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# Social and Emotional Learning: An Argument for Religious Pluralism

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING:  
AN ARGUMENT FOR RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

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This work is dedicated to my parents, Louise and Michael Mayconich, who instilled in me a deep appreciation for our Catholic faith and the courage to follow my convictions; and to my children, David and Denise Baron, who have been model students and a constant inspiration to me.

*Our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith –  
and I don't care what it is.*

President Dwight Eisenhower

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to argue that in order for social and emotional learning (SEL) goals to achieve their intended outcomes for students and society, religious pluralism must be reflected in student instruction. SEL involves the use of evidence-based practices to provide opportunities to develop competencies related to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making which are intended to enable students to demonstrate morally appropriate actions and ethical decisions, which I am calling “right behavior.”

It is my argument that one’s understanding of right behavior embodies both implicit and explicit moral beliefs based on one’s worldview which reflects a certain conception of the good life and the good society. In many cultures this concept is shaped by the dominant, organized religion of the group. However, the religious diversity in the United States since its inception led to an American tendency to privatize religion and avoid meaningful public deliberation of competing views of the good life and the good society. However, I contend that this paradigm is no longer adequate for equipping twenty-first century students with the background knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving, and ethical judgment skills required for full participation in the social, political, and economic spheres of society. Instead, I am proposing a SEL-religious studies model that values religious freedom, equality, and neighborly affection, and recognizes the presence of moral and religious pluralism in American society.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

**Defining the Problem**

The purpose of this project is to argue that in order for social and emotional learning (SEL) goals to achieve their intended outcomes for students and society, religious pluralism must be reflected in student instruction. SEL is a term that emerged in the late-twentieth century to describe the science related to what takes place within the student to guide one's social and emotional well-being (Cherniss, Extein, Goleman, & Weissberg, 2006). In schools, SEL involves the use of evidence-based practices to provide opportunities to develop competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) which are intended to enable students to demonstrate morally appropriate actions and ethical decision-making, which I am calling "right behavior."

It is my argument that one's understanding of right behavior embodies both implicit and explicit moral beliefs based on one's worldview which reflects a certain conception of the good life and the good society. In many cultures this concept is shaped by the dominant, organized religion of the group (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2010). However, the religious diversity in the United States since its inception led to an American tendency to privatize religion and avoid meaningful public deliberation of competing views (Marty, 2000). Instead, the common schools were founded around generalized Protestant sectarian values and private parochial schools were established by

those groups who wanted different religious values inculcated in their children.

However, I contend that this paradigm is no longer adequate for equipping twenty-first century students with the background knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving, and ethical judgment skills required for full participation in the social, political, and economic spheres of society. This argument is grounded in the theories of educators (particularly Freire, 1970/2000; Gutmann, 1987/1999; Marty, 2000; Noddings, 1984/2003; 1993; 2002; 2006a; 2008; Nussbaum, 1997; 2010; 2012) who believe that without a concerted effort to teach about both the brute fact and ideal of religious pluralism, as well as the importance of religious literacy, it will be nearly impossible for schools, public or private, to implement a curriculum which will provide students with the opportunity to acquire these essential competencies. I will try to support this belief by demonstrating that the SEL goals provide schools with new opportunities which should not be ignored for teaching students to embrace religious pluralism and the importance of religious literacy in a society that values religious freedom.

The definition of religious pluralism that informs this project comes from an essay written by Eboo Patel (2008), entitled “Religious Pluralism in the Public Square,” for the *Debating the Divine: Religion in 21<sup>st</sup> Century American Democracy* initiative sponsored by the Center for American Progress. Patel states:

In short, then, religious pluralism is neither mere coexistence nor forced consensus. It is not a watered-down set of common beliefs that affirms the bland and obvious, nor a sparse tolerance that leaves in place ignorance and bias of the other. Instead, religious pluralism is “energetic engagement” that affirms the unique identity of each particular religious tradition and community, while recognizing that the well-being of each depends upon the health of the whole. Religious pluralism celebrates diversity and welcomes religious voices into the public square, even as it recognizes the challenges of competing claims. Also, it recognizes that in a pluralistic democracy, competing claims must be translated

into moral language that is understood by fellow citizens – believers and nonbelievers alike – who must be convinced of the benefits of what is being proposed. (p. 21)

It will be shown that this understanding of religious pluralism is needed to accommodate the religious diversity present in the nation and to affirm our commitment to religious freedom, including unbelief. In *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*, Diane Eck (2002) urges that “we must find ways to make the differences that have divided people the world over the very source of our strength here in the U.S.” (p. 25). The proposed approach does this by reflecting the ways in which religion and politics have become increasingly intertwined in the United States and assists in understanding the influence these spheres have on individual behavior (Putnam, Campbell, & Garrett, 2010). It recognizes that religious literacy is also critical to understanding national and global events and issues, as well as cultivating peaceful relations locally and abroad (Gutmann, 1987/1999, Moore, D., 2007).

By failing to acknowledge the variety of worldviews present in American society, students with certain perspectives are affirmed while the beliefs of other students are marginalized (Delpit, 2006; Lareau, 2003; Ogbu, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Therefore, the politics of power and the challenges of religious diversity in a pluralistic society need to be addressed when teaching students right behavior. These challenges, which I view as issues of inclusion and tolerance, cannot be ignored if the SEL goals to foster self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, healthy relationships, and responsible decision-making are to be achieved. This project examines why SEL must include a deeper engagement of these challenges in order to remain true to its ideals.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will provide an overview of the evolution in the

thinking related to the science behind SEL and examine how the chasm between emotion and reason in Western thought no longer supports the positive development of every child. Beginning with a glance back to the educational goals of Ancient scholars, like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, I will then take a brief look at the gendered and anti-religious roots of the scientific study of emotions and social behavior. The medicalization of psychology and education and its relationship to the evolution of the positive psychology movement will also be explored. I will then provide some background on efforts aimed at supporting the development of the whole child which stress the need for educational objectives that foster social competence.

The efforts of SEL advocates to address and reconnect the chasm between the head and the heart will be presented as a means for fostering social competence. I will provide information about the intended social and emotional learning outcomes for students advanced by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning and other SEL advocates. Their claims that these outcomes are possible by merely teaching neutral skill-oriented processes serve as the antithesis of my argument that these science-based processes have no meaning without moral content. I will challenge the neutrality of SEL instruction and try to demonstrate the hidden values implicit in this work. Because of the inability to separate values from behavior assessments, I will attempt to establish my claim that SEL is a type of moral education aimed at teaching students right behavior, and therefore, requires the recognition of religious pluralism as an essential element of instruction in order to avoid being hegemonic.

## Antecedents of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

### Putting a New Name on an Old Tradition

The term “social and emotional learning” is said to have first been used at a meeting hosted by the Fetzer Institute in 1994 (Cherniss, Extein, Goleman, & Weissberg, 2006). In the same year, the Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was established to advance the science of social and emotional learning, as well as to “to translate scientific findings into effective school-based practices that are used worldwide” (Graczyk et al., 2000, p. 4). CASEL, also known as the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning, changed its name to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning in 2001. It is one of the preeminent organizations advancing the science and evidence-based practice of SEL (Devaney, O'Brien, Resnik, Keister, & Weissberg, 2006; Elias & Arnold, 2006). It will be shown that this educational model is consistent with the principles advanced by educational philosophers such as John Dewey (1916/2007), Paulo Freire (1970/2000), Amy Gutmann (1987/1999), and Nel Noddings (1984/2003; 1993; 2006a; 2008).

Several members of the initial CASEL Leadership Team published *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators* (Elias et al., 1997) in which they define SEL as “the process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to acquire social and emotional competence” (p. 2) The authors explain further that:

Social and emotional competence is the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one’s life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development. It includes self-awareness, control of impulsivity, working



cooperatively, and caring about oneself and others. (p. 2)

**Table 1. CASEL Core Social and Emotional Competencies**

- **Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
- **Self-management:** The ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.
- **Social awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- **Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
- **Responsible decision making:** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Source: CASEL, 2012, p. 9

In 2003, CASEL published *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader’s Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs* after examining nearly 250 programs that address health promotion, problem prevention, and positive youth development. Based on those findings, CASEL determined that effective SEL programs foster development of five core social and emotional competencies. In 2012, the first of a two-part updated guide was published to assist schools in selecting preschool and elementary SEL programs. A companion publication is expected to be published in 2013 that includes reviews of middle and high school programs. The *2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs – Preschool and Elementary School*

*Edition* reflects only minor modifications in the definitions of the five competency clusters. The current definitions of CASEL's core social and emotional competencies are presented in Table 1.

However, SEL is not an entirely new area of study. To a large degree SEL is reflective of a 3,000 year old schooling tradition that started in Egypt, India, and Greece, aimed at teaching students about their culture and its habits, as well as the importance of self awareness. The evidence for these roots are in the teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as the inscription "Know thyself," which was carved on the wall of the Oracle Apollo in Delphi over 2,500 years ago (Cohen, J., 1999, 2001, 2006). An essential aspect of knowing one's self has involved understanding our emotions and how they impact our relationships with others. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (1999) tells us that "we can experience [emotions] either too much and too little, and in either cases not properly. But to experience all this at the right time, toward the right objects, toward the right people, for the right reason, and in the right manner – that is the median and the best course, the course that is a mark of virtue" (p. 43 [1106b20]). Educators throughout much of history have been striving to help their students to better understand their emotions and how to successfully live with others. These aims will be explored throughout this project.

### **Tracing the Chasm between Emotion and Reason in Western Thought**

As Christianity gained influence in Europe, most formal schooling became the province of the Catholic Church until the twelfth century. Then a shift away from revealed knowledge began to take place when the first universities were established in Europe. These universities began to promote scholasticism, a method of learning based

on empiricism, secular study, reason, and logic. Initially, this method was employed by scholars like Thomas Aquinas to support Roman Catholic doctrines through reasoning, rather than resting solely on intuition or revelation (De Wulf, 1903/1956).

As the reliance on scientific knowledge grew, a deep chasm between thought and feeling developed in Western education. “The pedagogic assumption of scholasticism in the West has been that education was for the rational mind; emotions were out of place – and, implicitly, unschoolable” (Goleman in Bar-on, Maree & Elias, 2007, p. ix). This line of thinking became even more entrenched during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as part of the European Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, when an even stronger belief in rationality and science began to dominate intellectual circles.

Intuition and revealed knowledge were determined to represent religious superstitions, neither of which was viewed to have a place in the public sphere, especially in the secular academy outside of the arts and humanities (Manseuto, 2011). Jacques Maritain (1940) complained, “One of the worst vices of the modern world is its dualism, the dissociation between the things of God and the things of the world. The latter, the things of the social, economic and political life, have been abandoned to their own carnal law, removed from the exigencies of the Gospel” (p. 22). Some argue that this is still the situation today to some extent, particularly with regard to the treatment of revealed knowledge and the study of religion in higher education (Hart, 1999; Miller, L., 2010).

René Descartes is largely credited with advancing the belief that the body was something separate from the mind; the mind being the thinking part and the body being the mechanical part. According to Antonio Damasio (1994/2005), Descartes’ greatest error was “the suggestion that reasoning, and moral judgment, and the suffering that

comes from physical pain or emotional upheaval might exist separately from the body. Specifically: the separation of the most refined operations of the mind from the structure and operation of a biological organism” (p. 250). The Cartesian idea of a disembodied mind discounts “the rest of the organism and the surrounding physical and social environment – and also [leaves] out the fact that part of the environment is itself a product of the organism’s preceding actions” (p. 251).

Feelings increasingly became associated with the body and the feminine realm. Megan Boler (1999) claims, “Women are the repository of emotion in Western culture” (p. 31). She traces “how religious, scientific, and rational discourses have ‘controlled’ women’s emotions and relation to knowledge as a strategy to maintain her subordinate status within patriarchal culture.” Boler identifies what she calls the politics of emotions, pointing out that “the view of emotions as symptoms of the failings and moral evil of women remains a bedrock of Western Protestant cultures. In part because of their association with women’s imperfection in the eyes of God, emotions signify vice rather than virtue” (p. 41). She argues that women have had to live with the ideological contradictions that they are inferior at the same time as being assigned the role of “caring police.” In this role, women serve as nurturing caregivers and the embodiment of intimate passions, where “the privatized sphere of women’s ‘love’ and sentiment is deemed as a *social* virtue” (p. 42, italics in original). Boler maintains “emotions have been constantly individualized and privatized” as a means for excluding women from higher education and public power (p. 42). “Emotions are assigned as women’s dirty work, and then used against her as an accusation of her inferior irrationality.”

As feminist scholars grew increasingly vocal in challenging these ideological

contradictions, some SEL advocates also began to recognize SEL instruction as an opportunity to restore the relationship between spirituality, emotion, and reason in the educative process (Cohen, J., 1999; Goleman, 1995/2005; Kessler, 2000; Lantieri, 2001a; 2001b; Pasi, 2001). They claim their efforts are aimed at “correcting a long-standing wound in Western civilization, one caused by the chasm between thought and feeling” (Goleman in Bar-on et al., 2007, p. ix).

Since SEL instruction is marketed as a science and evidence-based practice, I will confine the discussion here to the role the scientific community has had in advancing SEL, particularly with regard to the efforts of those involved with the biological and psychological study of social and emotional behavior. I will explore contemporary efforts to reaffirm the relationship between emotion, spirituality, and education from philosophical and cultural perspectives later in this project. As will be shown, while very relevant, those efforts have had a less direct influence on the SEL movement thus far.

### **Identifying the Roots of the Scientific Study of Emotions and Social Behavior**

Despite the fact that there are written accounts of earlier observations regarding expressions and emotions, Charles Darwin is credited with publishing the first scientific study of emotions in 1872 in the first edition of *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. In his last major work, Darwin (1890/2009) observed “that the same state of mind is expressed throughout the world with remarkable uniformity; and this fact is in itself interesting, as evidence of the close similarity in bodily structure and mental disposition of all the races of mankind” (p.27). The same was not true regarding the development of “invented articulate language” which he decided appears to have been influenced more by local conditions.

However, finding similar expressions and involuntary gestures in both humans and lower animal forms with regard to fear, pain, and pleasure, Darwin (1890/2009) viewed this as further evidence for his theory of evolution. Yet, expressions such as blushing, grief, and anxiety, often identified as “emotions of the heart,” were found to be uniquely human. Darwin attributed this to the structure of our respiratory and circulatory systems and claimed if the related organs “had differed in only a slight degree from the state in which they now exist, most of our expressions would have been wonderfully different” (p. 332). He concluded “that expression in itself, or the language of the emotions, as it has sometimes been called, is certainly of importance for the welfare of mankind.” But, Darwin was unable to go any further in identifying the “source or origin of the various expressions” (p. 334), and he urged others to engage in further study.

Yet, little additional attention was given to the empirical study of emotions and social interaction by the scientific research community for nearly fifty years. Then, Edward Thorndike (1920) identified social intelligence as one of at least three distinct constructs of intelligence, in addition to constructs related to abstract (verbal) and mechanical (visual/spatial) abilities. He said, “Not only philanthropist and philosophers, but hard-headed, practical men of affairs in business, education, and government, are now looking to psychology, the science of human behavior, to provide principles for human engineering – for the efficient private and public management of man-power or ‘personnel’” (p. 227). Thorndike defined the concept of social intelligence as “the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls – to act wisely in human relations” (p. 228). After several attempts to study it, he observed, “Social intelligence shows itself abundantly in the nursery, on the playground, in barracks and factories, and

salesrooms, but it eludes the formal standardized conditions of the testing laboratory” (p. 231). Finding social intelligence difficult to measure in order to make this knowledge useable, he eventually stopped trying.

Thorndike (1920) was confident that the other two constructs would sufficiently identify persons with high intelligence to train for leadership positions. He believed that most of them would serve the common good over selfish interests, even though he could not find test results that showed any more than a .40 or .50 correlation between intelligence and character. “It seems entirely safe to predict that the world will get better treatment by trusting its fortunes to its 95- or 99-percentile intelligences than it would get by itself. The argument for democracy,” he said, “is not that it gives power to all men without distinction, but that it gives greater freedom for ability and character to attain power” (p. 235). He believed that the “masses,” in the long run, had best been ruled by intelligent men.

Other research psychologists following Thorndike through the 1960s, most notably David Wechsler, Lee Cronbach, and J.P. Guilford, experienced similar frustrations with their efforts to develop predictive social intelligence measurements (Goleman, 2006; Jahoda, 1958; Salovey & Mayer, 1990/2004). They concluded that sufficient attempts had been made and that further efforts would be fruitless. Since the systematic study of social behavior among research psychologists produced little useable knowledge in terms of measuring social abilities, educational psychology and curriculum development focused more and more on the measurement and assessment of cognitive skills related to abstract and mechanical abilities. However, there was still considerable interest among a number of researchers and practitioners during the first part of the

twentieth century about the role of emotion and social interaction in decision-making and how these constructs influenced learning and human development.

John Dewey (1938/1997) clearly recognized the relationship between emotion and interpersonal interaction in his theory of experience and its impact on the educative process. He believed that, “Traditional education tended to ignore the importance of personal impulse and desire as moving springs” (p. 70) and the extent to which relationships between the teacher and students, as well as among students, resulted in either positive, growth-oriented experiences or negative mis-education. In designing learning experiences, the teacher, he argued, was responsible for offering suggestions and information as a starting point and then allowing “the purpose to grow and take shape through the process of social intelligence” (p 72). This involved the participation and cooperation of all involved in the project, instead of the teacher dictating the plan and purpose for the activity to the class. He viewed this approach as one of the most significant distinctions between traditional and progressive education. Traditional education had no need to recognize emotions as the aims of education were static, “subject-matter as well as standards of proper conduct are handed down from the past, the attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity, and obedience” (p. 18). Progressive education, on the other hand, was about giving students “acquaintance with a changing world” (p. 20), along with the skills to be flexible and adaptive, so that they would become inquisitive, receptive, and self-disciplined individuals.

Daniel Prescott’s report to the American Council on Education, entitled *Emotion and the Educative Process* (1938) reflects the debate taking place in education circles



during this period around this topic. Prescott chaired the Council's interdisciplinary Committee on the Relation of Emotion to the Educative Process. The report provides significant insight into the concerns of the day, many of them not much different than those expressed today. The report utilized 180 references, including a 1931 publication entitled *Social and Emotional Development of the Pre-school Child*. The charge to the Committee was to ascertain:

The recognition to be accorded emotional factors in the educational process, with special reference to the questions: (1) whether emotion has been unduly ignored in the stress laid upon the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skill in the acquisition of knowledge; (2) whether education should concern itself with the strength and direction of desires developed or inhibited by the educational process; (3) whether the stress laid on the attitude of neutral detachment, desirable in the scientific observer, has been unduly extended into other spheres of life to the impoverishment of the life of American youth; and (4) in the event that it should appear desirable for education to concern itself more directly with the development and direction of emotion, to consider by what devices emotion may be more accurately described, measured, and oriented. (p.4)

Over a four year period, the Committee studied the academic literature and discourse related to the affective experiences thought to be involved in education, including "feelings, emotions, and all attitudes with emotional components" (Prescott, 1938, p. 5). The Committee concluded, "The whole area of the role of affective factors in personality development and education fairly bristles with unconquered mountains of ignorance" (p. 282). Suggestions were made for more than a hundred research studies and experiments to gain empirical data about the physiology and psychology of affective behavior, child development, and the formal training of children in schools.

The observations and insights of the committee members reflected the complexity of the subject matter and the difficulty in using conventional quantitative scientific methods to study it. However, they cautioned that should not be an excuse to not move

forward using case studies and other non-quantitative methods to build and test theories and practices. They encouraged “the pooling of the knowledge and skills of a considerable group of experts in the different sciences,” viewing it as “perhaps . . . another test of democracy, which demands unselfish and often intangible contributions from many people for the common good” (Prescott, 1938, p. 293).

### **Understanding the Medicalization of Psychology and Education**

The Committee on the Relation of Emotion to the Educative Process was established not only to shed light on the emotional components of learning, but also in response to the growing influence of the “mental hygiene point of view” on education (Cohen, S., 1983; Prescott, 1938). Ideas which originated in psychiatry inspired social workers, teachers, clinical psychologists, sociologists, clergymen, and others to launch the mental hygiene movement in the early twentieth century (Cohen, S., 1983; Franklin, 1994; Pols, 2004; Warren, H., 1998). Educational historian Sol Cohen (1983) claims:

Few intellectual and social movements of this century have had so deep and pervasive an influence on the theory and practice of American education as the mental hygiene movement. . . [It] provided the inspiration and driving force behind one of the most far-reaching yet little understood educational innovations of this century, what I call the “medicalization” of American education. I mean by this metaphor the infiltration of psychiatric norms, concepts and categories of discourse – the “mental hygiene point of view” – into virtually all aspects of American education in this century, epitomized in the idea of the school’s responsibility for children’s personality development. (p. 124)

According to S. Cohen (1983), the mental hygiene movement has its roots in the Progressive reform movements which emerged at the turn of the twentieth century in response to concerns related to urbanization, industrialization, and immigration. A large part of the initial social agenda of the mental hygiene movement was to impose middle-class standards of conformity on poorer and immigrant children. The intent of these

efforts were to prevent juvenile delinquency and establish new mechanisms for social control in response to the increasing ethnic diversity, reflected in the different beliefs, values, and attitudes held by America's changing population (Franklin, 1994; Horn, 2004). Parallel to the eugenics movement, which identified "the primary cause of social pathology as innate lack of intelligence or innate feeble-mindedness," the hygienist, as they were called, "rejected the pessimistic hereditarianism of the eugenicists and the intelligence testers," focusing instead on "conduct issues from personality" (Cohen, S., 1983, p. 128).

The National Committee for Mental Hygiene (NCMH) was organized in 1909 in response to the growing perception that mental illness was the most serious social evil of the time. Based more on ideas than scientific underpinnings, "it largely eschewed scholarly citations of precedent or authority," instead drawing on an eclectic mix of thoughts, including Adolf Meyer's dynamic psychiatry of 'the whole person,' John B. Watson's behavioristic psychology, and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic concepts. Hygienists, "chose to minimize or disregard neurological injury or heredity" and instead emphasized personality. "Mental illness was not a 'disease of the brain or nervous system but a personality disorder . . . The emotions, in contrast to intellect, were the 'essential core' of personality, and the 'most determining aspect of mental life in general'" (Cohen, S., 1983, pp. 126-127). Critically important to education was the belief in the malleability of personality, particularly during childhood (Prescott, 1938; Symonds, 1936).

The emphasis on personality development represented a significant shift in thinking and discourse about deviance which was occurring at that time. What

constitutes a deviant act was changing “from a moral lapse or simple recalcitrance to a socialization failure. And our understanding of how one responds to deviance [was changing] from something akin to punishment – namely, inflicting pain and death – to a process of reintegrating the individual into society” (Franklin, 1994, p. 8). Barry Franklin, an educational historian, refers to this change as the “medicalization of deviance” where criminal and deviant behavior “would come to be seen as a sickness” resulting from “organic or psychological defects that . . . required a therapeutic regimen if [these individuals] were to be reintegrated into society.” He maintains that one of the most significant outcomes of this shift “was that it brought this medical effort to combat deviance into the schools” in an effort to identify and manage childhood behavior problems (p. 12).

