making skills. For example, see Nucci (2001) and Oser (2014).

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