While the term “personality” continues to have different meanings in different disciplines, the post World War I psychiatric conception informed the mental hygiene movement. According to S. Cohen (1983), hygienist used the term “development of personality” as:

a shorthand notation for a cluster of systematically related assumptions, attitudes, and concepts which includes the following essential elements: personality maladjustments are the cause of individual mental disorder and social problems of all sorts; childhood is the critical period in the development of personality; children are extremely vulnerable to personality disorders; the school is the strategic agency to prevent, or detect and ‘adjust’ problems in children’s personality development; and finally, the personality development of children must take priority over any other educational objective. (p. 124)

While the primary goals of the mental hygiene movement were “to educate the public about mental illness, identify its early signs, and it was hoped, to prevent it,” the prevention focus faded as the notion of the problem child changed from a social problem

to an individual problem (Horn, 2004, p. 156). In the textbook *Mental Hygiene of the School Child*, Percival Symonds (1936) wrote about the positive, preventive aspects of mental hygiene, to fill what he perceived to be a gap in the literature. In the Preface of his book, he lamented that:

Principles of mental hygiene have developed out of the knowledge of abnormal psychology and the practice of psychiatry, and mental-hygiene textbooks are generally filled with terms relating to pathological forms of behavior and thinking. Unlike other aspects of hygiene, mental hygiene traditionally places more stress on how to correct poor mental adjustments or how to cure mental disorders than on how to prevent bad mental habits from arising. As related to education, mental hygiene has practically devoted its attention to the remedial treatment of the problem child. (p. x)

This therapeutic or medical model of schooling, focused on pathology, has been a determining force in shaping special education practices in American schools. This branch of the mental hygiene movement also prepared the way for guidance counseling, school psychology, and differentiated instructional programs for those students who are hard to teach, particularly those students who displayed emotional disturbance, social maladjustment, and learning disabilities. Franklin (1994) argues that this shift produced a recalibration of the common school ideals based on democracy and egalitarian beliefs to ideals related to accessibility to public schooling based on one's abilities and any handicapping conditions. This has resulted in the ongoing practice of sorting students into separate and distinct courses of study determined largely by scores on standardized intelligence and achievement tests. This practice has come under increasing criticism from educators, parents, and community organizations. However, S. Cohen (1983) warns, "It may not be so easy to de-medicalize the school" (p. 143).

Recognizing the importance of promoting healthy development, some advocates

within the field of special education have begun to call for a continuum of positive supports for students to reduce the occurrence of challenging behavior problems. Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS), also known as Positive Behavior Support (PBS), is based on a multi-tiered public health model which emphasizes prevention along with increased levels of intervention in relation to the intensity of the problem behavior (Sugai et al., 2000). “Insights from public health and the increasing public awareness of the rising rates of mental disorders have signaled the need for a change within the field of psychology . . . The wait for pathology is no longer acceptable” (Reinke, Herman, & Tucker, 2006, p. 315).

Universal interventions are directed to all students as part of school-wide prevention efforts aimed at targeted behavioral acts and not disorders. While there is a difference in orientation, with PBIS emphasizing the amelioration of identified problem behaviors, and SEL emphasizing the development and enhancement of core social and emotional competencies, there is much overlap between these strategies. Strengthening the collaboration between educators and mental health professionals to bring these approaches together has the potential to establish a more balanced approach to fostering student well-being and success in the classroom and with other life issues (Paternite & Johnston, 2005). However, the focus on pathology will not be reduced if SEL is used primarily as another lens to identify individual deficiencies in need of remediation (Hoffman, 2009).

### **A New Paradigm Gains Momentum**

#### **Moving from Pathology to Positive Psychology**

Positive psychology, the study of human thriving that began to take shape in the

late 1990s, as “the *antithesis* of the medical model, which continues . . . to focus on the study, diagnosis and treatment of psychopathology” (Bar-on, 2010, p. 54) is also recognized as having its earliest roots in the positive mental health movement of the 1930s. Positive psychology is also an outgrowth of the humanistic psychology movement founded in the 1960s by Abraham Maslow along with Charlotte Bühler and others (Bar-on, 2010). It is out of the community health and positive psychology schools of thought that SEL emerged in a somewhat parallel and simultaneous fashion in the later part of the twentieth century.

Initially in reaction to World War II and then to the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union, discussions occurred in the United States during the 1950s between educators, public health officials, social scientists, and others regarding “the nature of man as he ought to or could be . . . [and] searching for expressions incorporating its ideals of a good man in a good society” (Jahoda, 1958, p. 4). It was in this milieu that H. Harry Giles (1943; 1953; 1958), a professor of education at New York University, promoted the scientific study of human conflict, as well as, the need for social relations education, as a means of supporting “the democratic ideal of the maximum possible growth for all human beings” (1953, p. 419). He argued, “Our main problem is not how to educate for mass destruction or for developing nuclear power. It is how to educate in the social relationships which will enable us to reach the goals of a free society” (1958, p. 27).

Giles (1958) cautioned about the “lack of symmetry in the development of physical science and technology over that of social relations practices” and “the survival of preatomic power politics in an age which calls for the full use of new methods in the communications of peoples and the employment of space, time and resources” (p. 28).

Giles encouraged educators to use the best knowledge about human development and social relationships to inform school practices and provide social relations education. The goals he identified for this education are quite similar to CASEL's core competencies regarding social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Recognizing these competencies as process skills, Giles also suggested the content cover subjects, such as race, religion, national culture similarities and differences, economic class problems and values, sex and age differences, family relationships, and "the Oldtimer and the Newcomer," referring to native-born Americans and new immigrants, respectively (p. 29).

This was also when Maslow (1950) began his study of self-actualizing people with what started as a project to help him find "the solution to various personal moral, ethical, and scientific problems" (p. 11). He defined self-actualization, a term that Kurt Goldstein had coined in 1939, as "the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc. Such people seem to be fulfilling themselves and tend to be doing the best that they are capable of doing." These individuals had met their basic emotional and cognitive needs and "had worked out their philosophical, religious, or axiological bearings" (p. 12). Maslow concluded self-actualizing people "are more completely 'individual' than any group that has ever been described and yet are also more completely socialized, more identified with humanity than any other group yet described" (p. 33).

Intrigued by these individuals, Maslow began to work with others to "develop a psychology of the healthy person, of healthy being and living at a time when the Freudian doctrine of the overwhelming predominance of neurosis prevailed" (Bühler, 1979, p. 9). "It was a near-revolutionary step to create confidence in the concepts of healthy growth



and constructive potentials of human nature. For so long the predominant outlook had been one stressing the neurotic disturbances in people's lives" (p. 10).

Recognizing the presence of essentially healthy forces within individuals and the significance of having life goals, Maslow and Bühler, along with a few other colleagues formed the American Association for Humanistic Psychology in 1962 to help foster the ability in human beings to find and express their maximum potential (Bühler, 1979). They identified one of the most pressing problems for the group was to define mental health. Marie Jahoda (1958) also cited this short-coming as one of the most significant barriers to conducting systematic research on this topic, in her comprehensive review, *Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health*, completed on behalf of the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health.

However, these scholars independently concluded that mental health was more than the absence of mental illness and that the range of what constituted normal behavior varied from one culture to another (Bühler, 1979; Jahoda, 1958; Maslow, 1950). Human relationships, both positive and negative, as well as the setting or environment, and any changes in these conditions significantly influenced the development and maintenance of mental health. They also recognized that the psycho-social nature of these relationships necessitated interdisciplinary research and collaboration. These themes, as will be demonstrated, form the foundation for SEL.

### **Supporting the Positive Development of Every Child**

Even among the mental hygiene advocates some questioned the appropriateness of the medicalization of education (Symonds, 1936). Adolf Meyer, one of the founding members of the movement, warned in 1932, "I am very skeptical about the wisdom of

introducing too much pathology into the school” (quoted in Cohen, S., 1983, p. 142). Prescott (1938) also complained that it was “regrettable that the literature of mental hygiene is devoted so thoroughly to a discussion of ‘problem’ children in terms of the conditions that are unwholesome for personality development” (p. 110). Instead, the intent of Prescott’s committee was to “undertake a more positive statement of what children need for the promotion of normal adjusted personalities” (p.111). His committee viewed the schools as being responsible for providing students with experiences that would help them to gain the “affective maturity” needed to continuously re-evaluate their values and loyalties so that they would not become “blind conformists” nor “bigoted conservatives.” Those within this branch of the mental hygiene movement joined forces in the 1930s with the Progressive Education Association to support the life adjustment movement (Cohen, S., 1983).

While continuing to receive much less attention from psychiatrists and psychologists than that given to addressing mental illness, support for a positive mental hygiene approach persisted. A positive mental health movement endured through the mid-twentieth century promoting mental wellness through prevention and self-improvement programs and eventually became the part of the community health movement in the 1960s (Pols, 2004). “Whether we like it or not, the term mental health, or mental hygiene, is firmly established in the thought and actions of several groups . . . the public has taken hold of the term in spite of (or, perhaps, because of) its ambiguity” (Jahoda, 1958, p. 5). This ambiguity resulted in the establishment of several parallel fields within psychology. Among the streams that would have the greatest impact on the evolution of SEL were the community health and positive youth development approaches

(Comer, Ben-Avie, Haynes, & Joyner, 1999), prevention and social competence promotion (Elias, Parker, Kash, Weissberg, & Utne O'Brien, 2008), and positive psychology (Bar-on, 2010). However, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that recognition of the importance of mental wellness in relation to academic success and life in general began to gain widespread attention (Adelman & Taylor, L., 1997; 2006; Atkins et al, 2006; Atkins, Graczyk, Fraizier, & Abdul-Adil, 2003; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008; Lueck & Kelly, 2010; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010).

Reacting to the increased reliance on standardized testing to sort students and an overemphasis on cognitive skills development at the expense of all other types of learning, much of the support for nurturing the emotional and social intelligences emerged in the late-twentieth century. It came from a renewed effort to promote educating the whole child and in recognizing the importance of relationships which are not easily measured (Comer et al., 1999). Much like John Dewey and those involved in the progressive education movement a century ago, today's advocates also support a broader definition of accountability and achievement that goes beyond what is measured on standardized exams. They argue that the popularity and use of "paper and pencil" psychometric and standardized tests grew "not because we don't know any better, but because we want accountability on the cheap" (Rothstein, Wilder, & Jacobsen, 2007, p. 12). These advocates support schooling reform that facilitates the "social, emotional, physical, ethical, civic, creative, and cognitive development" of our children (Commission on the Whole Child, 2007, p. 10).

An influential voice for using a positive youth development approach for school reform has been James Comer, a physician and founder of the Yale School Development

Program and a member of the Commission on the Whole Child. The Comer education model is based on positive relationships and healthy child development practices. In *Child by Child*, Comer says, “many in the modern school reform movement are concerned about issues of power (matters of choice, charters, vouchers, privatization); test scores; and what parents, teachers, administrators, politicians want – not what children need to grow, develop, and meet their adult tasks and responsibilities” (Comer et al., 1999, p. xx).

Critical of educators and policymakers for supporting “the dominant cultural perspective that learning is primarily a function of intelligence and will, not development,” Comer et al. (1999) claim is done just because we believe that we can quantify individual knowledge acquisition and utilization (p. xx). They argue, instead, that families, schools, and communities need to provide experiences which will enable children to grow and develop their linguistic, physical, psychological, social, and ethical, as well as cognitive competencies, even if our tools are “too crude” to measure individual learning in all of these areas.

Comer is among those (including Tyack, 1974) who view many of the existing education practices as holdovers from an assembly-line model that was designed to produce a workforce for an agrarian and industrial society that required few individuals with higher level thinking skills. However, this society no longer exists in the United States. Comer and colleagues (1999) argue that the current system largely operates from a deficit orientation versus a capacity building perspective. In today’s fast moving world, they maintain, as did Dewey (1938/1997), all students must learn to be critical thinkers and creative problem-solvers in order to keep pace with the changes that will occur

throughout their lifetime. Unlike machines or computers, the healthy development of human beings and human systems depends on healthy relationships built around respect, trust, and mutual goals. Comer's claims that "the adults must know how to create the conditions to make high-level academic learning possible for all" (Comer et al., 1999, p. xxv) is echoed in the SEL discourse, particularly with regard to recognizing the importance of school-family-community relationships and their impact on a child's learning. This element of SEL will be discussed again in Chapter Four.

Comer and colleagues' (1999) emphasis on creating a school climate that enables all students to achieve at a high level differs significantly from the position reflected in the school model for the masses supported by Thorndike (1920) where only a limited number of students could expect to be highly successful in each class. Statistics from the Pentagon indicate that 75 percent of America's young people ages 17 to 24 are currently unable to enlist in the military because they are poorly educated, involved in crime, or are physically or mentally unfit (Mission: Readiness – Military Leaders for Kids, 2009). This data also suggests that many youth will not be prepared to assume other responsible roles in society and live healthy and productive lives, signaling the need for significant changes in American schooling.

A new paradigm for the twenty-first century in which high-level learning is possible for all students is endorsed by those who favor an expanded role for schools in eliminating barriers to learning and enhancing mental wellness. Many of these advocates are part of a school reform movement that calls for full-service community schools which serve as hubs in providing students and their families with access to a comprehensive range of academic supports, as well as health and human services to meet their needs

which interfere with learning (Adelman & Taylor, L., 1997; Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Holtzman, 1997).

Incorporating SEL in the curriculum is consistent with this new paradigm, as well as the recommendations outlined in the report of the Commission on the Whole Child (ACSD, 2007) which calls for a new learning compact between educators, the American public, policymakers at all levels of government, and our young people and their families. These recommendations have been endorsed by ASCD, (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), who convened the Commission. ASCD has taken a leadership role in disseminating resources for educating the whole child through its print and electronic communication channels and publications. Founded in 1943, ASCD's (2013) membership includes over 140,000 professional educators from all levels and subject areas, including superintendents, supervisors, principals, teachers, and professors of education, as well as school board members in 134 countries. It is also affiliated with 56 other organizations, making one of the largest education-focused voices around the world.

In order to gain more broad-based support for this new paradigm, ASCD (2007) is also supporting an ongoing "public engagement and advocacy campaign to encourage schools and communities to work together to ensure that each student has access to a challenging curriculum in a healthy and supportive climate." This campaign is intended to encourage community conversations across the country about changes that will need to occur in the allocation of resources, particularly space, time, and personnel, if American schools are to focus on each child's success and implement the recommendations of the Commission on the Whole Child. Conversations like these are also a necessary

component for introducing and sustaining SEL as an integral part of the school curriculum (Devaney et al., 2006). The importance of school structures to support this dialogue will be discussed in Chapter Four.

### **Fostering Social Competence**

Another stream within psychology that has had a significant influence on the evolution of SEL is the field of prevention and social competence promotion (Elias et al., 2008). This area has its roots in the social learning theory shaped initially by the work in clinical and personality psychology of Julian Rotter in the 1950s and later by Albert Bandura. These theorists not only recognized the impact of modeling and observation but also the strong influence on behavior that individuals draw from their experiences to create expectancies about interactions with others (Elias et al., 2008). Bandura's approach to dealing with aggressive and other antisocial behavior "informed SEL's emphasis on providing students with new skills directly while simultaneously altering the educational context so that it supports more socially and emotionally 'intelligent' behavior" (Elias et al., 2008, p. 255). This dual emphasis on individual competencies and ecological environment demonstrates the crucial impact interpersonal relationships have on one's sense of human agency (Bandura, 1977, 2001). An ongoing theme to be explored throughout this project is the notion that effective SEL at the individual level requires congruence between the skills being taught in the classroom and the overall climate and norms of school-family-community interactions.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy, which is based on the understanding "that problematic patterns of cognition, affect, and behavior are learned and therefore, can be replaced with more adaptive patterns learned in their stead," provided the pedagogical

approach for the initial SEL strategies (Elias et al., 2008, p. 256). In the 1970s, SEL pioneers recognized that a “preventive effect” could be achieved not only in clinical settings but in the regular context of school and family life. They began to develop programs for teaching social-cognitive competencies to students not only in one-on-one situations and in small groups, but on a universal basis to an entire classroom – not just to those students who had exhibited a problem. In an effort to promote research that would be useful to practitioners, Gary Ladd and Jacquelyn Mize (1983) developed a cognitive-social learning model to provide an explanatory framework and technology for evaluating social-skill training methodology. They defined social skills as “children’s ability to organize cognitions and behaviors into an integrated course of action directed toward culturally acceptable social or interpersonal goals” (p. 127).

Charles Maher and Joseph Zins (1987) were among the earliest preventionists to draw attention to school-based psychoeducational interventions to enhance student competence in areas such as social problem solving, study-skills development, and substance abuse prevention. One of their primary goals was to promote the use of “pre-referral interventions” by regular education classroom teachers. Rather than looking for ways to “fix” students, their focus was on systems analysis and change strategies involving consultative assistance provided by special services personnel, such as social workers and school psychologists, to teachers in regular education classrooms to help stage students for success in school and life before any problem behavior developed. This approach represents a major change in the role of special services staff by involving them in the promotion of healthy social, emotional, and cognitive development and the prevention of problem behaviors, as opposed to having them deal reactively with the



identification and remediation of problem behavior and learning difficulties.

The SEL movement took shape to not only prevent forms of psychopathology, but more importantly to intentionally promote wellness in children and adolescents.

Building on the work initiated by Emory Cowen in the 1950s and 1960s, this approach represents the intersection of community psychology, developmental psychopathology, and an environmental perspective on development (Cicchetti, Rappaport, Sandler, & Weissberg, 2000). During the 1980s and 1990s a number of prevention programs to address problem youth behavior, including school violence, academic failure, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS, were making their way into classrooms, either being taught by health or science teachers or through cooperative agreements with community human service providers. Although some of these programs showed promising results (Durlak & Wells, 1997; Hoagwood & Erwin, 1997), many lacked a theoretical framework or any evidence of effectiveness (Weissberg & Elias, 1993).

This situation brought clinical and school psychologists together with researchers and educators to form the Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence (Consortium). The Consortium (1991), a precursor of CASEL, sought to increase the crossover between preventionists and educators by advancing dialogue around four messages: “1. Comprehensive social competence promotion should be an integral part of school curricula . . . 2. For best results, curriculum efforts must be complemented by efforts at the school and community levels . . . 3. There is a prevention technology and there are outcome data. When seeking programs, look for both . . . 4. Implementation is a complex process. Educators need to collaborate with preventionists through preservice, in-service, and other professional development programs” (pp. 302-

303). In 1992, the Consortium identified sets of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills they considered to be the “active ingredients of prevention programs” to assist schools in selecting effective programs (Goleman, 1995/2005, pp. 301-302). These skill sets are based on an analysis of effective programs and are similar to the skills identified in CASEL’s (2012) core competencies.

The demand for prevention programs was driven largely by federal policies. As a condition to receive federal funds under any federal program, schools were required to certify by October 1, 1990, that they had a K-12 program in place to prevent the underage use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. In 1991, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued *Healthy People 2000*, which recommended that the Nation’s schools “provide planned and sequential kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade quality school health education . . . to educate young people to acquire developmentally appropriate knowledge, attitudes, and skills that will help them avoid health risks and engage in health practices to maintain their own health, the health of the families for which they become responsible, and the health of the communities in which they will reside” (quoted in Weissberg & Elias, 1993, p. 180). A number of state and federal initiatives to support this recommendation provided funding for local schools to “adopt a potpourri of well-marketed, packaged programs” (Weissberg & Elias, 1993, p. 180).

Timothy Shriver and Roger Weissberg (1996) claim that after more than two decades of a misguided approach to social and behavioral problems based on a number of categorical “prevention wars,” SEL offers a comprehensive, coordinated strategy to addressing the developmental needs of the whole child from preschool through high school. They maintain that SEL is based on the understanding that many of the problem

behaviors targeted by the “wars” could be prevented by providing students with a supportive and challenging learning environment and helping them to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to cope adaptively with the complex web of familial, economic, and cultural circumstances which contribute to modern-day stresses.

Advocates assert that in order to do this, school-based efforts “must promote a sense of shared values, culture, and support among students, parents, and the larger community. This integration underscores the importance of coordinating classroom-, school-, and community-level programming efforts” (Weissberg, Caplan, & Harwood, 1991, p. 837). It is this understanding of SEL that frames this project.

### **Reconnecting the Head with the Heart**

In the later part of the twentieth century, advancements in technology, developments in neuroscience, and Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences stimulated renewed interest among scholars, educators, and the general public to understand, measure, and influence what Gardner defines as personal intelligences (Goleman, 1995/2005, Postman, 1996). In *Frames of Mind*, Gardner (1983) claims that the personal intelligences represented the innate human desire and capacity for self-knowledge and knowledge of others. He identifies two aspects of personal intelligences: one being intrapersonal intelligence – “*access to one’s feeling life – one’s range of affects or emotions;*” and the other, interpersonal intelligence – “*the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals* and, in particular, among their moods, temperament, motivations, and intentions” (p. 239, italics in original). These are the same functions that Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and educators throughout history have tried to cultivate. Gardner states:

I feel that these forms of knowledge are of tremendous importance in many, if not all, societies in the world – forms that have, however, tended to be ignored or minimized by nearly all students of cognition. It is not relevant to my inquiry to explore the reasons for this omission. But whatever the reasons, this omission has spawned a view of intellect which is all too partial and makes it difficult to understand the goals of many cultures and the ways in which these goals are achieved. (p. 241)

Gardner claims that a *sense of self* emerges from the balance struck “between the promptings of ‘inner feelings’ and the pressures of ‘other persons’” (1983, p. 242). He notes that a developed sense of self in service to others has frequently been considered the highest achievement of human beings throughout history. This understanding is similar to Maslow’s (1950) findings regarding self-actualizing people. Gardner believes that every person has the opportunity to develop and manage the sense of self through the two forms of personal intelligences within the dictates of the individual’s encompassing culture. While this occurs naturally for all individuals with better results for some than others, Gardner, who has spent many years doing research in cognitive psychology and neuropsychology, admits that he did not know how this happened or how it could be enhanced or problems remediated. “Difficulty of study and a high degree of personal involvement are not, of course, valid reasons to avert the scrutiny of scientific investigation” (p. 243). In laying out a theory and issuing a challenge to others to engage in this work, Gardner provided one of the primary stimuli that launched the current SEL movement (Cohen, J., 1999; Elias et al., 1997; Goleman, 1995/2005; Salovey & Mayer, 1990/2004).

Gardner was not alone among contemporary psychologists in recognizing the relationship between intelligence and emotions. During the 1953-1954 academic year, Jean Piaget delivered a series of lectures at the Sorbonne on the relation of affectivity to

intelligence throughout a child's development. While his lecture notes were published in French in 1954, they were not organized and translated into English until 1981. In *Intelligence & Affectivity*, Piaget lays out his understanding of emotion as the energetics, or motivation, that provides the energy for cognition to occur, in the way gasoline drives an automobile (Piaget, Brown, Kaegi & Rosenweig, 1981). While he recognized that "intelligence and affectivity are indissociable in all behavior," he maintained that they are separate elements. According to Piaget, moral and social feelings are "examples of affects that crystallize into well-determined structures" that take the form of values (p. 9). For him, affective structures, or systems of thought, were the result of the intellectualization of momentary feelings.

Piaget et al. (1981) observed that cognitive systems tended to be closed and stable, until a time when they are replaced by another structure based on new knowledge. While affectivity was constantly influencing the content of structure, it was not the source of new knowledge. Piaget concluded that "affective structures become *the cognitive aspect of relationships with other people*" (p. 74, italics in original). He rejected the idea that intelligence and affectivity were "distinct but analogous mental faculties acting on each other" because he did not think it was possible to classify behavior under two rubrics. Instead, he distinguished between "*behaviors related to objects and behaviors related to people*" Behaviors related to objects are based on empirical and logicomathematical knowledge, motivated by intra-individual feelings, such as interest and effort. The energetic element for behavior related to people, he argues, is comprised of interpersonal feelings acting upon value structures that have been shaped by "an intellectualization of the affective aspect of our exchanges with other people" (p. 73).

Although this particular piece of Piaget's work did not receive much attention in the United States (Elias et al., 2008), his ideas demonstrate an ongoing awareness that the relationship between emotion and learning should not continue to be ignored.

While not particularly interested in the role emotion plays, Robert Sternberg (1989) in *The Triarchic Mind*, like Gardner, presented a new theory of human intelligence that includes a broader understanding of intelligence than what is measured on traditional intelligence tests. Sternberg argues, "Intelligence is essentially a cultural invention to account for the fact that some people are able to succeed in their environment better than others. We define as 'intelligence' those mental self-management skills that enable these people to do so" (p. 71). Under his model, mental self-management is dependent on three aspects: the relationship of intelligence to the internal world of the individual, to the experience of the individual, and to the external world or context. These relationships shape what Sternberg refers to as book smarts or academic intelligence, common sense or practical intelligence, and the ability to think in novel ways or executive intelligence. Together they influence one's abilities to plan and solve problems, successfully execute a chosen plan, and gain insight in order to learn from the experience in order to solve future problems.

According to Sternberg (1989), traditional intelligence tests tend to only focus on academic intelligence which has a very low correlation with the other two components of intelligence, thereby making intelligence test scores poor predictors of "real-world" success. Like Gardner, Sternberg helped to draw attention to the multiple manifestations of intelligence and the short-comings of placing too much emphasis on only the analytic aspect. His research demonstrated that one could learn to be smarter through exercises

that help to develop intellectual skills in each of the three areas.

Following publication of Gardner's and Sternberg's theories recasting the discussion of intelligences, more scientific publications began to appear on the scene regarding emotion and reasoning, providing theoretical and empirical support for SEL. Among them was *Descartes' Error*, in which Damasio (1994/2005) laments the lasting influence Descartes has had on Western science and humanities regarding the separation of the mind from the brain and body, as indicated earlier. He argues that:

Versions of Descartes's error obscure the roots of the human mind in a biologically complex but fragile, finite, and unique organism; they obscure the tragedy implicit in the knowledge of that fragility, finiteness, and uniqueness. And where humans fail to see the inherent tragedy of conscious existence, they feel less called upon to do something about minimizing it, and may have less respect for the value of life. (p. 251)

Finding fault with Descartes' first principle, "I think therefore I am," Damasio (1994/2005) maintains that the opposite is more accurate in that humans begin by being and thinking results when one is fully interacting with the physical and social environment, not in isolation from it. His argument is consistent with Eastern thought where the body-mind separation did not occur. The Chinese have a word "xin," which translates as "heart-mind" to describe the thought-process, or disposition, in which individuals receive input internally or from the world to coordinate our behavior with others (Hansen, 1989).

Based on research and studies he has done with his patients, Damasio (1994/2005), a neurologist, insists that a better understanding of the physiology of emotion and feelings will help to harness their positive effects and minimize their potential harm. In his groundbreaking book, he lays out his hypothesis that the reasoning

system evolved as a complementary function to the automatic emotional system, with emotion playing a number of different roles in the reasoning process. Rather than disturbing the reasoning process, as was commonly assumed, he argues that emotion cannot be taken out of the loop in that it provides critical information both at the conscious and subconscious level to inform reasoning. With regard to making use of this knowledge, Damasio cautioned:

that educational systems might benefit from emphasizing unequivocal connections between current feelings and predicted future outcomes, and that children's overexposure to violence, in real life, newscasts, or through audiovisual fiction, downgrades the value of emotions and feelings in the acquisition and deployment of adaptive social behavior. The fact that so much vicarious violence is presented without a moral framework only compounds its desensitizing action. (p. 247)

When Damasio (1994/2005) wrote this, schools and the public at large were just beginning to recognize and look for strategies to address the prevalence of violence in American society. In fact, many of the first SEL programs for adolescents were developed to prevent school violence, focusing on conflict and anger management (Goleman, 1995/2005). Damasio's understanding of the physiology of emotion and feelings is very similar to Bruner's (1996) psychological understanding of the mind, in that both scholars recognize that human behavior involves a two-way interaction between the individual and the particulars of the environment. These insights are extremely relevant to understanding SEL and its situated nature.

In addition to Damasio, Robert Sylwester has played a significant role in advancing SEL by bringing attention to developments in the brain sciences and their potential for improving instruction and learning (Elias, Bruene-Butler, Blum & Schuyler, 1997). Sylwester (1995) has written extensively for ASCD to inform educators about



recent developments regarding how the brain functions and the potential implications this information has on educational practices. In *A Celebration of Neurons: An Educator's Guide to the Human Brain*, Sylwester advises:

By separating emotion from logic and reason in the classroom, we've simplified school management and evaluation, but we've also separated two sides of one coin – and lost something important in the process. It's impossible to separate emotion from the important activities of life. Don't even try . . . Scientists have now replaced this duality with an integrated body/brain system . . . Think of our emotions as the glue that bonds the body/brain integration . . . We could also imaginatively think of emotions as the glue that could help us make an integrated curriculum out of a curriculum composed of separate, logically defined disciplines. (p. 75)

Sylwester (1995) acknowledges that many of the discoveries in neuroscience serve to affirm what good teachers have always intuitively known. He explains that SEL is about using this scientific and intuitive knowledge to make instruction related to the healthy management of emotions and positive social interaction more intentional and useful to students throughout their life.

During this time, a number of other neuroscientists and research psychologists were also beginning to turn their attention to the science of emotion (see Salovey, Brackett, & Mayer, 2004). Building upon the work done by Damasio, as well as the work of John Mayer and Peter Salovey, the first psychologists to develop a concept of emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman (1995/2005) wrote *Emotional Intelligence* in which he outlined his own expanded model. *Emotional Intelligence* was an international phenomenon, appearing on the *New York Times* bestseller list for over a year and selling more than five million copies worldwide. One reviewer declared, Goleman “gives us an entirely new way of looking at the root causes of many of the social ills of our families and our society” (Goleman, 1995/2005, inside cover). In *Social Intelligence*, which he

describes as the sister volume to *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (2006) states that, “Some scientists speculate social prowess – not cognitive superiority or physical advantage – may be what allowed Homo sapiens to eclipse other humanoids” (p. 329). Describing a study run by researchers at Loyola University Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago involving evaluations of 233,000 students from across the country, Goleman claims, “Social-emotional learning, they discovered, helps students in every way” (2008, p. 8). In spite of criticisms for being overzealous (Salovey, Brackett, & Mayer, 2004), Goleman established a loyal following that helped to launch the SEL movement (Cohen, 1999).

While the Mayer and Salovey model (Salovey & Mayer, 1990/2004) focuses exclusively on abilities related to emotions, the Goleman model (1995/2005; 1998/2000) also includes social skills, incorporating Damasio’s understanding of the way in which cognition interacts with the physical and social environment through emotion. “This turns the old understanding of the tension between reason and feeling on its head: it is not that we want to do away with emotion and put reason in its place, as Erasmus had it, but instead find the intelligent balance of the two. The old paradigm held an ideal of reason freed of the pull of emotion. The new paradigm urges us to harmonize head and heart” (Goleman, 1995/2005, p. 28-29). He claims that emotional intelligence may matter more than IQ for success at work and in life in general.

Reconnecting the head and heart is a theme that frequently appears in SEL literature, as exemplified by an article entitled “Education Standards for the Head and the Heart” (Elias, 2002). *Educating Minds and Hearts* was the first in a series on SEL published by Teachers College Press. Jonathan Cohen (1999), editor of the series and

founder of the Center for Social and Emotional Education (renamed the National School Climate Center in 2002), credits the affective education movement of the 1960s, which grew out of the civil rights and women's movements, for drawing attention to the importance of cultivating emotional abilities. J. Cohen (1999) references scholars like Carol Gilligan, who conceived a feminist theory of moral development, for revealing "that many of our models of human development were based on facets of male development. This work – inadvertently – slighted the importance of human relatedness and self-reflection" (p. 9).

In "Why We Need Schools with Heart and Soul," Linda Lantieri (2001b), co-founder of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program and a founding member of the CASEL board of directors, writes, "We need to insist that schools develop policies and approaches that enable all young people to have their emotional and social selves welcomed, spirits uplifted, and inner lives nourished as a normal, natural part of their education" (p. 4). In making the case for SEL, Raymond Pasi (2001) reinforces this message:

In the end, the responsibility for teaching students how to deal with their social and emotional lives cannot be reserved solely to their families or strictly to the guidance or health departments of schools. All the professionals in the school have a responsibility for teaching young people that their minds must work with their hearts if they hope to live successful and fulfilled lives. (p. 5)

After an approximately 400-year separation, armed with new empirical data, a growing number of educators and scientists are now advocating for an end to the schism between reason and emotion. Recognizing that emotion plays a critical role in problem-solving and decision-making, they argue that SEL is an essential component for developing one's full potential.

## **Creating Expectations for SEL Outcomes**

During the 1980s and 1990s, the study of emotion, intelligence, and social relations from theoretical perspectives occurred somewhat independently from the work being done by practitioners and educators regarding prevention and the impact of emotions, cognition, and behavior on academic achievement. However, during the past two decades, these efforts in psychology, neuroscience, and education have begun to converge (Day, 2004). There now appears to be some consensus on a set of necessary social emotional skills, along with the importance of a positive sense of purpose and a healthy educational environment in order for one's social emotional development to flourish (Elias et al., 2008).

While many conceptualizations emerged, there appear to be three main models of emotional intelligence (EI) that undergird SEL (Elias et al., 2008; Spielberger, 2004). These are the models proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997/2004; Salovey & Mayer, 1990/2004), who align themselves most closely with traditional intelligence theories, viewing this construct as an endowed ability; Goleman (1998/2000), who focuses on a variety of competencies and skills that contribute to organizational leadership and performance at work and related life outcomes; and Bar-on (1997; Bechara, Damasio, & Bar-on, 2007), who has identified a number of interrelated social and emotional skills and competencies that influence intelligent behavior. These three theories will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

CASEL's core social and emotional competencies most closely align with the Goleman and Bar-on models. A summary of the skills which CASEL's SEL model is intended to enhance is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2. CASEL's Elaboration of SEL/Emotional Intelligence Skills****1. Self-Awareness**

- Recognizing and naming one's emotions
- Understanding the reasons and circumstances for feeling as one does
- Recognizing and naming others' emotions
- Recognizing the strengths in, and mobilizing positive feelings about, self, school, family, and support networks
- Knowing one's needs and values
- Perceiving oneself accurately
- Believing in personal efficacy
- Having a sense of spirituality

**2. Social Awareness**

- Appreciating diversity
- Showing respect to others
- Listening carefully and accurately
- Increasing empathy and sensitivity to others' feelings
- Understanding others' perspectives, points of view, and feelings

**3. Self-Management and Organization**

- Verbalizing and coping with anxiety, anger, and depression
- Controlling impulses, aggression, and self-destructive, antisocial behavior
- Managing personal and interpersonal stress
- Focusing on tasks at hand
- Setting short- and long-term goals
- Planning thoughtfully and thoroughly
- Modifying performance in light of feedback
- Mobilizing positive motivation
- Activating hope and optimism
- Working toward optimal performance states

**4. Responsible Decision-Making**

- Analyzing situations perceptively and identifying problems clearly
- Exercising social decision-making and problem-solving skills
- Responding constructively and in a problem-solving manner to interpersonal obstacles
- Engaging in self-evaluation and reflection
- Conducting oneself with personal, moral, and ethical responsibility

**5. Relationship Management**

- Managing emotions in relationships, harmonizing diverse feelings and viewpoints
- Showing sensitivity to social-emotional cues
- Expressing emotions effectively
- Communicating clearly
- Engaging others in social situations
- Building relationships

- Working cooperatively
- Exercising assertiveness, leadership, and persuasion
- Managing conflict, negotiation, refusal
- Providing, seeking help

Source: Elias, Parker, Kash, Weissberg, & O'Brien, 2008

Based on my review of the literature and my experience working with educators for over twenty-five years to address barriers to school success, particularly related to promoting healthy lifestyle choices and preventing destructive behaviors, these appear to be reasonable and appropriate skills for enhancing one's interpersonal well-being and performance in a wide range of domains, including school, work, and other social settings.

While almost all states have integrated SEL into their instruction standards for early childhood, language arts, social studies, and health, only two states have adopted statewide free-standing standards that extend through high school: Illinois and Kansas. CASEL played a role in drafting both sets of standards and both, therefore, incorporate CASEL's five core competencies. Illinois was the first state to develop a comprehensive set of free-standing SEL standards that covers pre-school through high school (Dusenbury, Zadrazil, Mart, & Weissberg, 2011). The Illinois SEL standards were adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education in 2004. These standards combine the five core competencies under three goals. Self-awareness and self-management are combined in one goal, as are social-awareness and relationship/interpersonal skills. Responsible decision making is part of a goal that also stresses responsible behavior. In 2005, CASEL published an Illinois version of *Safe and Sound* to reflect the Illinois SEL goals and standards and to assist schools with their implementation. The Illinois SEL K-12 goals and standards are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Illinois SEL Goals and Standards for Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade**

<p><b>Goal 1:</b> Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Identify and manage one’s emotions and behavior;</li> <li>B. Recognize personal qualities and external supports; and</li> <li>C. Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Goal 2:</b> Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others;</li> <li>B. Recognize individual and group similarities and differences;</li> <li>C. Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others; and</li> <li>D. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.</li> </ul> <p><b>Goal 3:</b> Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions;</li> <li>B. Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations; and</li> <li>C. Contribute to the well-being of one’s school and community.</li> </ul>
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Source: Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.

In 2012, the Kansas State Board of Education was the second to adopt statewide standards and the first in the country to integrate character development with their SEL standards (Kansas State Department of Education, 2012). The Kansas model standards include a character development goal that was developed with assistance from the Character Education Partnership and the Institute for Excellence and Ethics. Dissemination and implementation of the Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development (SECD) Model Standards has just begun and little information is available about the progress being made. The Kansas SECD K-12 goals and standards are presented in Table 4. The Illinois and Kansas standards serve as operational models of the concepts and policies advocated by CASEL.

**Table 4. Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards for Kindergarten Through Twelfth Grade**

<p><b><i>Character Development</i></b> – To develop skills to help students identify, define and live in accordance with core principles that aid in effective problem solving and responsible decision-making.</p> <p><b><i>I. Core Principles</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Recognize, select, and ascribe to a set of core ethical and performance principles as a foundation of good character and be able to define character comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and doing.</li> <li>B. Develop, implement, promote, and model core ethical and performance principles.</li> <li>C. Create a caring community.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>II. Responsible Decision Making and Problem Solving</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Develop, implement, and model responsible decision making skills.</li> <li>B. Develop, implement, and model effective problem solving skills.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Personal Development</i></b> – To develop skills that help students identify, understand and effectively manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviors.</p> <p><b><i>I. Self-Awareness: Understanding and expressing personal thoughts and emotions in constructive ways.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Understand and analyze thoughts and emotions.</li> <li>B. Identify and assess personal qualities and external supports</li> </ul> <p><b><i>II. Self-Management: Understanding and practicing strategies for managing thoughts and behaviors, reflecting on perspectives, and setting and monitoring goals.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Understand and practice strategies for managing thoughts and behaviors.</li> <li>B. Reflect on perspectives and emotional responses.</li> <li>C. Set, monitor, adapt, and evaluate goals to achieve success in school and life.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Social Development</i></b> – To develop skills that establish and maintain positive relationships and enable communication with others in various settings and situations.</p> <p><b><i>I. Social Awareness</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Be aware of the thoughts, feelings, and perspective of others.</li> <li>B. Demonstrate awareness of cultural issues and a respect for human dignity and differences.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>II. Interpersonal Skills</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Demonstrate communication and social skills to interact effectively.</li> <li>B. Develop and maintain positive relationships.</li> <li>C. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts.</li> </ul>
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Source: Kansas State Department of Education, 2012

The goals and standards in both of these models are consistent with principles advanced by educational philosophers such as Dewey (1916/2007), Freire (1970/2000),



Gutmann (1987/1999), and Noddings (1984/2003; 1993; 2006a; 2008), whose work will be discussed in more detail later in this project. These standards also reveal the extent to which moral assumptions are embedded within SEL. More important at this point, is that while both sets of standards refer to ethical behavior, there is no mention of values or morals, unless that is what is meant by “core ethical and performance principles” in the Kansas standards.

Yet, the Illinois and Kansas standards demonstrate the extent to which SEL cannot be separated from the moral beliefs embedded in them by the state and why it is necessary to bring to the surface these beliefs and related assumptions, as well as those held by instructors, students, and their families in order for SEL instruction to make sense. It is my contention that these standards represent a valuable and unique intersection of social and emotional learning, moral education, citizenship education, and the opportunity to teach about religion.

### **Critical Omission in SEL Implementation**

#### **Claiming Meaning without Moral Content**

While some proponents of SEL proceed as if this instruction has meaning without moral content, others argue “SEL is a parallel movement to moral education in that it is about the process of learning more than the content of learning” (Elias et al., 2008, p. 263). Many of these SEL advocates maintain that SEL involves the conscious inculcation of particular behaviors governing self-control and interactions with others, which yields value neutral process skills and competencies that students need to acquire in order to make responsible decisions related to school and life success (CASEL, 2003; 2005; 2012; Kress, Norris, Schoenholz, Elias, & Siegle, 2004; Sailor, Stowe, Turnbull, &

Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2007; Zins, Payton, Weissberg, & O'Brien, 2007; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). They also contend that this instruction is intended to produce students who demonstrate morally appropriate actions and ethical decision-making, which I am calling "right behavior." They imply this will in some way occur in the absence of deliberate efforts to develop one's conscience, or at least without some guidance for distinguishing right from wrong behavior.

However, there are more than a few SEL advocates who recognize the relationship between SEL and character formation, as indicated by the adoption of the Kansas (2012) SECD standards. These SEL advocates favor an approach which recognizes the importance of developing not only academic, social, and emotional competencies, but ethical competencies as well (Cohen, J., 2006; Novick, Kress & Elias, 2002). They acknowledge that SEL, moral, and character education draw from different backgrounds, but are complementary and inseparable approaches, viewing their underlying principles as being quite similar. J. Cohen (2006) links these efforts to the Progressive education movement in the early twentieth century, referring to Dewey (1916/2007) as the grandfather of the current social, emotional, ethical, and academic education movement. J. Cohen also recognizes the influence of the community health and positive psychology movements in the late twentieth century. Goleman (1995/2005) too stresses the importance of recognizing the moral dimensions of these efforts. Although he maintains that emotional competencies can be taught, giving children a better opportunity to maximize their inherited intellectual potential, he warns his readers:

Beyond this possibility looms a pressing moral imperative. These are times when the fabric of society seems to unravel at ever-greater speed, when selfishness, violence, and a meanness of spirit seem to be rotting the goodness of our

communal lives. *Here the argument for the importance of emotional intelligence hinges on the link between sentiment, character, and moral instincts* [emphasis added]. There is growing evidence that fundamental ethical stances in life stem from underlying emotional capacities. For one, impulse is the medium of emotion; the seed of all impulse is a feeling bursting to express itself in action. Those who are at the mercy of impulse – who lack self-control – suffer a moral deficiency: The ability to control impulse is the base of will and character. By the same token, the root of altruism lies in empathy, the ability to read emotions in others; lacking a sense of another’s need or despair, there is no caring. And if there are any two moral stances that our times call for, they are precisely these, self-restraint and compassion. (p. xxii)

I share this quote from Goleman because of the emphasis he places on the social and moral significance of emotional competencies. He even goes so far as to say, “There is an old-fashioned word for the body of skills that emotional intelligence represents: *character*” (p. 285, italics in original). Yet, even some of those who recognize the likely convergence of SEL with moral and character education tend to downplay the moral components because they are less observable, harder to measure, and more likely to be challenged (Elias et al., 2008). In their effort to gain support and perhaps avoid controversy, these advocates stress the evidence-based aspects of SEL, while marginalizing the character education aspects. The following statement made by Elias and colleagues (1997) demonstrates the distinction found in SEL literature:

Whereas many character education programs promote a set of values and directive approaches that presumably lead to responsible behavior, social and emotional education efforts typically have a broader focus. They place more emphasis on active learning techniques, the generalization of skills across settings, and the development of social-decision making and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many situations. Moreover, social and emotional education is targeted to help students develop the attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions to become ‘healthy and competent’ overall – socially, emotionally, academically, and physically – because of the close relationship among these domains. And, as you will see, social and emotional education has clear outcome criteria, with specific indicators of impact identified. In sum, both character education and social emotional education aspire to teach our students to be good citizens with positive values and to interact effectively and behave constructively.

The challenge for educators and scientists is to clarify the set of educational methods that most successfully contribute to those outcomes. (p.2)

In maintaining that SEL is primarily about developing a student's skills regarding self-knowledge, knowledge of others, and decision-making, advocates appear to be distancing SEL from the critical "link between sentiment, character, and moral instincts" that Goleman (1995/2005) views as vital elements of emotional intelligence. Perhaps, as indicated above, this is being done to avoid the potential confrontations that arise when teachers go beyond a superficial discussion of values in the classroom (Gutmann, 1987/1999). However, failing to acknowledge and embrace the moral nature of SEL will keep students from developing the kind of self-control and empathy Maslow, Damasio, Goleman, and Bar-on describe as so essential to enhancing one's emotional intelligence and society's well-being. Instead, I maintain that educators will be imposing an unexamined set of values and external controls on their students.

The contention here is that this will thereby continue to limit the effectiveness of schools to prepare students for their role as citizens in a deliberative democracy. If students do not have an understanding of the role moral beliefs play in determining right behavior and if they are unaware of different conceptions of the good life and the good society, they will not acquire the language, background knowledge, and ethical judgment required to engage in the critical thinking and problem-solving needed to recognize and challenge unjust practices and policies. They are likely to be unaware of the politics of power at play and may be less likely to deal nonviolently with the challenges of inclusion and tolerance that confront a pluralistic society like ours. These tensions are the focus of this project.

### Acknowledging “Hidden” Values

Value laden terms like responsible, positive, success, ethical, respect, empathy, honesty, fairness, and compassion are used throughout the SEL literature to express student behavior expectations. The problem is not that the SEL objectives are value laden; quite the contrary, since one of the main purposes of SEL is to teach students right behavior. The problem arises when instruction is not intentionally informed by the notion of religious pluralism defined earlier. Without an energetic engagement with a range of worldviews, SEL runs the risk of teaching students process skills without any content, or more likely, of being hegemonic like prior efforts aimed at teaching students right behavior. This risk was also expressed by Prescott (1938), when he called for “a well-thought-out social philosophy [to] underlie all attempts at educational experimentation involving strong sentiments” (p. 9). He stated:

School people should be working out the philosophical and social considerations that shall determine the manner of applying such knowledge as [the *proper* role of affective experiences in the educative process] . . . Emotions and emotionalized attitudes may be used as effectively for regimentation and demagoguery as for the development of worthy social motives or the furtherance of democratic procedures of social adjustment. Emotions are stirred as much or more in hatred, violence, and repression as in the collective striving of free people for a richer life and higher spiritual goals. (p. 9, italics in original)

By reinterpreting the problems of the nation to flow from individual personality problems, the mental hygiene movement deflected attention away from considering possible social or political changes as a means of addressing these issues. The status quo was maintained, while the expectation that a society free of problems could be created by changing and improving one’s fellow human beings. As one prominent hygienist put it, “We need not accept even human personality as we find it . . . Personality may be

consciously improved and better adapted to social needs . . . This is social progress” (quoted in Cohen, S., 1983, p. 141). Diane Hoffman (2009) warns, “There are indeed serious political, social, and ethical consequences if SEL is defined as an individual competency subject to the lens of deficiency and remediation” (p. 547). She advises that more work must be done to connect SEL’s ideals of caring, community, and diversity with actual practices and to address the cultural and political assumptions that have been built into current approaches.

Originally, the behavior expectations in American public schools were based on white, conservative, middle-class, male, Protestant social values (Jensen & Knight, 1981). Although the overt inculcation of these values ended in the mid-1900s in most public schools, they remain in many schools as a part of what Philip Jackson (1968) identifies as the “hidden curriculum.” These practices are so ingrained that they are frequently carried out without question (Ellenwood, 2006; Giroux & Purpel, 1983; Hlebowitsh, 1994; Prichard, 1988).

The unquestioned presumption of shared values is further evidenced by the statement made by SEL proponents that, “SEL has evolved from skills via programs, to participatory competencies via settings. These competencies are not neutral, however; they are aligned with fundamental, common values and attributes of good character and sound moral development” (Elias et al., 2008, p. 263). This claim leads one to believe that an uncontested, universal set of desired values and attributes exists in a particular setting regarding right behavior. Elias and colleagues go on to say:

The education system has the responsibility of preparing children for citizenship in a democracy and for leading a morally-guided life. It is not schools’ responsibility alone to do this, but since schools’ ability to educate all children

and move them forward depends on their climates being places where children can ‘catch’ character, they cannot ‘wait’ for other responsible agents to act. (p. 263)

We are not told who comprises “the educational system” and who might these other “responsible agents” be – but it appears that they may be parents and community members – that the education system cannot allow to slow its progress. Some scholars have criticized the typical school code of conduct for teaching all students to “act white,” dismissing or marginalizing the cultural values of other racial and ethnic groups (Delpit, 2006; Lareau, 2003; Ogbu, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Knowledge and reinforcement of the school’s desired behavior norms at home is said to privilege some students and disadvantage those who do not know these “rules” (Bourdieu, 1973/2000). This situation is believed to result in behavior problems and lower academic achievement for those students who do not come to school with this knowledge (Lareau, 2000).

As I intend to demonstrate, SEL instruction that does not embrace both the brute fact and ideal of pluralism is likely to be authoritarian, enforcing a rigid, conformist-oriented perspective of right behavior. Giles (1958) had hoped to avoid consequences like that by stressing the importance of social relations education and teaching about the advantages and disadvantages of difference, as well as the distinction between authority and authoritarianism. Pedro Noguera (2003) found that poor, minority males who are behind academically are also disproportionately likely to be punished for behavior violations and removed from school. A recent study conducted by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A & M University had similar findings (Fabelo et al., 2011). During the six-year period examined, involving an analysis of more than a million school and juvenile justice

records in Texas, nearly 60 percent of the seventh through twelfth grade students studied had been expelled or suspended at least once, primarily for violations related to the local school's conduct code. African-American and Hispanic students, particularly males, as well as students with educational disabilities, were disproportionately removed from the classroom. Those disciplined were more likely to be held back a grade, drop out of school, and become involved in the juvenile justice system. They also found that suspension and expulsion rates varied significantly among schools, even when there were similarities in the student population and campus characteristics.

Fabelo and colleagues (2011) conclude that greater effort must be made to develop local consensus, involving educators, students, parents, juvenile justice system officials, community service providers, and other concerned parties, around strategies that will improve outcomes for both students and teachers in individual schools. This recommendation is consistent with SEL's emphasis on citizenship and democratic values. These values demand acknowledgement of a broad range of acceptable behaviors that have been negotiated and are periodically reviewed and endorsed by members of the local education system, including students, parents, and community members along with school personnel and policymakers (Grant, 1988; Gutmann, 1987/1999).

I will argue that SEL informed by pluralism, particularly religious pluralism, gives educators the opportunity to help students develop the language and reflexivity to incorporate their ever-changing experiences in a diverse society into a healthy, integrated sense of self, along with an understanding of citizenship in an inclusive environment. I contend that schools must go beyond a notion of pluralism limited to various ethnic and racial groups, as it is generally presented in multicultural discourse, to include religious



groups. One's worldview and identity are largely shaped by religious beliefs which also have a significant influence on one's conception of right behavior (Samovar et al., 2010). Therefore, religion needs to be a part of the conversation.

### **Recognizing the Need to Teach About Religion**

American schools have been reluctant to embrace religious pluralism and teach about the variety of beliefs present in the nation (and the world) largely because of the potential for controversy (Fraser, 1999; Gutmann, 1987/1999; McClellan, 1999; Noddings, 1984/2003; 1993; 2006a; 2008). In a pluralistic society like the United States, it is likely that the values of some stakeholders will collide with the values of others. For example, what parents might want to achieve with their children (passing on a particular notion of the good life and right behavior) might not accord with what professional educators (those designing and implementing SEL objectives) want to nurture. And then, both their intentions might possibly also be in conflict with what the liberal democratic state wants its citizens to cherish and how they are to act.

Yet, one's education has also typically included instruction about the dominant religious beliefs, values, and habits of the time (Samovar et al., 2010). Beyond explaining the unknown within a given culture, religion serves many functions related to acceptable social behavior, conflict resolution, emotional support, and reinforcement of group solidarity. "These functions consciously and unconsciously impact everything from business practices (the Puritan work ethic) to politics (the link between Islam and government) to individual behavior (codes of ethics)" (p. 25). There has been a long-standing relationship between emotion, religion, and schooling which seems no less relevant today than in past times.

With passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the United States became the most religiously diverse nation in the world, according to Diane Eck (2002), founder of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University. This occurred at the same time that the Moral Majority and Religious Right were beginning to make public their call for a return to “traditional Christian” American values. Eck says, “For many Americans, however, religious pluralism is not a vision that brings us together but one that tears us apart” (p. 7). The various religious groups in the United States have different values related to right behavior, as well as different ways of expressing shared values. Faith traditions play an especially significant role in determining the code of conduct of religious individuals (Samovar et al., 2010). Students need to have some knowledge of the major world religions to understand the differences and similarities between them.

Additionally, in order to exercise and protect the freedoms granted by the First Amendment, I will argue that students need an education that enables them to express their beliefs and to recognize the variety of beliefs that others bring to public dialogue, along with the language and skills needed to engage in that dialogue. I contend that SEL instruction has the potential to provide this type of education with some adjustments to what is currently being done. While SEL proponents have been criticized for failing to adequately address questions of cultural diversity and the politics of power (Hoffman, 2009), even less attention has been given to the range of moral belief systems present in the classroom and beyond (Cohen, J., 2006; Elias et al., 2008; Kristjánsson, 2004). Recognizing the moral nature of SEL instruction provides schools with new opportunities which should not be ignored for acknowledging religious pluralism in a society that values religious freedom and in helping students to understand the importance of

religious literacy in relation to public policies and world events.

### **Making the Case for Religious Pluralism**

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide essential background information in order to make obvious what I believe to be a critical omission if SEL instruction is undertaken without a commitment to religious pluralism. In summary, I am arguing that using instructional practices without recognizing the values and moral beliefs associated with them will not necessarily provide students with opportunities to develop the intended competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that will enable them to demonstrate morally appropriate actions and ethical decision-making, which I am calling right behavior. It is my contention that the failure to acknowledge the diversity of values and beliefs involved in defining right behavior will result in teachers imposing an unexamined set of values and external controls on their students. This outcome would be the direct opposite of the desired SEL goals to foster self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, healthy relationships, and responsible decision-making.

I have tried to provide background information here to ground the promises of the SEL pioneers to bridge the long standing chasm between emotion and reason in Western thought, as well as bring attention to the gender and anti-religious bias that has supported that chasm. Their efforts to move away from a medicalized model of education that has emphasized pathology and deficiencies to a positive youth development model that focuses on self-actualization and well-being was also explored. The intentions of the SEL pioneers to reconnect the head and the heart were also discussed. I believe that the promises the SEL pioneers have articulated have the potential to become a reality if SEL strategies are implemented with fidelity and a commitment to religious pluralism.

The SEL strategies to provide students with the language for self-expression, opportunities for recognizing similarities and differences, and practice in shared decision-making around mutual concerns are essential elements of developing citizens to sustain our democracy (CASEL, 2003, 2005, 2012). However, these are activities in which contested beliefs and values are likely to surface if engaged beyond a superficial level. Therefore, one needs to consider whether the prevalent practice of ignoring religious differences and giving minimal attention to cultural diversity will keep the SEL objectives from having their intended outcomes for students and society. Or instead, perhaps the time has come for American schools to embrace religious pluralism and cultivate religious literacy so that teachers can aim to educate the head and the heart and achieve the outcomes for students that the SEL advocates have promised.

In the coming chapters I will argue that by failing to acknowledge the variety of worldviews present in American society, students with certain perspectives are affirmed while the beliefs of other students are marginalized. I contend that the politics of power and the challenges of religious diversity in a pluralistic society need to be addressed when teaching students right behavior. These challenges, which I view as issues of inclusion and tolerance, cannot be ignored if the SEL goals to foster self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, healthy relationships, and responsible decision-making are to be achieved. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to examine why SEL must include a deeper engagement of these challenges in order to remain true to its ideals. An overview of my plan for making this argument follows.

In Chapter Two, I will provide a literature review that examines what others have to say about SEL and the issues that they have raised. This review will be organized

around four themes. First, I will present an overview of the efforts to establish the legitimacy of SEL. Next, the two-pronged SEL framework that has emerged, which involves creating a caring climate, along with selecting effective, evidence-based SEL instructional strategies will be examined. Efforts to measure emotional intelligence and assess student competencies will also be covered, as will the underlying social-psychological-neurological theories that have become associated with SEL. Following that, I will review the claim made by several scholars that the implementation challenges related to SEL require greater collaboration across social systems, academic disciplines, and curriculum topics. Finally, I will examine the issues that must be addressed in order to take SEL to the next level of implementation, including what the SEL literature has to say regarding parent and community involvement, as well as cultural sensitivity and the treatment of religious pluralism in SEL instruction.

In Chapter Three, I will argue that the demands of pluralism, as well as an appreciation of pluralism, point to the necessity of why religious pluralism must be an essential element of SEL, if it is to avoid the shortcomings of prior moral education efforts. I will demonstrate that the moral elements of SEL must be explicit and intentionally taught based on an articulated philosophical foundation. I will show that SEL instruction must be inclusive, recognizing the diversity of worldviews held not only by members of American society, but by people throughout the world.

I will argue that religious pluralism provides the disposition, and knowledge of the major world religions and ethical perspectives provides the substance, to confront our deepest differences in a constructive manner within the SEL curriculum. Additionally, I will demonstrate that the scientific method and empiricism alone are not sufficient

methods for discovering right behavior. I will show that the kind of SEL instruction being proposed will require students to have the vocabulary and experiences needed to subject competing worldviews to ongoing examination in a respectful and caring environment that looks at both the positive and negative aspects of different beliefs and perspectives. It is my contention that in doing so, SEL will live up to its aim to produce ethical citizens who are capable of participating in and sustaining a liberal democratic society.

In Chapter Four, I will examine some of the challenges that educators will need to consider and how they might go about incorporating religious pluralism in the SEL curriculum. I will examine issues that relate to the role religious pluralism plays in providing students with the language to construct a moral self and an authentic identity. I will also discuss the need to prepare teachers to discuss religion and other spiritual matters in the classroom. Additionally, I will argue that schools must establish better structures for sharing power and fostering ongoing collaboration between educators, parents, and community members to support the proposed model of SEL in the schools.

In Chapter Five, I will present a snapshot of what an integrated SEL-religious studies curriculum might look like. I will also examine the potential benefits to students that could result from the proposed curriculum and the opportunities it provides for human flourishing. I will speculate that these increased opportunities will result from acknowledging the relationship between religion and well-being, as well as by providing students with the vocabulary to foster development of the moral self and the tools for meaning making. I will also suggest benefits to society that are likely to result from its implementation, including an increased capacity for schools to respond to the public's

desire for moral education and better prepared citizens. I surmise that this could also result in the likelihood of increased civic participation and a commitment to diffusing the culture wars. I will conclude with recommendations for further study and action.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

While the U.S. Department of Education has yet to publish a “What Works” guide for SEL (Stoiber, 2011), in 2003 the British Department for Education and Skills (DfES) released *What Works in Developing Children’s Emotional and Social Competence and Wellbeing?* (Weare & Gray, 2003). This DfES report identifies promising practices and makes recommendations for local and national policies and implementation based on case studies of five local educational authorities, interviews with professionals working in the field, and a literature review which to a large extent represents “sound evidence found in the literature from the U.S.” (p. 6). The British *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* initiative, which is very similar to the American *No Child Left Behind* reform effort, places emotional well-being as a central concern (Hawkey, 2006). In addition to interest in Britain and the United States, effort is being made to include “emotional competencies within the basic competencies in compulsory schooling and in the objectives of pre-service teacher training that is now being designed within the European Space for Higher Education” (Palomera, Fernández-Berrocal, & Brackett, 2008, p. 438).

Yet, as a rather new research topic, relatively little appears in the academic literature about SEL. The American Educational Research Association did not establish a SEL special interest group until 2008. Much of the literature consists of opinion pieces, case studies, suggested strategies, and examples of best practice-based prevention and



case studies, suggested strategies, and examples of best practice-based prevention and health education programs, many of which were not specifically designed to foster social-emotional competencies. Using “social emotional learning” as a search term produced only 387 resources in a combined search of the WorldCat.org and Academic Search Complete databases. By comparison, the search terms “moral education” produced 28,967 resources and “character education” yielded 5,257 documents. Within the WorldCat search, adding “pluralism” to SEL identified four documents, adding “religious” to SEL produced three results, and adding “religious pluralism” yielded no results. Of the 387 SEL resources identified in the WorldCat search, only 34 were published prior to 2000. Other databases produced similar outcomes, with much overlap in the results. There were 245 entries in the Education Research Complete database, but only 94 SEL results in the ERIC database. Of the 56 documents containing “social emotional learning” in their abstracts, 13, or nearly 25%, were published in 2012 in the ProQuest dissertations and theses database. (Note: These searches were last updated February 10, 2013.) This data indicates a growing body of empirical research specifically related to SEL that substantiates the earlier work is beginning to take shape.

In this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of the existing literature. For the most part, the SEL literature focuses on concerns related to overcoming barriers to incorporating SEL in the K-12 curriculum. Across the literature, one of the most significant barriers expressed is the lack of pre-service and in-service training for school personnel to support their students’ social and emotional development. There is increasing evidence of the need to develop emotional competencies as a part of teacher preparation and ongoing professional development in order to enhance the well-being and

performance of both teachers and their students. Additional concerns center largely around accountability issues related to how social and emotional competencies will be assessed and who will be involved in this process.

This review has been organized around four themes as follows to examine major trends in the SEL literature:

(1) Efforts to establish the legitimacy of SEL – As might be expected with such a new approach to youth development, promoting the importance of social and emotional competencies has been one of the topics proponents have spent considerable time addressing. I will examine how the intent of SEL to improve multiple areas of student well-being and behavior has taken a backseat to its role in improving academic achievement. It appears that touting this relationship has taken on greater importance than other intended outcomes as a means of justifying the use of limited instruction time. Efforts to recognize and incorporate SEL in state academic and personnel preparation standards will also be explored.

(2) Two-pronged SEL framework emerges – Strategies for implementing a sustainable SEL framework has also received much attention. I will provide an overview of the literature suggesting how to create a caring climate and select effective, evidence-based SEL instructional strategies. Interwoven in this review will be an examination of issues related to the need to enhance school personnel readiness and administrative leadership, as well as concerns expressed about assessing instructional effectiveness and student SEL competencies. This investigation will also take a look at efforts to measure emotional intelligence and student competencies, along with the underlying social-psychological-neurological theories that have become associated with SEL.

(3) Implementation challenges require greater collaboration – While the academic study of youth development and learning takes place in many discrete disciplines within higher education, the literature indicates that such an approach creates significant implementation challenges at the classroom level in elementary and secondary schools. I will provide information about calls for improved interdisciplinary collaboration and the need to converge SEL, character education, moral education, and citizenship education. In addition to the need for greater internal collaboration within the education realm, a need for increased involvement with families and their communities receives considerable mention in the literature. The importance of school-home-community collaboration is viewed as a means of ensuring that SEL instruction will demonstrate cultural sensitivity and promote reinforcement beyond the classroom.

(4) Taking SEL to the next level – I will demonstrate that while parent and community involvement, as well as cultural sensitivity, are identified as essential components, little engagement has occurred in these areas. This chapter will conclude with a review of the scant attention given in the SEL literature to either the ideal or brute fact of religious pluralism in American society, establishing the basis for this project.

### **Efforts to Establish the Legitimacy of SEL**

#### **Promoting the Importance of Social and Emotional Competencies**

An early proponent of SEL, Jonathan Cohen (2006) lamented, “There is a paradox in our preK-12 schools, and within teacher education. Parents and teachers want schooling to support children’s ability to become lifelong learners who are able to love, work, and act as responsible members of the community. Yet, we have not substantively integrated these values into our schools or into the training we give teachers” (p. 201). In

an effort to resolve what has been identified as *Cohen's paradox*, a growing body of research has begun to emerge demonstrating the important ways in which intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies influence schooling outcomes (Carlson, D., 2011). In constructing the case for incorporating SEL in the curriculum, new studies are showing that “efforts to promote children’s social and emotional competence have had substantial impacts on educational motivation, behavior, risk taking, and attachment to school . . . SEL has an impact on every aspect of children’s development: their health, ethical development, citizenship, academic learning, and motivation to achieve” (Devaney, O’Brien, Tavegia, & Resnik, 2005, p. 108).

In one of the earliest articles advocating for greater attention to SEL, Maurice Elias (1997) refers to SEL as the “missing piece” in most education reform efforts, causing “success for all” to continue to be an elusive goal. He claims “children and adults are social and emotional beings first, and that any system of education and socialization that does not take this primary characteristic into consideration will not be effective in producing healthy citizens” (p. 36). Elias further argues that SEL forms the centerpiece for workplace readiness and comprehensive health education, as well as developing skills that are essential for citizenship in a democracy. These are consistently touted themes in the SEL literature, as will be shown below.

Others similarly view SEL as an essential component of school reform in order to prepare students to carry out their responsibilities as citizens, because “the United States arguably is more deeply divided and confused today than it has been since the civil rights and Vietnam War eras, as we grapple with issues such as preemptive war, civil liberties, and personal freedoms versus national security, abortion, the definition of marriage,

affirmative action, and immigration” (Zins & Elias, 2007, p. 236). Preparing students to be responsible citizens is one of the most common themes in the SEL literature (e.g. Cohen, 2006; Devaney et al., 2005; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Fredericks, 2003; Zins & Elias, 2007). Cohen (2006) articulates what many SEL advocates perceive these responsibilities to be, “Along with an informed citizenry, a democratic society must reflect a respect for others, an ability to collaborate, regard for fairness and justice, concern for the commonwealth, as well as voluntary, active participation in society” (p. 203). He maintains SEL promotes the development of the skills and dispositions needed to achieve “a sense of personal and national well-being and happiness” in order to counteract the generalized sense of fear and insecurity so prevalent in American discourse.

Linking social and emotional competence to success in the workplace is also quite common in the literature (Beland, 2007; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Goleman, 1995/2005; 1998/2000; 2006; 2008). Jill Casner-Lotto and Linda Barrington (2006) found that among over 400 employers across the United States, social-emotional skills, which they identify as applied skills related to “professionalism/work ethic, teamwork/collaboration, oral communications, and ethics/social responsibility,” were more important for new hires than basic knowledge in areas such as “English language, mathematics, science, government/economics, and history/geography” (p. 21). “Reading comprehension” was the only basic knowledge skill to place in the top five skills ranked as “very important.” Casner-Lotto and Barrington note that employers may be more likely to rank the applied skills higher because they can observe them more directly in one’s day-to-day job performance, unlike most basic knowledge skills.

It is especially interesting that skills which are so prominently recognized in the workplace have been so elusive in educational settings, as indicated in the prior chapter. One of the main obstacles to making SEL a part of the school curriculum has been the difficulty in developing empirical measures for assessing emotional intelligence and social and emotional competencies (Matthews, G., Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002; Stoiber, 2011; Ziedner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2009). Current efforts to develop these measures will be discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to the continued omission of social-emotional-behavioral concerns in many reform efforts (Adelman & Taylor, L., 2000; Becker & Luther, 2002; Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003; Sailor et al., 2007; Zins et al., 2004) and persistent questions about effectively measuring SEL outcomes (Stoiber, 2011; Tanyu, 2007), incorporating SEL in the curriculum faces several other barriers and challenges. Those most frequently identified in the literature include overcoming the fragmentation of existing prevention, health promotion, and character education initiatives, the difficulty of replacing popular programs that lack evidence of effectiveness with those that are evidence-based, and concerns about time spent away from meeting academic accountability measures, as well as insufficient teacher preparedness and funding to train teachers and purchase curriculum materials (Cohen, 2006, Elias, Brune-Butler, Blum, & Schuyler, 1997; Fredericks, 2003, Stoiber, 2011; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004).

To address funding barriers, a variety of philanthropic, corporate, and government sources have made implementation grants available to encourage schools to incorporate SEL in the curriculum. The Academic, Social and Emotional Learning Act of 2011 (U. S. H.R. 2437) was introduced in the last session of Congress, as was a similar piece of

legislation (U. S. H.R. 4223) also introduced in 2009 in the U.S. House of Representatives. This legislation would support evidence-based SEL programming by providing grants to elementary and secondary schools for teacher and principal training (Biggert, 2011). Although neither bill has passed out of committee, efforts to advance this legislation continue to grow. Updated funding and legislation information can be found on the CASEL website ([www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)). Generally, ongoing costs must come from the school districts' general operating funds. Therefore, in light of the current revenue situation at all levels of government, it is likely that many schools will continue to find funding an obstacle to integrating SEL in the curriculum.

Even without additional funding, proponents argue that a comprehensive SEL approach is needed to overcome the fragmentation and elimination of ineffective prevention, health promotion, and character education programs aimed at meeting the mandates imposed on schools to address public health, mental health, and juvenile justice concerns (Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2000; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004). Pointing to the weakening of institutions, such as the family, church, and community, due to economic pressures and "easier access to media that encourage health-damaging behavior . . . the demands on schools to prevent problem behaviors and promote positive development have grown" (Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004, p. 87). Greenberg and colleagues cite six sources for making the claim that "most educators, parents, students, and the public support a broader educational agenda that also involves enhancing students' social-emotional competence, character, health, and civic engagement" (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 466).

The results of prevention and youth development research conducted during the

1980s and 1990s were initially highlighted to garner support for SEL (Goleman, 1995/2005; Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2000). These studies were done on a range of topics such as positive mental health, antisocial behavior, conflict resolution, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, substance abuse, illegal drug use, truancy, and school failure. Efforts to study these areas continue to produce a strong body of research supporting the benefits of SEL. In 2003, the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences found stronger research evidence to support school-based prevention interventions than the quality of studies examining math education and professional development (reported in Zins & Elias, 2007).

Although reference has consistently been made to improving academic performance and learning, it was not the main thrust of the early SEL literature. However, addressing concerns about SEL efforts taking time away from meeting academic accountability measures has increasingly received much more attention. While positive youth development and preventing destructive behavior continues to be addressed, the research focus shifted to also include the relationship between SEL and academic achievement (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Dymnicki, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2009; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Kress et al., 2004; Payton et al., 2008; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004; Zins & Elias, 2007; Zins et al., 2007; Zins et al., 2004).

### **Emphasizing Academic Achievement**

Rather than fighting head-on the attention currently given to academic achievement scores, and for seeking a more balanced approach in developing students' emotional, social, and cognitive abilities, advocates have taken the approach of highlighting how SEL can help to enhance those scores. "With the emergence of *No*



*Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation, many schools place greater attention on direct instruction that helps students pass achievement tests and are deemphasizing broader curricula that foster students' development. Now more than ever, it is critical to determine the varied benefits of including programming that does not directly target improving academic performance" (Dymnicki et al., 2009, p. 2).

Claims, such as "social-emotional competence and academic achievement are interwoven and that integrated, coordinated instruction in both areas maximizes students' potential to succeed in school and throughout their lives" (Zins & Elias, 2007, p. 233), have become a common theme in the SEL literature. In *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?* (Zins et al., 2004) and *The Educator's Guide to Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement: Social-Emotional Learning in the Classroom* (Elias & Arnold, 2006), the authors strive to demonstrate that SEL is not in opposition to academic learning. They instead stress that the intentional teaching of emotional and social competencies, along with the integration of SEL across the academic curriculum, will improve teacher satisfaction and student success.

The popular media also emphasizes the SEL tie to academic achievement, as evidenced by the *Yahoo! News* headline "Teaching kids social skills pays off in grades" (Goodwin, 2011). The story was prompted by the release of the findings from the first meta-analysis that focused exclusively on examining how universal school-based SEL programs impact a number of diverse student outcomes. Researchers found that "SEL programs yielded significant positive effects on targeted social-emotional competencies and attitudes about self, other, and school. They also enhanced students' behavioral

adjustment in the form of increased prosocial behaviors and reduced conduct and internalizing problems, and improved academic performance on achievement tests and grades” (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 417). The majority of the report addresses the findings from a meta-analysis of 213 SEL programs that targeted the development of one or more SEL skills, involving 270,034 students in kindergarten through high school. Yet, the online article led with the findings from an analysis based on a sub-set of 33 studies that showed an average 11 percentile-point gain in academic achievement for students who participated in SEL programs over those who did not. While this finding is significant, in that it supports prior research findings and indicates SEL programs produce improvements in academic achievement tests that are comparable to strictly educational interventions, it also shows how obsessed the public is with test scores above all other schooling outcomes.

What Durlak and colleagues (2011) found, is consistent with a growing number of scientific reviews that continue to verify the positive impact of SEL beyond improving academic achievement (Dymnicki et al., 2009; Payton et al., 2008; Zins et al., 2004). These findings demonstrate that ethically and racial diverse students in urban, suburban, and rural settings in kindergarten through high school benefit from this instruction. In addition to academic gains and improved social-emotional skills and attitudes about themselves and others, SEL has been proven to increase connections to school and reduce students’ conduct problems and emotional distress. The results of these studies indicate that “SEL programs are among the most successful youth-development programs offered to school ages youth” (Payton et al., 2008). Yet, proponents recognize that in order to secure a place in the curriculum, SEL programs must accommodate the current standards-

based focus in American schools.

### **Incorporating SEL in State Standards**

Even prior to distinguishing SEL as a discreet discipline, social-emotional skills have been embedded in academically targeted and personnel preparation standards (Cohen, 2006; Doolittle, Horner, Bradley, Sugai, & Vincent, 2007; Fleming, J. & Bay, 2004; Kress et al., 2004; Sailor et al., 2007). Sometimes this was done inadvertently, without much intentionality, because many educators intuitively recognized the synergistic relationship between curriculum content areas and SEL related skills before the empirical evidence emerged. Although much remains to be learned about the specifics, there is growing recognition that “SEL facilitates the achievement of state standards by strengthening students’ preparedness for learning and promoting the development of prosocial attitudes and behavior that mediate school performance” (Kress et al., 2004). New research is especially promising. *Reading & Writing Quarterly* (Jan-Jun 2011, Vol. 27 Issue 1-2) dedicated the entire volume to articles describing research that shows how SEL benefits struggling readers and writers, as well as suggesting topics for future research. In the Introduction to this themed issue, David Carlson (2011) states “Struggling readers who feel safe, respected, and effective are much more apt to attend to learning than those who feel otherwise. Thus, it’s important that all teachers use SEL principles” (p.2).

The newly formulated Common Core Standards in Math and English Language Arts that have been adopted by 42 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands include standards addressing cooperation, problem solving, and communication skills, especially listening and speaking (Dusenbury et al., 2011). The recommended

standards developed by organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Science Teachers Association also promote cooperative problem solving and the Council for Social Studies endorses “student knowledge of individual and cultural diversity and the use of this knowledge to solve social problems” (Sailor et al., 2007, p.367). National model standards in Health that are used by more than 80 percent of the states support the development of decision making and goal-setting skills, as well as communication skills (Dusenbury et al., 2011). These examples of SEL integrated into other sets of learning standards are important for making a case about the compatibility of SEL and academic content area instruction. However, Dusenbury and colleagues caution that this is an inadequate strategy for providing students with comprehensive instruction in all of the SEL core competencies. They argue that social and emotional competencies must also be intentionally taught in an appropriate, coordinated developmental sequence.

Nearly all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have early childhood learning standards that include specific SEL guidelines for their preschool programs. This is not the situation with their K-12 curricula. While most states have SEL content reflected to some extent across the curriculum and several have free-standing, focused standards that address one or more elements of SEL, Illinois and Kansas are the only states to have adopted free-standing, comprehensive sets of K-12 SEL standards, as indicated in Chapter One. Following four years of development, the New York Board of Regents (2011) adopted “Educating the Whole Child, Engaging the Whole School: Guidelines and Resources for Social and Emotional Development and Learning (SEDL) in New York State.” In order to encourage more states to adopt SEL specific standards,

CASEL and the University of Illinois at Chicago Social Emotional Learning Research Group plan to convene a working group to design a set of model SEL standards for preschool through high school. They have set a goal “to establish comprehensive developmental standards for social and emotional learning, from preschool through high school, in 20 states by 2015” (Dusenbury et al., 2011, p. 8).

Special education advocates in favor of schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS) also endorse the adoption of social-behavioral standards for students (Sailor et al., 2007) and school personnel preparation (Doolittle et al., 2007). “Applications of SWPBS take the form of an applied pedagogy at three distinct levels of application that follow the logic of a school mental health risk prevention model or a response to intervention (RTI) approach” (Sailor et al., 2007, p. 368). The three SWPBS levels, also known as the positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) model, aligns with the interconnected systems framework for school-based mental health services. It includes Tier 1 – *Prevention for All*, providing universal instruction to all students, both those with and without any identified behavior problems; Tier 2 – *Early Intervention for Some*, responding to those requiring additional support and/or who are at-risk of or beginning to exhibit problem behavior; and Tier 3 – *Intensive Interventions for Few*, delivering individual support to students with identified treatment or service needs (Lueck & Kelly, 2010).

Rather than use exclusionary discipline tactics which remove students with behavior problems from class, schools using PBIS or SWPBS instead seek to identify the cause of the problem behavior so that environmental changes and teachable prosocial replacement behaviors can be identified by a multidisciplinary team to help both students

and school personnel remedy the problem. RTI similarly encourages schools to use a continuum of interventions, beginning with whole class instruction, to address academic and behavior problems. All of these initiatives involve multidisciplinary teams that are encouraged to include parent and community representatives, as well as teachers and school support personnel, such as psychologists, social workers, and counselors, to ensure that disability, language, or other cultural characteristics can be taken into account in planning the intensity and approach to be used in addressing problems.

As PBIS and RTI gain acceptance in schools, instruction looks more and more like general education, and less like special education (Prasse, 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2006; 2008; Sugai, Simonsen, & Horner, 2008; Warren, J. et al, 2006). In doing so, this connects the “general and special education systems without sacrificing one in favor of the other . . . It pulls supports and services in a manner that enables all students to receive benefits as needed from the constellation of all supports and services available to the school” (Sailor et al., 2007, p. 371). It also replaces the traditional special education wait-to fail approach with a prevention and intervention delivery system (Prasse, 2006). These shifts in special education appear to be very compatible with SEL, making the integration of these approaches likely. If this does not occur, Hank Bohanon and Meng-Jia Wu (2012b) warn, “Without a common roadmap and a coordinated leadership team, it is possible that well-meaning implementers of all three approaches may create unnecessary overlap and ineffective organizational structures” (p. 12).

There is growing support in the literature for greater collaboration between advocates of these approaches (Bear, 2010; Bohanon & Wu, 2012a; 2012b; Center for Prevention Research and Development, 2009; Merrell & Guelder, 2010). Bohanon and

Wu (2012a; 2012b) recently completed a comparison of the similarities and differences between SEL, PBIS, and RTI to assist schools with integrating, or at least coordinating, overlapping activities. The Center for Prevention Research and Development at the University of Illinois (CRPD, 2009) had recommended such a study be done after finding that Illinois schools are being “challenged by the need to simultaneously implement very similar – but not completely similar – SEL-like initiatives” (p. 47) “One of the reasons for this challenge has been the differing philosophies of the two initiatives, one of which focuses on external reward systems (PBIS), while the other focuses on intrinsic rewards (SEL)” (p. 33). Although all three approaches share a common desire to galvanize greater support for school-based efforts to develop students’ social-emotional-behavioral competencies, there is also a potential for conflict among their advocates because of the differences in their underlying philosophies and orientations.

However, personnel preparation standards are another area where both SEL and special education advocates have addressed the need for greater support for student social behavior at the individual, classroom, and schoolwide levels. In a review of certification requirements for elementary school teachers and administrators, Doolittle and colleagues (2007) “found behavior competency requirements for general educators in 42 states (82%), for special educators in 46 states (88%), and for elementary-school administrators in 26 states (51%)” (p. 241). While extensive diversity exists in terms of exactly what each state requires, most specify some type of knowledge in behavior or classroom management and strategies to create a successful learning environment. Knowledge to support individual student behavior was only required in 30 states (59%) for general education teachers and in 9 states (18%) for administrators, as opposed to 39 states (76%)

for special education teachers, reflecting less emphasis in schools on developing student social competence outside of special education. Knowledge of schoolwide behavior support was required for administrators in fewer than half of the states (20, 39%), and only 2-3 states (4-6%) required it for educators. This data indicates that while there is a starting point upon which to build recognition of classroom strategies and approaches that do more than promote exclusionary disciplinary practices, there is much room for improvement in institutionalizing the supports needed to help all students succeed in school.

A review done by Jane Fleming and Mary Bay (2004) found that 10 out of 11 core expectations (91%) of the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards incorporated SEL competencies. The complete Illinois Professional Teaching Standards are posted on the Illinois State Board of Education website ([www.isbe.state.il.us](http://www.isbe.state.il.us)). J. Fleming and Bay view the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards as being representative of typical teacher preparation and performance standards across the country. Illinois is one of 49 states participating in the reform initiatives of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium which impact teacher training programs. J. Fleming and Bay claim that “teacher candidates receive little to no instruction in social and emotional development or exposure to SEL programs until they are required to teach them in the schools” (p. 95). However, they also found that not only do the Professional Teaching Standards require teachers to promote SEL among their students, they “imply a degree of SEL competence on the part of the teacher in terms of awareness of self and others” (p. 99). While I intend to examine the research on teacher readiness later in this chapter, at this point I would only like to acknowledge that SEL already has a prominent place in



these standards.

Although much more work needs to be done, there is substantial evidence that elements of SEL have already begun to make their way into academic and personnel preparation standards. Recognizing the link between implementing SEL standards and achieving desired academic outcomes greatly influences the likelihood of teachers to address them (CRPD, 2009). The value of making SEL a cornerstone in school reform efforts has also begun to be demonstrated (Elias & Leverett, 2011; Zins et al., 2004). This research continues to affirm that in order for SEL to be most effective it is essential that the “academic and SEL goals are unified by a comprehensive, theory-based framework that is developmentally appropriate” (Elias, Zins et al., 1997, p. 139).

### **Two-Pronged SEL Framework Emerges**

#### **Implementing a Sustainable SEL Framework**

The comprehensive framework most often described in the literature for implementing and sustaining SEL involves a two-pronged approach, with one effort directed more toward student learning by influencing the curriculum and instructional practices, and the other at improving the climate both in the classroom and throughout the school. These efforts come together through formal and informal social-emotional skills instruction that takes place in a safe and supportive environment, involving engaged educators, parents, and community members. SEL represents a unifying framework that brings together the principles of positive youth development, health promotion and problem prevention, character education, service learning, and schools as communities of learners (Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2000). SEL advocates envision a learning environment that optimizes the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and moral

development of every child (Zins & Elias, 2007). The recommended framework recognizes that school-family partnerships serve as the foundation for this type of learning and that the quality of these relationships determines schooling outcomes (Mart, Dusenbury, & Weissberg, 2011). Educators are also encouraged to take into account the cultural diversity present in most American classrooms (Ceisel, 2011; Elias, Patrikakou, & Weissberg, 2007; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005).

Several guidelines have been published to assist educators in implementing and sustaining schoolwide and district-wide SEL initiatives. CASEL has developed an extensive *Implementation Guide and Toolkit* (Devaney et al., 2006), as well as a less detailed guide that outlines CASEL's Ten-Step Implementation Plan and the way in which SEL aligns with the goals of the U.S. Department of Education's Safe Schools-Healthy Students initiative (CASEL, 2008). Other publications provide more generalized approaches to implementing both classroom level and schoolwide SEL programs (e.g., Cohen, J., 1999, 2001; Elias, Zins et al., 1997; Pasi, 2001). Jonathan Cohen (2006) proposes a five-step model for social, emotional, ethical, and academic education, which explicitly recognizes the role ethical concerns play in issues regarding quality of life and in preparing students for participation in a democracy. All of these guides stress the importance of ongoing planning and evaluation, family-school-community partnerships, professional development and training for all school personnel, leadership and the institutional infrastructure to support a climate for the comprehensive integration of SEL into district and school policies and practices, including the allocation of resources, and frequent, interactive communication between school personnel, families, students, and community members about SEL activities and successes.

A limited number of studies have been done to assess SEL implementation processes, as opposed to evaluations of specific programs. In 1999, CASEL cosponsored an invitational conference on implementation research at which 20 prominent prevention researchers and federal program officers committed to the further study and assessment of SEL implementation processes (Graczyk et al., 2000). In one of the papers to come out of that conference, researchers concluded that “psychoeducational innovations are predominantly dependent on human operators, rather than technologies, for their implementation” (Elias et al., 2003, p. 304). Based on their examination of the literature on educational innovation and reform, along with research done regarding prevention and SEL programs, the authors found that success in classroom approaches is dependent on ongoing social-ecological adjustment and adaptation.

Three structural, long-term recommendations emerged from their analysis: 1. An action research perspective is essential that promotes flexibility and a spirit of continuous improvement; 2. The importance of capturing details about the implementation process must be emphasized in training those who will lead the implementation process, to gain a better understanding of how programs work in real-world conditions and to uncover “ecologically embedded and complex units of ‘active ingredients’ or ‘key elements’ that can be monitored to ensure that adaptation does not preclude fidelity” (Elias et al., 2003, p. 315); and 3. Professionals assisting with the implementation of schoolwide SEL initiatives require an interdisciplinary array of skills and knowledge about “coordinating programs relating to prevention, health, social competence promotion, and character, and integrating these areas with the academic mission of schools (p. 316). While these structural changes are viewed as important in all settings, they were determined to be

particularly relevant to successful SEL implementation in the context of urban schools with high rates of students living in poverty.

Research related to implementation of the Illinois SEL standards is beginning to appear. Tanyu (2007) examined implementation of the standards at the elementary level based on survey responses from 189 teachers from 13 Illinois schools. Peter Ji and colleagues at CASEL (Ji, et al., 2008) published a report describing the early stages of implementation at 84 pilot sites identified in 2007 to serve as the first cohort of schools to receive implementation support from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership (ICMHP). CPRD (2009) completed an initial evaluation for ISBE and ICMHP comprised of 21 case studies involving a subset of the initial pilot sites to identify obstacles and barriers to successful planning and SEL implementation. ICMHP (Lueck & Kelly, 2010) also conducted its own assessment of progress being made to meet the needs of Illinois students through a variety of school-based mental health initiatives.

The Center for School Evaluation, Intervention, and Training at Loyola University Chicago is also collaborating with ISBE and ICMHP to evaluate implementation of the SEL standards and school mental health supports in 61 schools (Shulruff, 2010). A self-assessment tool and online data collection system have been developed and data collection began in 2009. Initial data indicates that only 17 of the 61 (28%) participating schools have SEL programs in place. Although no assessment reports have been published yet, this project is expected to provide additional insight about the support necessary for effectively implementing and sustaining a schoolwide SEL framework.

Findings from the Illinois studies demonstrate a direct relationship between the levels of organizational support, professional development, and the use of SEL standards-aligned curriculum and instructional practices. These findings are in line with earlier studies regarding implementation of other educational innovations (Elias et al., 2003). Additionally, the Illinois researchers found that teachers are generally eager to learn about and use the SEL standards, but are stymied in doing so because of the limited support available to them. Most of the teachers view implementing the standards as optional because of the lack of mandatory accountability measures. However, understanding the link between improved academic achievement and SEL principles served as a primary motivating factor for many teachers.

Most Illinois schools are in the very early stages of implementing schoolwide SEL approaches and are struggling to balance schoolwide activities with curriculum selection and implementation, as well as finding meaningful ways to involve parents in planning and implementation (CPRD, 2009). These issues will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

### **Creating a Caring Climate**

As indicated above, establishing and maintaining a positive school environment is one of the two main facets of a comprehensive SEL framework (Devaney et al., 2006). A caring, supportive, and challenging context leads to better SEL, according to Elias, Zins, and colleagues (1997). They identified it as one which reflects the following elements:

- Free and open interaction and dialogue among and between staff and students.
- High standards of behavior and achievement, including the ability to think critically and make informed judgments about behavior and related consequences.
- Collaboration, cooperation, and constructive group problem-solving activities.

- Equity, fairness, and respect for diversity of race, culture, ethnicity, social class, religion, gender, ability, and other factors.
- Supportive, positive learning experiences.
- Strong connections between adults and students, and commitment to the mission and goals of the school. (p. 76-77)

A decade later, the National School Climate Center (2007) adopted a similar definition, defining a healthy school environment in the following way:

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits of, and satisfaction from, learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school as well as the care of the physical environment. (p. 5)

The National School Climate Center (2009) has also adopted a set of standards and benchmarks to provide criteria for educational leaders, families, and other community members to assess and support efforts to sustain a positive school climate. These standards are provided in Table 5. The Council designed them to complement the Parent Teacher Association's National Standards for Family School Partnerships, as well as to provide guidance for pre-service and continuing education in line with existing national standards for educational leadership and professional development.

School climate research typically indicates that at least four elements must be taken into consideration to foster a positive climate: *safety* on multiple levels, including physically, intellectually, and social-emotionally; *relationships* that encourage school connectedness; *teaching and learning* that promotes cooperation, group cohesion, mutual trust, and respect; and *institutional environment*, including school connectedness and physical surroundings (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, and Dumas, 2003; Cohen, J.,

**Table 5. National School Climate Standards**

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.</li> <li>2. The school community sets policies specifically promoting <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge, dispositions and engagement, and</li> <li>(b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students,</li> <li>(b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities;</li> <li>(c) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and</li> <li>(d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.</li> <li>5. The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.</li> </ol>
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Source: National School Climate Center, 2009, p. 3

2006; Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Cohen & Geier, 2010; National School Climate Center, 2007; 2009). Among research entities attempting to better understand the role of school climate is the National School Climate Center. The National School Climate Center (n.d.a) was initially founded in 1996 as the Center for Social and Emotional Education and changed its name in 2002 to reflect a shift in focus from developing leaders in SEL to measuring and improving school climate. The Center has developed the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) to assess how students, parents, and school personnel perceive a school's particular climate for learning.

The National School Climate Center (n.d.b) has established 12 dimensions upon

which to measure school climate. The measures most relevant to this project are *respect for diversity*, which they define as, “Mutual respect for individual differences (e.g. gender, race, culture, etc.) at all levels of the school – student-student; adult-student; adult-adult and overall norms of tolerance,” and *social support from adults*, defined as, “Pattern of supportive and caring adult relationships for students, including high expectations for student success, willingness to listen to students and to get to know them as individuals, and personal concern for student’s problems.” A complete list of the 12 measures can be found at [www.schoolclimate.org](http://www.schoolclimate.org). Using CSCI data gathered from 64 schools, the National School Climate Center found schools with higher climate ratings also tended to have better test scores and graduation rates. This relationship was even stronger for schools with high poverty rates.

While a factor analysis was not provided, the overall National School Climate Center findings are consistent with the results of research done by Elias and Haynes (2008) involving minority, low-income elementary students in an urban community. Elias and Haynes found that perceived teacher support is important for school attendance and academic success. They observed ethnic group differences in perceived changes in teacher support and in considering previous levels of social-emotional competence, as well as students’ absence from school. Drawing on the results of other studies as well as their own findings, they concluded “that when one is part of a minority group in an environment where ethnic/cultural tensions exist, it is not unusual to experience higher levels of environmental stress and also perceive lower levels of support” (p. 489). Elias and Haynes recommend that “future research pay greater attention to the influence of cultural factors on students’ social and learning behaviors and academic achievement”



(p.490), particularly in schools with immigrant populations. They advise that research on culturally diverse students should include assessments of acculturation and data from family members regarding values communicated about school behavior and achievement.

In a large scale-scale multiyear study of middle school students, researchers also found that support for, and sensitivity to, diversity and cultural pluralism was a significant dimension of school climate (Brand et al., 2003). Brand and colleagues employed the following four-item scale to measure support for cultural pluralism:

- (1) Your teachers show that they think it is important for students of different races and cultures at your school to get along with each other.
  - (2) Students of many different races and cultures are chosen to participate in important school activities.
  - (3) You get to do something which helps you learn about students of different races and cultures at your school.
  - (4) You work with students of different races and cultures in a school activity.
- (p.575)

Higher student self-expectations associated to academic goals, such as the likelihood to graduate from high school, and academic aspirations, such as the importance placed on high school graduation and college attendance by themselves and their parents, were consistently related with higher mean levels of perceived support for cultural pluralism in the school among all students.

Additionally, “in schools that minority students rated as having higher levels of Support for Cultural Pluralism, minority students exhibited higher academic expectations and aspirations, lower levels of delinquency and substance abuse, and better socioemotional adjustment. Among White students, the relationship between Support for Cultural Pluralism and adjustment outcomes was weaker” (Brand et al., 2003, p. 582). Brand and colleagues say this is to be expected as the White students would more than

likely identify with the dominant culture and not experience the same benefit from recognition of their culture, as would minority students. They claim these findings are particularly significant in that they go beyond the more traditional studies which tend to only emphasize the importance of student and teacher commitment to academic achievement in assessing climate dimensions. By looking at additional factors, such as support for cultural pluralism, Brand and colleagues have demonstrated that multiple dimensions of school climate must be assessed in order to better understand how the school environment impacts students differently and influences their academic achievement, behavior, and social-emotional adjustment.

One of the most significant influences on classroom and schoolwide climate appears to be the social-emotional competencies of the adults involved in the school community (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2011; 2012; Reicher, 2010). Although the CASEL implementation model (Deveney et al., 2006) recommends launching an evidence-based SEL program in classrooms while simultaneously integrating SEL into schoolwide practices, CRPD (2009) found “it might be more appropriate to implement general school-wide SEL staff development trainings prior to implementing a specific curriculum . . . because teachers themselves had SEL skill development needs.” In order to support a healthy SEL environment, CRPD recommends the development of SEL practice guidelines that “include how to establish ongoing professional development, teacher and all staff mentoring and wellness programming, Employee Assistance Programs, and less formal mechanisms to naturally help school staff gain comfort with SEL skills and behaviors” (p. 46).

In order to best achieve positive system-wide results, researchers urge that the

social-emotional competencies of not only teachers, but building-based and district-level administrative personnel, guidance counselors, school psychologists, nurses, school social workers, food service workers, maintenance staff, transportation providers, school board members, and parents need to be addressed as well (Elias & Leverett, 2011; Walberg, Zins, & Weissberg, 2004). Helping the adults to recognize how their behavior impacts the learning environment and student behavior, and then giving them opportunities to improve their social-emotional skills, may be the best place to begin whether adopting a comprehensive SEL framework or implementing a particular SEL program (CASEL, 2008; Reicher, 2010).

### **Enhancing School Personnel Readiness and Administrative Leadership**

Very little research has been done regarding teacher's emotions and their impact on teaching and student learning (Brown, J., Jones, LaRusso, & Aber, 2010; Hargreaves, 2000; Hawkey, 2006; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Larsen & Samdal, 2012; McCuin, 2012). Rosemary Sutton and Karl Wheatley (2003) speculate that the reasons for this "paucity of research" on teachers' emotions is related to at least two factors: the emotional revolution in psychology did not begin to gain attention in teacher education until the late 1990s and the attitude in Western culture that "when we say someone is 'emotional,' we usually mean irrational" (p. 328). Yet, researchers examining student outcomes found that the teacher's social-emotional competencies seem to be particularly important (Cherniss, 2002; Douglass, A., 2011). "Even without an intervention, some teachers model and teach social and emotional skills to their children in highly effective ways. Conversely, even with an intervention, some teachers lack the social and emotional qualities that are essential for teaching these sorts of skills" (Cherniss, 2002, p.

7).

Additionally, most educators have not had any SEL training prior to being required to teach a curriculum their school has purchased (Carlson, D., 2007; CASEL, 2003; Cohen, J., 2006; Cohen, J. et al., 2009; Elias et al, 2003; Fleming, J. & Bay, 2004).

J. Fleming and Bay (2004) say the reason for this omission is that:

compliance with the full range of requirements of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) as well as state and local teacher preparation standards often leaves little room for additional coursework covering SEL in teacher education curricula. This argument against SEL training is reinforced by the supposition that SEL content is incompatible with the performance-based standards that teacher preparation programs are required to address (p. 95).

Not only is this reasoning inconsistent with the research relating SEL to academic achievement, as discussed earlier in this chapter, J. Fleming and Bay (2004) argue that it is not reflective of the reforms advocated by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). However, the fact remains that few teachers have received pre-service training to improve their own social-emotional skills or to implement SEL programs in their classrooms (Lantieri & Nambiar, 2012; Tom, 2012).

The child development course offerings that prospective teachers are required to take tend to focus on the cognitive development of children and adolescents (Fleming, J. & Bay, 2004) and classroom management techniques that encourage use of external discipline practices aimed at influencing disruptive student behavior during periods of whole-class instruction (Doolittle et al., 2007). Although this training generally has not addressed individual student behavior supports or positive schoolwide behavior support systems, Doolittle and colleagues anticipate this may be changing due to federal legislation and research related to initiatives such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Response*

*to Intervention.* Progress being made in this area is outside of the scope of this project, but does offer promise for greater attention to social-emotional development issues in teacher preparation programs.

The prevention of attrition among new teachers and burnout among veteran educators are also arguments being advanced for greater attention to social-emotional development issues in teacher preparation programs (Cohen et al., 2009; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Among the most likely reasons given for leaving the profession are emotional stress and school climate related issues, such as student discipline problems and a lack of support from school administrators. “One of the most persistent problems in education is the instability of the teaching force. Significant attrition plagues the profession. It is estimated that by the fifth year after entry, 46% of teachers have left the profession . . . Not only does this mean that students consistently get inexperienced teachers” (Cohen et al., 2009, pp. 200-201), but teacher attrition also places a strain on school budgets (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Most damaging is that students show lower levels of performance and on-task behavior when teachers are unable to effectively manage the social and emotional challenges within their school and classroom. Patricia Jennings and Mark Greenberg (2009) claim that “the classroom climate deteriorates, triggering in the teacher what [they] refer to as a ‘burnout cascade.’ The deteriorating climate is marked by increases in troublesome student behaviors, and teachers become emotionally exhausted as they try to manage them. Under these conditions, teachers may resort to reactive and excessively punitive responses that do not teach self-regulation and may contribute to a self-sustaining cycle of classroom disruption” (p. 492).

As a remedy, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) propose a prosocial classroom model that centers on the teacher's social and emotional competence and well-being. This model involves instructing teachers to: 1. Recognize student's individual needs in order to support healthy teacher-student relationships; 2. Adopt proactive classroom management skills that foster self-regulation in students; and 3. Model the social and emotional behavior they desire from students to facilitate effective implementation of the school's SEL curriculum. They anticipate that these activities will interact to not only contribute positively to students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes, but will also reinforce teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, and "commitment to the profession, thereby creating a positive feedback loop that may prevent teacher burnout" (p. 494). Jennings and Greenberg provide substantial evidence to support their model and criticize pre-service and in-service programs for not using the knowledge base generated by "decades" of research in related areas to provide emotionally intelligent teacher training that helps teachers to develop their social and emotional competencies and improve student outcomes.

In one study, researchers found that nearly all the teachers they surveyed believe that SEL is important and support the concepts it promotes (Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, & Merrell, 2009) and in two others most teachers indicate a readiness to learn more about SEL (CRPD, 2009; Tanyu, 2007). However, teachers in all of these studies cite time constraints as a major obstacle to implementing SEL practices in their classrooms. In addition to limited time, the absence of instructional materials and technical assistance were frequently indicated as barriers. CRPD (2009) found low levels of teacher buy-in were also related to "discomfort in addressing emotional issues (both their own as well as

those of their students) . . . Increasing teacher comfort in dealing with students on an emotional level is clearly an area needing to be addressed within the SEL framework” (pp. 34-35). Tanyu (2007) found “that in schools with higher professional development activities and accountability systems, teachers were more likely to incorporate SEL into their instruction and curriculum” (p. 64).

In a related vein, support from the school’s principal and other district administrators has also been found to be very important in the SEL implementation process (Deveney et al., 2006; CRPD, 2009; Tanyu, 2007). Transitions and turnover among teachers, administrators, and school board members often threatens progress and requires ongoing efforts by supporters to “sell” SEL (CRPD, 2009). To reinforce an emphasis on social-emotional skill-building, principals are encouraged to introduce “SEL considerations into teacher recruitment, selection, and evaluation procedures” (Deveney et al., 2006, p. 109). Additionally, expectations conveyed by administrators appear to have a critical influence on teachers’ perceptions regarding the importance of implementing SEL standards in the classroom (Tanyu, 2007).

According to the literature, the social-emotional competence of the school leader, who in most instances is the principal, plays a large role in implementing and sustaining effective schoolwide change (Deveney et al., 2006). David Saxe (2011) found that the social-emotional competence of school principals was a predictor of transformational leadership behavior. “Although effective school leadership is essential in any successful school improvement effort, it is particularly important to SEL programming. SEL is as much about adult change as it is about improvements in student performance” (O’Brien & Resnik, 2009, p. 3). These SEL advocates claim that leaders, like teachers and

principals, must model the behavior they desire in order to build trusting relationships and create a safe environment for learning.

Teachers and principals are not the only school personnel who are likely to assume new or expanded roles and functions in relation to SEL. Pupil services professionals and other mental health service providers, who have traditionally focused on a specific student's problems, are expected "to play increasing roles as advocates, catalysts, brokers, and facilitators of reform and to provide various forms of consultation and in-service training" as more emphasis is placed on promoting wellness and prevention, as well as accessing support services (Adelman & Taylor, 2000, p. 24). The training of professional school counselors, social workers, and psychologists is needed to help lead implementation efforts both as external consultants and from within (Elias & Leverett, 2011). Research indicates that when teachers participate in a consultation process incorporating performance feedback, there is greater fidelity in implementing SEL programs, resulting in enhanced teacher performance and student outcomes (Buchanan et al., 2009).

Even though school counselors and social workers, and psychologist to a lesser degree, have been involved with the implementation of social-emotional skill-building programs in many schools for a number of years, it is probable that teachers will continue to have greater responsibility for SEL as it becomes more integrated into the curriculum (Buchanan et al., 2009). For that reason, advocates argue that it is critically important to include SEL in teacher preparation programs by incorporating it into core content courses and fieldwork and making it a part of ongoing professional development for in-service teachers (Devaney et al., 2006; Elias et al., 2003; Palomera et al., 2008; Patti, 2006; Zins



et al., 2004). “When SEL competencies are taught and embedded in the teacher preparation program’s core work, they are likely to inform community dialogue about teaching and learning, and become integrated into teachers’ pedagogical approaches” (Carlson, D., 2007, p. 222). However, in order for this to occur, a “critical first step may be for teacher educators and proponents of SEL to find a more common language around social and emotional learning competencies” (Fleming, J. & Bay, 2004, p. 104), as well as the development of standardized observation protocols (Pianta & Hamre, 2009) and “social, emotional, and ethical curriculum guidelines and case method learning resources” (Cohen, J. et al., 2009, p. 202).

Quite germane to this project are the opportunities suggested by Nancy Chavkin (2005a; 2005b) and J. Fleming and Bay (2004) for SEL proponents to collaborate with other teacher educators and researchers to better prepare teachers to work with increasingly diverse students and their families. Chavkin says, “Diverse families include families with different social economic status, living arrangements, languages, histories, cultures, religions, sizes, etc. The list of differing characteristics is endless, and it is important for educators to be prepared for these differences” (2005b, p. 16). J. Fleming and Bay point out that SEL shares a substantial degree of common ground with culturally relevant teaching, “including prioritizing self-awareness, perspective taking, student-teacher connections, student interaction and collaborative learning, and family and community partnerships” (p. 105). Chavkin favors the “use of multiple approaches at more than one level to prepare both pre-service and in-service educators to work with diverse families, including credentialing requirements, ongoing continuing education about family involvement, providing easy access to resources and community members,

and opportunities for sharing best-practices (p. 20). Strategies to increase parent involvement was one of the top training requests from teachers and administrators involved with implementing the Illinois SEL standards (CRPD, 2009).

However, there is little empirical evidence in the literature to demonstrate that schools of education are doing much to prepare teachers to work within a schoolwide SEL framework or to implement SEL in their classroom curriculum. In one study, only 15% of the teachers indicated they had learned about SEL through a college course they had taken. Training was more likely to come from a number of formal and informal sources, including “attending full-day (13%) or half-day (15%) in-service programs, attending a workshop (30%), participating in on-site coaching (12%), having prior work experience (14%), reading relevant books (19%), watching a video/TV program (10.6%), or some other means (3.4%)” (Buchanan et al., 2009, p. 194).

Although professional development training for in-service teachers and other school personnel leading SEL implementation efforts is available from groups like CASEL and the National School Climate Center, the main providers of training for teachers are currently the developers of packaged SEL-related curricula. For this reason, CASEL (2003; 2005; Devaney et al., 2006) recommends that early in the SEL implementation process that schools select a program with evidence that it has undergone years of scientific program development and evaluation, as well as the capacity to provide customized professional development and support. Until institutional changes are made in teacher preparation and/or more SEL consultants have been trained to work with schools, program selection will play a large role in facilitating the readiness of staff to move forward with their SEL efforts.

## Selecting SEL Instructional Strategies

In addition to creating a caring and supportive climate, the other main component of a comprehensive SEL framework is the instructional strategies that facilitate the development of the five core social and emotional competencies related to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Devaney et al., 2006; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004). While progress is being made, “educators do not have a comprehensive K-12 social, emotional, and ethical learning curriculum based on the best available knowledge about social, emotional, and ethical learning, the development of social and emotional competence and ethical dispositions, and interactions between emotional, cognitive, and social learning” (Cohen, J. et al., 2009, p. 202). School leaders are placed in the position of choosing between purchasing pre-packaged SEL programs, developing their own curriculum, or some combination of the two approaches.

There are only a few comprehensive K-12 SEL programs with a proven track record, but hundreds of programs have been developed that address one or more of the five core competencies and target specific grade levels (CASEL 2003; 2012). Additionally, many schools have effective prevention and health promotion programs in place already and are reluctant to eliminate them. Therefore, much has been written about assessing programs already being used and guidelines for selecting new programs (for example CASEL, 2003; 2005; 2012; Devaney et al., 2005; Elias, Zins et al., 1997; Elias et al., 2003; Ji et al., 2008; Pasi, 2001; Payton et al., 2000). Factors to be considered not only include program design elements aimed at explicitly enhancing SEL, but other aspects as well, such as those identified by Payton and colleagues in Table 6.

**Table 6. Features of Quality Programs that Enhance SEL Competencies**

<b>Program Design</b>	
Clarity of rationale:	Program objectives and the methods for achieving them are based on a clearly articulated conceptual framework.
Promotion of effective teaching strategies:	Program includes detailed instructions to assist teachers in using variety of student-centered teaching strategies.
Infusion across subject areas:	Program provides structure for the infusion and application of SEL instruction across other subject areas within the school curriculum.
Quality of lesson plans:	Program lessons follow a consistent format that includes clear objectives and learning activities, student assessment tools, and a rationale linking lessons to program design.
Utility of implementation monitoring tools:	Program provides tools for monitoring implementation and guidance in their use, including how to use the collected data to improve program delivery.
<b>Program Coordination</b>	
Schoolwide coordination:	Program includes structures that promote the reinforcement and extension of SEL instruction beyond the classroom and throughout the school.
School-family partnership:	Program includes strategies to enhance communication between schools and families and involve families in their children's SEL education both at home and at school.
School-community partnership:	Program includes strategies that involve students in the community and community members in school-based instruction.
<b>Educator Preparation and Support</b>	
Teacher training:	Program provides teachers with formal training to enable them to comfortably and effectively implement the program within their classrooms and schools.
Technical support:	Program provides teachers with ongoing assistance to further build their capacity to successfully implement the program and to facilitate the resolution of any implementation issues.
<b>Program Evaluation</b>	
Quality of evaluation:	Program provides evidence of positive effects on SEL-related student outcomes from at least one methodologically sound study that includes program implementation data.

Source: Payton et al, 2000, p. 181

Quality SEL programs are defined as those whose instructional component has a prescribed sequence of lessons over multiple years, along with opportunities for schoolwide coordination and repeated opportunities to practice, involvement of family and community members, educator preparation and support, and positive evidence of effectiveness from at least one well-designed outcome evaluation.

Some resources provide examples of SEL activities and practices that teachers can use in their classrooms (for example Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Elias & Bulter, 2005a; 2005b; Elias, Zins et al., 1997; Elksnin, K. & Elksnin, N., 2003; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010; Rivers & Brackett, 2011). Other publications include case studies of existing SEL programs and provide opportunities to learn from those already “in the trenches” (for example Bar-On et al., 2007; Cohen, J., 1999; 2001; Goleman, 1995/2005).

The literature also contains a number of evaluations of specific SEL programs, for example the Caring School Community, formerly the Child Development Project (Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps & Lewis, 2000), Connecting with Others (Richardson, Tolson, Huang, & Lee, 2009), Incredible Years (Webster-Statton, Reid, & Stoolmiller, 2008), Positive Action (Allred, 2008; Whitten, 2010), Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) (Ceisel, 2012; Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2010), the 4 Rs (Reading, Writing, Respect, and Resolution) Program, formerly the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (Brown, J. et al., 2010; Jones, S., Brown & Aber, 2011), Second Step (Frey, Nolen, Edstrom, & Hirschstein, 2005), the Strong Kids Curricula (Caldarella, Christensen, Kramer, & Kronmiller, 2009; Merrell, Juskelis, Tran, & Buchanan, 2008; Ross, 2012), Student Success Skills (Webb & Brigman, 2006), and

Talking with TJ (Dilworth, Mokrue, & Elias, 2002; Romasz, Kantor, & Elias, 2004).

These examples do not reflect an exhaustive collection of SEL evaluation reports, as that is not the focus of this project. However, they do include studies related to several of the programs frequently cited in the SEL literature.

In terms of relevance to this project, the evaluation reports examined indicated that all of the programs included a parent component, except for Second Step and Student Success Skills where no mention was made about parent involvement. Only two evaluation teams sought input from parents (Jones, S. et al., 2011; Romasz et al., 2004) and only one evaluated the parent involvement component, although they did not seek input from the parents (Webster-Statton et al., 2008). Therefore, while parent involvement is recognized as an essential element of SEL programs, it has not received much attention from program evaluators. Parent involvement will be discussed more thoroughly later in this chapter and throughout the remainder of this project.

Similarly, promoting an appreciation for differences and cultural diversity is stressed in the program selection literature (for example Devaney et al, 2006; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010). Yet, aside from the racial/ethnic composition of the student populations, little other attention was given to cultural issues in the evaluation studies reviewed. Although most of the evaluations noted the racial/ethnic compositions of the student populations, only three teams (Dilworth et al., 2002; Solomon et al., 2000; Webster-Statton et al., 2008) used this data as a variable in the analysis. Only one study (Brown, J. et al, 2010) mentioned “the cultural norms, values, and practices [teachers and students] bring to the relationship and to the classroom” (p. 154). The racial/ethnic make-up of the teachers was analyzed as part of the evaluation, but the evaluators did not

look at student level data.

Several studies (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2010; Dilworth et al., 2002; Frey et al., 2005; Jones, S. et al., 2011; Solomon et al., 2000; Webster-Statton et al., 2008) did examine gender differences in the overall populations, but not by racial/ethnic groupings. Only two reports involving the Strong Kids Curricula (Merrell et al., 2008; Ross, 2012) discussed adaptations for use with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Additionally, only one report regarding the Talking with TJ program (Dilworth et al., 2002) indicated that it included a diversity component. Recognition in the literature of the need for greater cultural sensitivity will be discussed later in this chapter and throughout the remainder of this project.

Although student assessment tools are considered a critical element of a quality SEL program, developing empirical measures for assessing emotional intelligence and social and emotional competencies has been a challenge. Several of the evaluations utilized indirect indicators, like improved academic outcomes as an indicator of program effectiveness (Allred, 2008; Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2010; Jones, S. et al., 2011; Solomon et al., 2000; Webb & Brigman, 2006; Whitten, 2010). Yet, academic outcomes do not provide much insight about specific social or emotional competencies.

Most of the studies reviewed also used methods such as student pre- and post-intervention surveys, teacher ratings, classroom observations by external observers, and occasionally parent ratings, to assess changes in student behavior and/or attitudes. While these methods may be appropriate for program evaluation purposes, they are not necessarily practical for routine use by teachers (Merrell & Guelder, 2010). However,

effort is being made to modify lengthy research-based tools into assessment instruments that are both reliable and manageable for use in regular classrooms. Challenges and progress being made in this area will be discussed in the next section.

### **Assessing Student SEL Competencies**

As states begin to include social and emotional competencies in their learning standards, the need for assessment and accountability measures has taken on greater urgency (Zins & Elias, 2007). Most of the existing validated social-emotional assessment tools are pathology oriented, focusing on a student's problems, disorders, or a particular dysfunction (Merrell & Guelder, 2010). Additionally, CASEL's Compendium of Preschool Through Elementary School Social-Emotional Learning and Associated Assessment Measures (Denham, Ji, & Hamre, 2010) includes only one assessment tool out of 26 intended for use with elementary school students that addresses all five core competencies; 19 address only one or two areas. Of particular interest to this project, fewer than half (12) of these tools include a parent component in the assessment.

There are several reasons for the dearth of assessment instruments, including the recency of SEL as a field of research and a lack of consensus on what and how SEL competencies should be assessed. Some researchers recognize that unlike a traditional psychometric conception, where "measures of intelligence have a single correct answer, [this] generally does not apply to measurements of SEL, in particular given one's sociocultural context" (Coryn, Spybrook, Evergreen, & Blinkiewicz, 2009, p. 284). While, much of the academic literature on SEL to date has focused on the underlying socio-psychological theory supporting SEL (Cohen, J., 1999; Damasio, 1994/2005; Maher & Zins, 1987), efforts to describe and measure emotional intelligence (Cherniss et



al., 2006; Denham et al., 2010; Geher, 2004; Goleman, 1995/2005; Matthews, G. et al., 2002; Qualter, Gardner, & Whiteley, 2007; Salovey et al., 2004; Salovey & Sluyter, 1997) and social intelligence (Goleman, 2006) have resulted in limited success (Brody, 2004; Matthews, G., Roberts, & Zeidner, 2004; Mayer & Cobb, 2000; Waterhouse, 2006; Zeidner, Roberts, & Matthews, 2004).

The initial constructs for SEL appear to have emerged independent of a specific theory regarding its relation to intelligence (Day, 2004). However, more current SEL efforts are based largely on research and theories that have emerged during the past two decades regarding brain research and emotional intelligence (EI). Although notions of social intelligence have existed for nearly a century, “a cohesive theory of social intelligence that clearly distinguishes it from IQ and that has practical applications has eluded psychology” (Goleman, 2006. p. 332). Yet, Goleman views it as a “sister” intelligence to EI and suggests that it may be appropriate at this time to rethink social intelligence. In *Social Intelligence* (2006), which he sees as a companion tome to his *Emotional Intelligence* (1995/2005), Goleman asserts that his aim is again “to lift the curtain,” this time on the emerging field of social neuroscience. He states:

Virtually all of the major scientific discoveries I draw on in this volume have emerged since *Emotional Intelligence* appeared in 1995, and they continue to surface at a quickening pace. When I wrote *Emotional Intelligence*, my focus was on a crucial set of human capacities *within* us as individuals, our ability to manage our own emotions and our inner potential for positive relationships. Here the picture enlarges beyond a one-person psychology – those capacities an individual has within – to a two-person psychology: what transpires as we connect . . . [how] we create one another. (2006, p. 5)

Others, including John Mayer, have suggested an alternate route instead, that EI “could be groomed as the replacement member of the triumvirate where social

intelligence failed” (quoted in Goleman, 2006, p. 330). Mayer was referring to Thorndike’s (1920) original triad which also included social, as well as mechanical and abstract intelligence. As indicated in the prior chapter, while many conceptualizations of EI have emerged, there are three main models (Spielberger, 2004). These are the models proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997/2004; Salovey & Mayer, 1990/2004), who align themselves most closely with traditional intelligence theories, viewing this construct as an ability; Goleman (1998/2000), who focuses on a variety of competencies and skills that contribute to organizational leadership and performance at work and related life outcomes; and Bar-on (1997), who has identified a number of interrelated social and emotional skills and competencies that influence intelligent behavior. While the Bar-on model appears to be most in-line with the CASEL SEL framework, all three models have contributed to the knowledge base supporting SEL and warrant a brief review.

Salovey and Mayer (1990/2004), as noted earlier, were the first psychologists to develop a concept of EI, although the term had been used in various disciplines since the 1960s. They consider their model to most accurately reflect conventional intelligence terminology in the field of psychology, referring specifically to the cooperative combination of emotion and intelligence. “This valid conception of EI includes the ability to engage in sophisticated information processing about one’s own and others’ emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to thinking. That is, individuals high in EI pay attention to, use, understand, and manage emotions, and these skills serve adaptive functions that potentially benefit themselves and others” (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008, p. 503). They “view EI as a member of a class of intelligences, including the social, practical, and personal intelligences that [they] have come to call the

*hot* intelligences. The label refers to the fact that these intelligences operate on hot cognitions – cognitions dealing with matters of personal, emotional importance to the individual” (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004, p. 197). Their work has focused on demonstrating and measuring the existence of emotional intelligence. They have been critical of others who they claim have included too many traits and concepts, causing confusion and misunderstanding within and about the field (Mayer et al., 2004; 2008; Salovey et al., 2004).

The Mayer and Salovey model is a four-branch construct comprised of abilities related to perceiving emotions, using emotions (to facilitate cognition), understanding emotions, and managing emotions (Mayer et al., 2004; Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Hee Yoo, 2008). They have developed the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) to measure EI (Brackett & Salovey, 2004). The MSCEIT assesses emotion-related abilities using 141 questions that “have answers that can be evaluated as more or less correct” based on “the general consensus of test-takers” and “expert criterion in which experts judge” the correctness of the answers (Mayer et al., 2004, p. 200). Based on accumulating evidence from the MSCEIT, they have concluded that, “EI, measured as an ability, predicts a variety of important outcomes. As EI rises, so does academic performance, measures of relatedness, the ability to communicate motivating messages such as vision statements, and other similar criteria. As EI declines, problem behaviors, deviance, and drug use rise” (p. 210).

However, the MSCEIT has been designed to be used with adults. No students younger than undergraduates have been involved in studies using this instrument. Therefore, the developers have been critical of those they accuse of prematurely claiming

that elementary and high school SEL programs increase one's EI and caution that additional research is needed before "determining whether teaching emotional knowledge has a desirable effect on behavioral outcomes and might change EI itself" (Mayer et al., 2004, p. 211). They suggest less hype and more focus on research aimed at expanding EI measurement to younger age groups in order to study how EI develops and which interventions are most effective. Acknowledging that some SEL programs appear to encourage prosocial behavior, discourage problem behavior, and improve academic achievement, they add that these programs were not designed specifically to improve EI abilities. Therefore, more rigorous assessments are needed to learn more about the relationships and processes involved (Brackett & Salovey, 2004).

In spite of this warning, the Mayer and Salovey model has been used as a starting point by others, most notably Goleman (1995/2005; 1998/2000), to construct their own models and make claims about the importance of EI. In *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (1998/2000) identifies five basic sets of competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. He maintains that one's EI potential can be maximized by developing these competencies and skills. Further, Goleman argues they can be taught. He states, "a concerted focus on helping schools teach these capabilities can help improve both the civility of life in our communities and their economic prosperity" (p. 314).

A psychologist and science journalist, as well as a founding member of CASEL, Goleman's work has generated much media attention even though some counter that he has "made extraordinary and difficult-to-substantiate claims" overstating the significance of emotional intelligence (Salovey et al, 2004, p. i). Although Goleman is a Harvard-

educated psychologist and has published several successful tradebooks that have popularized his concept of EI, he is primarily considered by many to be a science journalist and not a researcher. This situation has resulted in considerable disrespect from some members of the academic community. While *Emotional Intelligence* was an international phenomenon, appearing on the *New York Times* bestseller list for over a year and selling more than five million copies worldwide, critics have said that his publications have been “written for the general public, rather than monographs for fellow academics, works whose style of argument, at times, reflects the Emersonian point that a scream may sometimes be better than a thesis” (Kristjánsson, 2004, p. 214).

Goleman has even been accused of contributing to a divide in the field because of his “naïve representations” of EI (Mayer, Salovey et al., 2004; 2008). In the “Introduction” to the tenth anniversary edition of *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (1995/2005) defends his work acknowledging, “Unfortunately, misreadings of this book have spawned myths” (p. xiii) which he attempts to clarify, while asserting that his work has helped to promote “the merging of neuroscience with the study of emotions” (p. xv) and generate the scholarly field that has blossomed since then. In spite of the criticisms, Goleman has arguably done more than perhaps anyone else to advance the school-based SEL movement even though much of his work has been directed at EI in the workplace.

Goleman, along with Richard Boyatzis, Fabio Sala, and others have developed the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) to demonstrate and assess their concept of EI. The purpose of the ECI is to identify and measure “the underlying emotional components of human talent,” which they identify as various sets of competencies. According to their definition, “*an emotional intelligence competency is an ability to recognize, understand,*

*and use emotional information about oneself or others that that leads to or causes effective or superior performance”* (Boyatzis & Sala, 2004, p. 149, italics in original).

Unlike the theory behind the Mayer and Salovey model, the intelligence theory behind the ECI takes neural-endocrine functioning and patterns of behavior into account, reflecting an intersection of psychology and neuroscience. It recognizes that behaviors are influenced by the intent related to specific situations and these relationships follow different neuro-endocrine pathways when responding. Maximum performance results when one’s talents, i.e., capabilities, overlap with the job to be done within a specific environment. After repeated experiences, these associations are “codified,” much in the same manner that qualitative researchers use codebooks for interpreting their data, making one’s behavior somewhat consistent and predicable in similar situations. Over time, these behaviors become automatic, unless there is something different about the new situation that makes one pause in order to consider a new response.

The ECI scales measures 18 competencies associated with four constructs: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (i.e., social skills). It is a multi-source instrument involving self-assessment questionnaires completed by individuals and similar questionnaires completed by people who live or work around them to obtain a 360° perspective which is used to predict work and leadership performance. Research has demonstrated that the original ECI and its updated version, the ECI-2, are capable of predicting life and job outcomes, including “salary increases, job/life success, performance in client services and administrative roles, predicted success as a leader, worldwide management performance and potential, job performance of first-line supervisors, student retention in colleges, outstanding

performance of public school principals, performance of firefighters, and leadership in multi-nationals” (Boyatzis & Sala, 2004, p. 176). Like the MSCEIT, college students are the youngest age group that has been studied using the ECI.

Instead of the ECI, Goleman has relied on related research done by others to substantiate his claim that SEL will help younger students to improve their EI and achieve outcomes similar to those that adults have demonstrated (Cherniss et al., 2006; Goleman, 1995/2005; 1998/2000). However, very little of the initial SEL research involving younger students was done specifically in relation to EI and therefore only indirectly supports his claims. This has been the source of much of the criticism Goleman has received from others (including Kristjánsson, 2004; Mayer et al., 2004; 2008).

The Bar-on model is the only one of the three main models which has been used to study EI in younger students. Reuven Bar-on (2004) is responsible for coining the term “EQ,” as an abbreviation for emotional quotient, to describe his efforts to develop an approach for measuring emotional and social intelligence that is parallel to the measurement of cognitive intelligence (IQ) tests. Unlike Mayer, Salovey, Goleman, and others, Bar-on does not view social intelligence as a separate construct from emotional intelligence. Instead, he favors a wider construct which he identifies as “emotional and social intelligence” and uses this term interchangeably with EI (Bar-on, 2007b).

According to the Bar-on (2004) model, *“emotional and social intelligence is a cross-section of inter-related emotional and social competencies that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands and pressures”* (p. 117, italics in original). His model

includes five key components: “(a) the ability to be aware of, understand and express one’s emotions; (b) the ability to understand others’ emotions and relate with people; (c) the ability to manage and control emotions; (d) the ability to manage change, adapt and solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature; and (e) the ability to generate positive mood and be self-motivated.”

In opposition to the medical model of psychology which focuses on the study, diagnosis, and treatment of psychopathology, Bar-on views his model, as well as the other two discussed here, as part of the positive psychology movement which emphasizes the enhancement of normal and optimal human growth. In doing so, it stresses the importance of preventive practices which enable one to go beyond the Darwinian notion of survival, to thriving. Bar-on (2010) believes this approach offers “an expanded dimension to the well-being continuum” (p. 55). He has identified six areas of overlap between EI and positive psychology: “self-regard and self-acceptance based on accurate self-awareness; the ability to understand other’s feelings and the capacity for positive social interaction; the management and control of emotions; realistic problem solving and effective decision making; self-determination; and optimism” (pp. 59-60).

Based on a number of empirical studies, these six factors “are also the strongest predictors of performance, happiness, well-being, and the quest for a more meaningful life” (Bar-on, 2010, p. 60). Many of the studies are based on results from research done using the Bar-on Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), a self-report questionnaire, which he began developing in the 1980s to measure emotional and social competencies. Studies using the EQ-i have also demonstrated that EI has an impact on physical and psychological health. Additionally, after examining the relationship between EI and self-



actualization, Bar-on concludes, “The implication of these findings is that EQ more than IQ affects our ability to do our best, to accomplish goals and to actualize our potential to its fullest” (2007b, p. 9).

There are several versions of the EQ-i: the original one used with individuals 17 years of age or older; the EQ-Interview that utilizes a semi-structured interview process; EQ-i youth long and short versions (EQ-i:YV) appropriate for use with respondents aged 6 to 18 years; and the EQ-i:360 that is a multi-rater assessment completed by key informants that live or work with the individual being assessed (Bar-on, 2007b). The EQ-i and EQ-i:YV are the only two EI tests to be included in the Buros Mental Measurement Yearbook, “the oldest and most reputable professional source for test authors, publishers and users” (Bar-on, 2004, p. 117 fn). While it is considered a psychological test, Bar-on advises “it may more accurately be described as *a self-report measure of emotionally and socially intelligent behavior which provides an estimate of one’s emotional and social intelligence*” (2004, p. 117, italics in original). The EQ-i is comprised of 133 Likert items using a five-point range, taking about 40 minutes to complete. It renders a total EQ score and five composite scores based on 15 subscale scores, providing very specific information. The composite and subscale scores provided are as follows:

- Intrapersonal (comprising Self-regard, Emotional Self-awareness, Assertiveness, Independence; and Self-actualization)
- Interpersonal (comprising Empathy, Social Responsibility, and Interpersonal Relationships)
- Stress Management (comprising Stress Tolerance and Impulse Control)
- Adaptability (comprising Reality-testing, Flexibility, and Problem-solving)
- General Mood (comprising Optimism and Happiness) (p. 118)

After its publication in 1997, more than a million assessments were completed

worldwide using the EQ-i during the first five years of its availability. The EQ-i:YV, developed in 2000, is similarly constructed with 60 items on the long form and 30 items on the short version (Bar-on, 2007a). Out of a field of 59 instruments, it has been recommended by the psychometricians at the University of Oxford to the British DfES for use in UK schools (Bar-on, 2004, p. 119) and is currently being used in a 25-year longitudinal study that is being conducted by Human Resources Development Canada involving 23,000 individuals from birth through early adulthood (p. 120). In spite of its reliability and validation, as well as the ease of administering this assessment, some question what it is actually measuring because of its use of self-reported data (Mayer et al., 2008). Of interest to this project, Bar-On and Michael Rock have developed a concept of spiritual development, along with a measure, the Spiritual Quotient Inventory (SQ-i). They are currently in the process of developing the Bar-on & Rock Moral Quotient Inventory (MQ-i) to assess moral competence (Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, 2013).

While all three of the EI models have much in common, and as indicated previously, have influenced the thinking about SEL, the Bar-on model appears to provide the most appropriate theory and evidence to support the CASEL Framework. Using both neurological and statistical evidence, Bechara et al. (2007) have established that “the neural circuitry that governs emotional experience and processing also subserves key aspects of EI. Additionally, these findings offer strong evidence that there is a difference between emotional intelligence and cognitive intelligence. Both aspects of human intelligence are not only governed by different neurological areas of the brain . . . but they also fail to demonstrate a statistically strong correlation” (p. 284). Since there is

limited overlap between EI and cognitive intelligence, they argue that explicit social-emotional developmental and educational practices can be used to strengthen the neuroplasticity of the neural systems where specific emotional and social functioning occurs to enhance overall personal decision-making, as well as to “unlearn” anti-social behavior caused by environmental conditions.

Relating neurological functions to key components of the Bar-on model, Bechara and colleagues (2007) have devised a more generic six-factor model of EI which relates very closely to CASEL’s five core competencies, as shown below in Table 7.

**Table 7. Comparison of Key Emotional Intelligence and CASEL Competencies**

Key Emotional Intelligence Competencies <sup>1</sup>	CASEL Competencies <sup>2</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional self-awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-awareness</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional control (impulse control)</li> <li>• Emotional expression (assertiveness)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-management</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social awareness (empathy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social awareness</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social problem-solving</li> <li>• Social interaction (interpersonal relationships and social responsibility)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible decision making</li> <li>• Relationship skills</li> </ul>

Sources: <sup>1</sup>Bechara, Damasio, & Bar-on, 2007, p. 286; <sup>2</sup>CASEL, 2003, p. 5

This understanding recognizes a higher level of interconnectedness between one’s emotional and social processes, than Salovey and Mayer’s model that focuses only on emotional processes and Goleman’s notion that emotional and social intelligences are somewhat separate “sister” constructs.

The neuroscience that supports the Bechara, Damasio, and Bar-on model suggests that “emotions are what an outside observer can see or measure; and feelings are what the individual senses or subjectively experiences” (Bechara et al., 2007, p. 275). They also

maintain that the neural systems governing emotions and feelings are subject to two types of developmental abnormalities: neurobiological abnormalities which are not likely to benefit from rehabilitation; and environmental abnormalities which “specifically relate to social learning, that is, learning how to interact with others and to observe acceptable social conventions” (p. 280). “Individuals whose abnormal neural representations of emotional/feeling states relate to inefficient social learning might be able to reverse this abnormality and theoretically ‘unlearn’ antisocial behavior once they are exposed to proper learning contingencies” (p. 281). While difficult to discern at the behavioral level, both types of abnormalities are distinguishable at the physiological level and have significant social and legal implications regarding education and discipline practices.

Relevant to this study is the way in which the methods used to measure emotional intelligence and abnormalities have the potential for cultural bias. Although it is clear that psychologists do not agree on a common definition of what emotions are, let alone how to measure it, “school personnel cannot wait for the research community to settle on a single dependable instrument” (Coryn et al., 2009, p. 285). In response to the pressure for accountability, some researchers have begun to focus on the development of behavior rating scales and self-report assessments related to specific SEL skills (Coryn et al., 2009; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010).

Sutton and Wheatley (2003) have identified five components generally included in the emotional process which are particularly relevant to teachers’ emotions and teaching, as well as student learning. These are *appraisal* – some kind of judgment that involves interpretation of importance to one’s motives, goals, or concerns; *subjective experience* – a distinct kind of mental state often described using metaphors;

*physiological change* – such as an increase in heart rate, body temperature, or blood pressure; *emotional expression* – such as facial expressions or nonverbal gestures; and *action tendencies* – the readiness to respond in a particular manner. While physiological changes and many emotional expressions have been found to be consistent across cultures, as Darwin (1890/2009) had discovered, Sutton and Wheatley found that appraisal, subjective experience, and action tendencies are very much influenced by “systematic cultural differences in the perception and interpretation of the ‘same’ events” (p. 330). They propose use of a multicomponential research model that uses a variety of data collection methods, such as self-report questionnaires and interviews, observations, and physiological measures, which “provides a more complete understanding of emotions and also suggests areas for research in which important cultural variations may emerge.” They advise that “future research should be explicitly sensitive to culture and context” (p. 351).

While others agree that due to the complexity of SEL, multiple assessment methods are needed when evaluating SEL practices and programs. Yet, they also argue this is not practical for monitoring and assessing individual student progress within the classroom context (Merrell & Gueldner, 2010). Instead, they advocate the use of frequent, brief assessments, in the form of student self-report questionnaires and/or behavior rating-scales completed by teachers, and occasionally, parents. However, other researchers have found “that what parents and teachers think about a child’s social competence is not always the same as directly observed social behavior” (McKown, Gumbiner, Russo, & Lipton, 2009, p. 868). The same can be said about differences in self-reported perceptions and one’s observed behavior (Matthews, G. et al., 2004),

although this may change in the future. “Discrepancies between self-ratings and performance measures of EI may diminish as educational systems incorporate social and emotional learning programs” and students receive explicit feedback about their emotional abilities (Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner, & Salovey, 2006, p. 790). If this were to occur, it could reduce some criticisms aimed at Bar-on’s EQ-i:YV, which is based on self-reports.

There are also significant issues of potential cultural biases or differences to be considered in constructing performance probes (Brackett et al., 2006; Brody, 2004; Matthews, G. et al., 2004; Rietti, 2009; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Watson & Emery, 2010; Zeidner et al, 2004). EI performance measures, like those employed in the MSCEIT and some SEL assessments, use either expert or consensus scoring. Expert scoring is based on the similarity or difference in answers provided by the individual being assessed and those provided by a group whose members have “expert” knowledge of emotions. Consensus scoring is similarly scored only using the responses of a large sample of non-expert respondents. Several problems with these scoring methods have been identified and will be discussed below.

Some of the major problems with these methods are that they take for granted that there is one right answer and that the expert or consensus response is the right one. “As a rule, intelligence test items are based on some formal, rule-bound system that indicates unequivocally whether an answer is correct . . . By contrast, the emotionally intelligent response to a real-life problem is often unclear or depends on the exact circumstances” (Matthews, G. et al., 2004, p. 185). “The existence of correct answers to cognitive ability items implies that it is possible for a person with unusually high cognitive ability to

provide a response to an item that is nonconsensual and correct,” but answers can only be correct if they are consensual when using these methods (Brody, 2004, p. 234). Another issue is that these measures test one’s knowledge on emotions, but knowing is not doing. “A person who has expert knowledge on emotions may or may not be expert in the actual ability that is allegedly assessed by the test” (Brody, 2004, p. 234).

Most relevant to this research is the concern that expert opinions and consensus responses may merely reflect the social norms of the dominant group rather than skill. Brackett and colleagues (2006) conclude, “in the domain of emotions, skill and conformity are not disentangled easily because emotional skills necessarily reflect attunement to social norms and expectations” (p. 791). Similarly, Zeidner and colleagues (2004) also argue that knowledge regarding competence is context- and culture-dependent and may be influenced by culturally defined stereotypes. Sophie Rietti (2009) argues that efforts to define and measure EI cannot “be agnostic about evaluative and normative issues” (p. 148). She identifies three concerns resulting from this stance. First, is the conformity-issue with the potential to produce “a sheeplike herd mentality” (p. 149). Secondly, is what she calls the Machiavellian issue, where the fear is of producing “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” whose “managed” emotions may be “at best deployed amorally, at worst immorally” (p. 150). Thirdly, is the correctness-issue, assuming “that there are clearly correct answers in these areas” (p. 150).

Rietti (2009) argues that the relevant area of “knowledge” contains non-veridical views, which are those “that there are no very precise truth-conditions for a claim, or that there is no definitive evidence available to prove or disprove it” (p. 150). She is not alone in drawing this conclusion. According to Zeidner and colleagues (2004), “At

present, there is no definitive, universally accepted body of knowledge about emotional competence that can be used for veridical scoring, in part because of the context- and culture-dependent nature of competence” (p. 243). “Thus, the veridical criterion against which responses can be scored as correct or incorrect, needed for defining intelligence, has not yet been satisfied by EI” (Matthews, G. et al., 2004, p. 186).

Keith Oatley (2004) argues that too much emphasis has been put on psychometrics and cautions, “We must be careful not to confuse science with scientism (i.e., the belief that the procedures of science are potentially capable of solving all human problems” (p. 221). He urges the consideration of other sources of understanding, in addition to *scientific truth* based on empirical findings resulting from the use of psychometrics. He identifies two further kinds of truth in psychology that can be applied to EI. They are: *coherence truth* often found in imaginative narratives which bring together theory and experience both simultaneously and over temporal sequences; and *personal truth* that results when psychological principles connect with the hearer or reader.

Zeidner and colleagues (2004) agree with the importance of coherence truth and personal truth in psychology, but suggest that these sources of understanding are highly sensitive to cultural values and therefore, not inclined to qualify as scientific truth that can be measured reliably and validly. They maintain that “Currently, EI mostly serves a cheerleading function, helping to whip up support for potentially useful (though seldom substantiated) interventions focused on a heterogeneous collection of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills . . . EI may be no more than a vague umbrella term for a variety of different abilities, personality traits, and items of acquired knowledge that do



not cohere psychologically or psychometrically” (Matthews, G. et al., 2004, p. 192).

Other researchers are also quite skeptical about education “policies [that] are based on popularizations of a very young science that is, at present, still developing support for its central hypothesis that emotional intelligence exists” (Mayer & Cobb, 2000, p. 181).

Still, considerable pressure is being put on proponents to develop reliable and practical SEL assessment instruments that examine social and emotional strengths and competencies. However, Noddings (2006b) warns:

There is something in current trends that should worry us. It may be that thinkers who advocate SEL are allowing themselves to be coopted by the dominant crowd of “evidence-based,” data-driven researchers. I am not a Luddite with respect to quantitative methods, data gathering, or the accumulation of evidence. Some of this work is useful, even necessary. But much of it moves us away from the heart of our concern – the kids and our relations with them. We can become too immersed in surveys and questionnaires.

Noddings, a former math teacher, is not alone in thinking that too much emphasis can be placed on trying to quantify everything. Albert Einstein is alleged to have had a sign hanging in his office at Princeton that said, “Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts” (Cohen et al., 2009). Therefore, for these reasons, as well as the difficulties discussed above in developing psychometric instruments to measure EI, some researchers have begun to look at alternative ways of assessing students.

Riatti (2009) says, “None of this need mean EI is a non-viable concept, scientifically or otherwise, but an evaluative (and contextualized) stance may be unavoidable here, both in judging and in emotional living and learning, so we may as well aim to be reflective and explicit about it” (p. 160). She proposes acknowledging the moral and social significance of emotion, as well as the descriptive and normative

assumptions made about it, calling this an ideology of emotion. Additionally, she recognizes the existence of sub-groups of ideologies related to particular emotions, such as anger, which are shaped by one's culture and outlook on the world. Her approach provides an opportunity for our understanding of emotions to be informed by culture-specific, as well as idiosyncratic and individual ideologies, that influence the triggers, display rules, and outputs related to one's own and other's emotions.

Similarly, Watson and Emery (2010) offer an alternative "assessment methodology that values social and emotional growth in young people without recourse to measurement" (p. 768). Their methodology is based on Michele Foucault's notion of giving visibility to "concepts and constructs that have had a complex history and about which there is little agreement," identified as a "minoritarian" approach (p. 769). They embrace a "sociocultural perspective that places emphasis on interactive systems, social settings, and qualitative analysis," over "the historical and dominant economic perspective grounded in the attributes of the individual and quantitative measurement" for examining social-emotional competencies, well-being, skills, and dispositions (p. 772). Watson and Emery propose a collaborative, consensus building model that engages key stakeholders, including students, in the observational assessment of authentic performance built on "the ability to form value judgments and determine the significance of an event . . . The assessment of performance relies upon the ability to co-construct a shared understanding of the focus of the observation and the properties inherent within this" (p. 779). They maintain that this approach will have several benefits, including a better understanding of the socially embedded and situated nature of SEL, as well as contribute to "the development of more authentic, pedagogically robust, meaningful

methods to value and/or assess development” of social-emotional skills and dispositions over time (p. 781).

As Coryn and colleagues (2009) have pointed out, school personnel cannot wait for researchers to settle all of their differences regarding definitions and methods of measuring social-emotional competencies. However, the evidence provided here suggests that educators need to be cautious in linking student SEL assessments to psychometric instruments without very careful consideration and articulation of underlying moral ideologies and cultural influences. Consideration of the underlying moral ideologies and cultural influences impacting SEL goes beyond issues of individual assessment and skill measurement. These factors also point to the need for greater interdisciplinary collaboration among scholars and researchers, as well dialogue with practitioners, parents, and community members regarding the placement of SEL in the curriculum. These themes will be discussed briefly in the remainder of this chapter, as well as in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

### **Implementation Challenges Require Greater Collaboration**

#### **Recognizing the Need for Greater Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

For more than two decades, there have been calls for greater interdisciplinary collaboration to strengthen children’s mental health and the prevention of problem behaviors. The reasons for the current attention given to the need for greater collaboration across social systems, academic disciplines, and curriculum topics are not much different those stated in Chapter One based on Daniel Prescott’s (1938) report for the American Council on Education. His recommendations were the result of the work done by the Council’s interdisciplinary Committee on the Relation of Emotion to the

Educative Process which Prescott chaired.

Emory Cowen (1991) stressed that “novel cross-disciplinary alliances are needed to catalyze and strengthen the ecological validity of the pursuit of wellness.” He spoke of *clusters* of scholars including “child development specialists, educators, experts in policy and planning for children, systems analysts, as well as psychologists . . . [with] major inputs beyond psychology, from political scientists, economists, and urban planners, and from the criminal justice, legal, and welfare systems” working together to create an alternative to past emphases on the diagnosis and repair of established disorders (p. 408). Several government studies done by the National Institute of Mental Health and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have also recommended increased interdisciplinary collaboration to develop additional prevention strategies, ensure cultural sensitivity, and improve the research-practice gap (Elias et al., 2003).

Teacher educators have also recognized this need. Sutton and Wheatley (2003) drew upon research in educational psychology, social and personality psychology, educational sociology, and research on teachers and teaching in their literature review regarding the emotional aspects of teaching and teachers’ lives. They concluded that these separate fields need to come together to reconceptualize classroom management and discipline practices in order to take into account the cultural experiences of both teachers and students. Similarly, J. Fleming and Bay (2004) also see opportunities “to share resources, coordinate curricular space, and engage in collaborative research” related to SEL and culturally relevant teaching, child and adolescent development, and special education, as well as classroom management. They conclude, “Recognizing this common ground and joining forces with faculty across complementary disciplines can

help further inform teacher education practices and serve to produce the best-qualified, most effective teaching corps” (p. 105).

### **Converging SEL and Related Education Efforts**

Issues regarding the placement of SEL in the curriculum represent another area where the need for greater interdisciplinary collaboration has surfaced. While clearly delineated silos in the academy, the distinctions between SEL, character education, moral education, and to some extent, citizenship education are less clear to those outside of academia, “because differences in terminology and language mask deep similarities” (Novick et al., 2002, p. 117). “Each has its own organizations and advocacy networks. And yet from an educator’s perspective, they are inextricably linked. Each enhances the impact of the other and enriches the learning experience for children” (Berman & McCarthy, 2006, p. 48). They argue that “these movements have their most powerful impact when they are brought together in an integrated approach in the classroom and a comprehensive approach in a school or school district.”

Other scholars have also begun to recognize the overlap between SEL, character education, moral education, and citizenship education. “SEL leaders need to understand related efforts. In some respects for example, SEL shares the goals and means of character education, although SEL draws more on psychological research, and character education derives to a larger extent from religious and humanistic traditions. Greater mutual understanding and linkages between the two efforts may benefit them both” (Walberg, Zins, & Weissberg, 2004, p. 215). This view is shared by others, particularly SEL leaders like Jonathan Cohen and Maurice Elias, who contend that these efforts are inseparable and have addressed the potential for a convergence between SEL, character

education, moral education, and citizenship education (Cohen, J., 2006; Elias, 2009; 2010; Elias et al., 2008; Novick et al., 2002). Additionally, newer scholars have also begun to take an interest in the overlap between these instructional efforts (Crider, 2012; Lewis, 2012).

These authors make valuable arguments about the differences between teaching students problem-solving skills, competencies, and dispositions to do “the right thing” versus just knowing the right thing to do. Elias (2009) views social-emotional and character development as inextricably linked to academic learning, claiming “schools cannot function if students lack character.” He argues that “character does not denote inborn and immutable personality attributes. Character is something that students ‘catch’ from the way adults in the environment set it up for them . . . education must provide systemic attention to building the social-emotional skills that underlie sound character and the ability to engage in the task of learning” (p. 833). This requires “strong parent education and parent involvement components . . . that allow parents to learn about, and also develop, the same social-emotional skills that their students [are] learning in school” (p. 836).

Elias (2009) provides four main reasons why educators need to support the social-emotional and character development (SECD) of their students: (1) SECD is a culmination of a strong convergence of streams of evidence about factors influencing learning; (2) Academic learning and performance is linked to social-emotional skill and character development; (3) SECD is the basis for meeting the preventive and character-building mandates of schools; and (4) Our system of democracy is linked to the emotional intelligence of voters. These arguments and the evidence provided below

support my premise that the moral element of SEL should not be treated as if it were not already there.

Attention to the social-emotional and character development of students will help them to “become productive citizens, behave ethically and responsibly, and appreciate the benefits of living in a multicultural society . . . [as] these are the kinds of skills basic to a truly participatory democracy, choices for a healthy lifestyle, and acquiring academic knowledge” (Elias, 2009, p. 842). While SEL can help to develop skills for responsible decision-making, overt character education recognizes the values and moral components involved in making ethical judgments about the appropriateness of particular ideas and actions, thus taking this instruction out of the realm of the “hidden curriculum.”

The Caring School Community program, originally known as the Child Development project “is predicated on a vision of education that holds that the intellectual, social, and ethical realms are interdependent, that simultaneous development in all should be central goals of schooling, and that the social context and emphases of classroom and school can be fashioned in ways that will enhance development in all three realms” (Solomon et al., 2000, p. 34). Similarly, the Lions-Quest positive youth development model, an evidence-based SEL program, incorporates four program strategies: “essential life skills, character development, service learning, and the positive prevention of health-compromising behaviors” (Keister, 2006, p. 177). In fact, *What Works in Character Education: A Research-Driven Guide for Educators* (Berkowitz & Beir, 2006) states:

In reviewing this literature, we have found that, regardless of what one labels the enterprise (character education, social-emotional learning, school-based prevention, citizenship education, etc.), the methods employed, the under-girding

theoretical justifications, and the outcomes are remarkably similar. After all, they are all school-based endeavors designed to help foster the positive, pro-social, moral, and/or civic development of youth. (p. 2)

Of the 33 character education programs identified to be most effective in *What Works in Character Education*, 27 included some form of SEL curriculum, as compared to only 18 with explicit character education elements and 14 featuring academic curriculum integration. Also relevant to this project, is that 26 of the 33 programs also included family and/or community participation. This participation fell into one of “three strategies: Active Family or Community Involvement, Parent Training, and Informing Family and/or Community” (Berkowitz & Beir, 2006, p. 8).

Elias and colleagues (2008) agree that understanding what is “right” is determined by the source of moral authority and/or the focus of the moral project, which are shaped by one’s worldview. They further recognize that this is where people are going to disagree, but provide no guidance for resolving the disagreements. Instead, they maintain that “from the perspective of America’s public, secular education system in a nation committed to democratic principles, there are sets of values and moral principles that can be seen as consensual” which they claim Dewey had outlined in *Democracy and Education* (p. 249). In their view, moral and character education serves to inform behavior, while enacting their principles requires social-emotional skills. They argue “that an emphasis on moral values is necessary but not sufficient to influence behavior and yield enactments that would allow one to be seen as having ‘good character . . . [and] SEL, as a set of basic interpersonal competencies, can be used for good or ill; but to be used for good, they must be mastered well. Responsibility, Respect, Honesty, and other desirable aspects of character all require sound SEL competencies” (p. 261). They call these “participatory competencies” that are dependent on the setting in which they will be used. While they maintain that the SEL skills are neutral, “these competencies are



not neutral, however; they are aligned with fundamental, common values and attributes of good character and sound moral development” (p. 263). They then conclude:

Thus, converging elements of SEL and moral and character education are to (1) provide a deep and visceral understanding of moral character by organizing schools as moral, caring communities of character with clear values, and (2) ensure that children are given opportunities and competencies to enact their moral character in deep and meaningful ways by becoming active participants in the moral community of the school. Thus imprinted, children will want to seek out such communities as places to live and work and worship, as well as create in their homes communities in which to raise children. This is the promise of SEL and its connection to moral education. (p. 263)

However, I will argue in the next chapter that the secular consensus Dewey (1916/2007) anticipated would take shape to replace sectarian values and moral principles has not occurred in American society. Instead, I will demonstrate that American schools have eliminated overt moral education in order to avoid potential conflicts arising from the differing worldviews held by parents, educators, and other key stakeholders. Unless this trend is reversed and religious pluralism – both as a brute reality and as an ideal – is acknowledged and expressed within the curriculum, SEL will not be able to fulfill the promise Elias and colleagues (2008) envision. I maintain that embracing religious pluralism is consistent with the emphasis SEL advocates place on freedom of expression, opportunities for recognizing similarities and differences, and participation in shared decision-making (CASEL, 2003, 2005, 2012). However, reversing the current trend regarding overt moral education will require high levels of parent and community involvement to establish a new paradigm.

### **Involving Families and the Community**

There are plenty of examples throughout the SEL literature stressing the importance of school-family-community partnerships for optimal program outcomes (for example Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Albright, Weissberg, & Dusenbury, 2011; Cherniss et al., 2006; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Devaney et al., 2006; Elias & Butler,

2005a; 2005b; Elias & Leverett, 2011; Elias et al., 2007; Elias, Zins et al, 1997; Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership, 2010; Lueck & Kelly, 2010; Mart et al., 2011; Merrel & Gueldner. 2010; Patrikakou et al., 2005). The following quote by Zins and Elias (2007) is representative in that it recognizes the value of collaboration between home, school, and the community, but is somewhat unique in recognizing the normative nature of the content:

Parents too can be true partners in deciding how SEL programming is delivered to their children, rather than being uninvolved or passive recipients . . . Programs have associated values that must be supported by and compatible with relevant school policies, practices, and goals if they are to succeed. Buy-in from constituencies at different organizational levels, including parents and the community, must be ascertained and their commitment established. (p. 247)

SEL advocates also point to the importance of providing parenting workshops and related training opportunities for parents to improve their own social-emotional skills, in addition to involvement in program planning and the development of SEL assessment and accountability measures. Advocates also suggest the use of newsletters and other channels to keep lines of communication open between school personnel, parents, and community members (Elias & Butler, 2005a; 2005b). Another tactic Elias and colleagues encourage is offering shared activities focused on social-emotional issues which serve "to create important dialogues between parents and educators, educators and students and children and parents" (Elias et al., 2007, p. 551). I will discuss the use of these kinds of shared activities later in this project, along with the collaborative, consensus building model proposed by Watson and Emery (2010) as a means for gaining support for embracing religious pluralism in relation to SEL at the school and/or district level.

Other strategies suggested to increase community involvement center around the benefits of using service learning projects to augment classroom activities (Fredericks, 2003; Simons & Cleary, 2006) and partnering with positive youth development organizations, like 4-H programs sponsored by the local Cooperative Extension offices affiliated with land-grant universities across the country, to strengthen reinforcement of the SEL concepts taught in school (Foster et al., 2008). These relationships not only have the potential to make available supplementary resources to the school, they provide experiences for students to practice their social-emotional skills in additional settings.

While the language of partnership is strong in the SEL literature and in several state and federally funded initiatives, parent involvement, particularly, can be an elusive goal (Moles, 2005; Redding & Sheley, 2005). “There are difficulties in creating true partnerships with a broad representation of parents . . . Even when parents do step forward, who they represent in the community may not be clear” (Elias et al., 2003, p. 314). “True collaboration requires a level of trust and commitment that can often be difficult for educators and families to attain. Moreover, a hallmark of effective partnerships is the creation of a trusting relationship and the ability to recognize and respect the diverse styles, skills, and strengths among participants” (Albright & Weissberg, 2010, p. 258). While these are guiding tenets of SEL, there are many challenges schools and families face in partnering to support children’s SEL.

One the most frequently identified barriers is the lack of teacher preparation regarding how to effectively engage families in SEL (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Chavkin, 2005a; 2005b; Ji et al., 2008; Lueck & Kelly, 2010). In their assessment of schools involved in the first cohort to receive implementation support from the Illinois

State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership (ICMHP), Ji and colleagues (2008) reported that “Nurturing partnerships with families and communities” had the lowest score of the ten steps involved in implementing CASEL’s schoolwide SEL model. The mean score was only 1.46 with a standard deviation of .68, indicating “little or no development or implementation” to “limited development or partial implementation” (p. 40). CPRD (2009) also found that Illinois schools in this first cohort were having difficulty finding meaningful ways to involve parents in planning and implementing SEL activities.

While several family involvement frameworks and models have been developed to help prepare educators for this task and an increasing number of states have added statements to their credentialing requirements about working with families, higher education has been slow to respond to these actions. Researchers found that most teacher preparation programs indicate “that the topic of family involvement was integrated into existing courses . . . [however] the most popular topic covered was the parent-teacher conference” (Chavkin, 2005a, p. 166). Other researchers report that little training is provided in other areas of family involvement, such as proactive outreach, involvement strategies, and communication opportunities (Albright & Weissberg, 2010). Chavkin finds that the competition for time slots in the degree plan is one of the main reasons for the limited attention given to parent involvement. She adds, “This dilemma is not unique to family involvement content; it is also true for multicultural issues, special education, character education, and a number of other important content areas” (p. 174). This is especially disappointing, in that these are all content areas that are useful in supporting SEL, as has been indicated previously.

Another area of challenge centers on program monitoring and evaluation. Not only is input from parents often lacking regarding student SEL outcomes and school-climate assessments (Zins & Elias, 2007), little empirical research has been done to examine the impact of implementing the same school-based SEL program with and without a family component (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; CASEL, 2012). Albright and Weissberg (2010) conclude that future research needs to examine the “value-added” benefit family involvement gives to SEL programs in order to assist schools in prioritizing programming efforts and utilization of resources. They maintain that, “the hiring of staff with a primary role related to [school-family-partnerships] and/or SEL demonstrates the importance of such a program within the school, and further validates initiatives” (p. 260). Without evidence of effectiveness, school administrators are often reluctant to spend funds for staff to carry out these responsibilities.

In response to these challenges and recognition that “meeting the mental health needs of school-aged children is a shared responsibility,” the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership (ICMHP) published *Guidelines for School-Community Partnerships* (2010, p. 3). ICMHP identified that many communities lack “a sustainable structure wherein all members share in the research, design, implementation, and evaluation of efforts undertaken collectively to assure the academic success and mental health of school age children and youth.” This is in part due to the limited recognition of the power relationships regarding who has a voice in determining what is taught in the school. Parent Advocates were hired through the SEL Project jointly sponsored by ICMHP and the Illinois State Board of Education to address these concerns. The advocates worked directly with parents and school teams to establish leadership roles for

families in program planning and operations. It was anticipated that they would serve as a model for other mental health programs (Lueck & Kelly, 2010). However, according to ICMHP, these positions were eliminated after a couple years due to a lack of funding.

### **Demonstrating Cultural Sensitivity**

Another critical challenge is the diverse composition of families represented in America's classrooms. "Variations in parent's cultural repertoires of behavior likely contribute to differences in patterns and types of involvement. The practices of particular cultural groups may complement teacher expectations and school demands more so than others, thereby prompting teachers to feel more comfortable with, and subsequently more likely to involve parents of a similar social class and ethnic group" (Albright & Weissberg, 2010, p. 260). They note that while parents' own skill sets and past experiences may influence their involvement, "schools and educators may need to use more personalized outreach to learn about, communicate with, and ultimately engage families."

According to Albright and Weissberg (2010), this approach necessitates that educators gain "a more thorough understanding of the families within their school-community; this reflects ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic identities and history, as well as characteristics of family composition, employment, and housing" (p. 260). In doing so, they argue, educators will be better able to tap into the knowledge and other resources the families have to contribute to their children's education. Albright and Weissberg are part of a growing number of SEL advocates who recognize the importance of cultural sensitivity in relating to students and their families.

Several authors have written about the importance of cultural sensitivity to SEL in

the classroom and with regard to program implementation (Brand et al., 2003; Castro-Olivo, Preciado, Sanford, & Perry, 2011; Ceisel, 2011; Dilworth et al., 2002; Dray & Selman, 2011; Elias & Butler, 2005a; 2005b; Elias & Hayes, 2008; Elksnin, L. & Elksnin N., 2003; Katz, Selman, & Mason, 2008; Matthews, D. J., 1998; Merrell et al., 2008; Reicher, 2010), as well as in relation to interactions with culturally diverse families (Hill, 2010; ICMHP, 2010; Laosa, 2005; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010; Patrikakou et al., 2005; Sung, 2010; Taylor, R., 2005). “In 1900, schools were more economically, racially, and ethnically homogeneous; today’s schools face unprecedented challenges to educate an increasingly multicultural and multilingual student body and to address the widening social and economic disparities in U.S. society” (Greenberg et al, 2003, p. 467).

In order to do this, Cherniss (2002) maintains that educators must understand the role of EI in relation to cultural competence:

One aspect of cultural competence is knowledge of specific aspects of other cultures—a cognitive ability. However, motivation and facility to acquire such knowledge, and to use it effectively, depends on more basic social and emotional competencies, such as empathy and interpersonal sensitivity, an awareness of how one reacts to those who are different, and an ability to manage effectively emotions such as anxiety and frustration that may be aroused when one engages in the difficult conversations that lead to greater understanding and mutual respect. In other words, EI is not the same as cultural competence, and it does not insure that one will be culturally competent, but it makes it possible for people to develop cultural competence. EI is the foundation for cultural competence, as well as many other competencies that are important for a good life—and a good community. (p. 5)

Zins and Elias (2007) report that SEL programs must be “tailored culturally to ethnic and racial minority children to maximize the programs’ effectiveness. In other words, the better the cultural fit is, the more likely that buy-in and perceptions of the program’s relevance will occur” (p. 249). Many federally funded programs that support

SEL require applicants to indicate how they will ensure that services are provided in a manner that is culturally relevant (Elias et al., 2003).

Elias, Zins, and colleagues (1997) state that, “Students come from diverse backgrounds and expect to be treated fairly and equitably. They expect their teachers, other staff, and peers to be sensitive to their individuality and to understand and respect them. Teachers and staff [must] encourage and support cross-cultural sharing and competence, and create environments that promote mutual respect and understanding among and between adults and students” (p. 77). According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), “Socially and emotionally competent teachers are culturally sensitive, understand that others may have different perspectives than they do, and take this into account in relationships with students, parents, and colleagues” (p. 495).

Sutton and Wheatley (2003) suspect that “emotions may influence teachers and students differently because teachers have a different role in classrooms, are older than students, and are often from different cultural backgrounds” (p. 342). There is a growing body of literature to support this line of thinking. It addresses teachers’ social and emotional competence and the influence their own culture has on working with students from diverse family backgrounds (Brown, J. et al., 2010; Buchanan et al., 2009; Chavkin, 2005a; 2005b; Conde-Frazier, 2007; Hargreaves, 2000; Hawkey, 2006; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Conde-Frazier (2007) makes an interesting observation, “Attempts to solve issues related to the diversity of cultures in the classroom have tended to focus on curriculum by directing attention on changing the student and not the teacher. In order to understand the cultural perspectives of the students in our classroom we must first look critically at our own worldview as teachers” (p. 111).



Hill (2010) suggests that rather than expecting school personnel to memorize aspects of different cultures, it might be “more productive to consider one’s own cultural biases, assumptions and worldviews so that we can be mindful of them as we engage with any parent, student, or family member” (p. 120). The need for ongoing self-reflection is a common theme in this literature, as is the need for better preparation at the pre-service level to develop cultural sensitivity, together with continuing professional development for in-service educators.

### **Taking SEL to the Next Level**

The SEL pioneers have made significant progress in raising awareness about the importance of intentionally addressing the social and emotional development of children and adolescents, as has been indicated in this chapter and the prior one. They have come a long way in a relatively short time to establish a sustainable two-pronged framework that emphasizes both the need to create a school-wide caring climate for learning, along with a specific set of SEL instructional strategies. Parent and community involvement are also recognized as essential components of effective program implementation and students outcomes.

Yet, in spite of the attention given to it in the literature, Diane Hoffman (2009) claims that “SEL has failed to engage in a deep way with questions of cultural diversity, with the politics of power, and with the real risks to educational opportunity of assuming yet another lens that defines educational problems in terms of individual deficits and remediation” (p. 549). The limited research that has been done regarding the influence of culture on SEL and family-school interactions, supports the need for greater intercultural consideration (Hill, 2010, ICMHP, 2010; Laosa, 2005; Sung, 2010; Taylor, R., 2005).

“When families and schools interact, cultural beliefs and practices are engaged both unconsciously and deliberately. When they are consistent and compatible, communication is efficient and students benefit (i.e., synergy). However, incongruence results in misunderstandings, chaos, and confusion” (Hill, 2010, p. 113).

Cultural discontinuities are viewed as major negative factors influencing the social and emotional well-being of both minority parents and children, as well as contributing to the achievement gap between student populations (Delpit, 2006; Laosa, 2005; Lareau, 2000; 2003; Ogbu, 2004; Sung, 2010; Taylor, R., 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). This project will build upon Hoffman’s (2009) argument that the SEL movement will not produce its intended outcomes without a deeper engagement with questions of cultural diversity and the politics of power related to family-school interactions.

I will argue that the reality of religious pluralism cannot be ignored if schools are to seriously recognize and value the diversity of worldviews and beliefs present not only in the classroom, but in American society and around the world. Educators must also recognize the role these different perspectives play in SEL and in determining right behavior. It is my position that the failure to do so will result in teachers imposing an unexamined set of values and external controls on their students.

While it was demonstrated in Chapter One that more and more SEL proponents recognize that the knowledge and skill-based aspects of SEL cannot be separated from the moral and ethical attitudes that guide their application, there is only passing mention in the literature acknowledging the challenge religious diversity poses to SEL instruction (Cohen, J., 2006; Elias et al, 2008; Kristjánsson, 2004). Just a few authors even mention religion or spirituality as a cultural component when discussing family-school

interactions (Hill, 2010), the cultural competency of teachers (Chavkin, 2005a; 2005b; Conde-Frazier, 2007;), or SEL program adaptations for diverse student populations (Elias & Butler, 2005a; 2005b; Elias, Zins et al., 1997; Katz et al., 2008; Matthews, D. J., 1998; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010; Reicher, 2010).

Although the literature on cultural and ethnic diversity does not specifically address SEL, it addresses the extent to which Americans tend to shy away from authentic discussions about cultural differences, especially religious diversity. Several authors have documented that the failure to engage religious differences can result in fear, mistrust, repression, and discrimination (including Banks, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2003; Eck, 2001; Moore, D., 2007; Pollock, 2004; Salili & Hoosain, 2006; Samovar et al., 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 2003; Taylor, L. S. & Whittaker, 2003). These authors agree that the failure to do so undermines open dialogue and shared decision-making

In the following chapters, I intend to demonstrate that what is taught in school as right behavior depends on whose beliefs, values, and expectations are taken into consideration. I will argue this is currently being done without acknowledging that there is no one universal expression of right behavior and that in reality, the definition of right behavior is constantly being contested. It is my contention, along with several other scholars (including Freire, 1970/2000, Gutmann, 1987/1999; Mouffe, 2005), that this should involve the explicit and intentional, ongoing deliberation and negotiation between all of the stakeholders and not just reflect the will of those with the power to impose their views. I will further argue that these negotiations must most often take place at the local level around specific classroom, school-wide, and/or district concerns.

I intend to demonstrate that this understanding is needed for SEL to meet its

promise of preparing students to become active, ethical members of their communities and citizens of a liberal democracy. I contend that while parent and community involvement, as well as cultural sensitivity, are identified as essential components of SEL, little engagement has occurred in these areas due to the fear of controversy that has long been a factor in American schooling.

My arguments are rooted in the belief that the ideal and brute fact of religious pluralism in American society, along with the role religion increasingly plays in world affairs, requires educators to acknowledge the role religion has had throughout history and continues to have in the lives of many people today. I will argue that teaching about religion and other moral philosophies must be a component of SEL so that students can acquire the language and knowledge needed to discuss moral issues in order to form their individual identities, as well prepare for their role as citizens in a liberal democracy. I will demonstrate that this type of education will necessitate significant changes in teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development, as well as changes throughout the curriculum to reduce an overdependence on the use of scientific methods of understanding. I will argue that other forms of meaning-making should be granted creditability so that all that we are unable to quantify is no longer viewed as lacking merit in our formal education systems. This is particularly relevant to student assessments at all levels and to the understanding of knowledge in higher education. It is my belief that with these changes, the promises of the SEL pioneers to bridge the chasm between emotion and reason, to move away from an emphasis on pathology to positive youth development, and to reconnect the head and the heart, might actually have the potential to become a reality.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF SEL

*To educate someone in mind and not in morals  
is to educate a menace to society.*

President Theodore Roosevelt

I will argue in this chapter why the demands of pluralism, as well as an appreciation of pluralism, particularly moral and religious pluralism, must be taken into consideration if SEL is to achieve the outcomes promised. One of the main reasons expressed for including SEL in the curriculum of American schools is to form ethical citizens to sustain a democratic society. This claim puts SEL undeniably in the realm of moral education, a position which is supported by several scholars discussed in the prior chapter who envision the convergence of SEL, character education, moral education, and citizenship education (including Berkowitz & Beir, 2006; Cohen, J., 2001; 2006; Elias, 2009; 2010; Elias et al., 2008; Keister, 2006; Novick et al., 2002; Solomon et al., 2000). It is also evidenced by the action of the Kansas State Board of Education at its April 2012 meeting to adopt the first Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards in the country (Kansas State Department of Education, 2012). To provide students with social and emotional skills and competencies without giving them the opportunity to apply them to moral and ethical issues is like teaching students to read without actually giving them texts to read. Moral content is an essential component of SEL as long as one of its primary goals is to form ethical citizens.

I contend that if SEL is to avoid being hegemonic, as has been the case with prior moral education initiatives in American schools, different conceptions of the good and how it is achieved must be recognized as legitimate, as well as open to examination. The brute fact of religious pluralism in the United States demands acknowledgement that individuals rely upon different sources of authority for meaning making and guidance on moral issues. I will argue that this understanding of moral pluralism provides a philosophical framework that supports an environment for discovery of self and others that contributes to human flourishing and sustains a liberal democracy. It is further my contention that this is also the kind of nondiscriminatory and nonrepressive environment required for the aims of SEL to be realized. While moral pluralism provides a philosophical foundation and environment for SEL, it is the ideal of religious pluralism that provides the disposition, along with knowledge of the major world religions and philosophical belief systems, that provide the substance for these aims to be realized within the SEL curriculum.

Incorporating religious pluralism in SEL will not only address criticisms lodged against SEL, but will also respond to several short-comings identified in other moral education efforts that have occurred during the past century. In this chapter, I will argue that the kind of “energetic” religious pluralism described in Chapter One is both an essential element of SEL in particular and moral education in general. I will address the following criticisms and demonstrate the essential role religious pluralism plays in dismissing them:

(1) While SEL lacks a philosophical foundation (Kristjánsson, 2004; Sherblom, 2008), religious pluralism supports a variety of philosophical perspectives which can

provide the foundation that SEL is lacking.

(2) Moral education has been inevitably hegemonic and results in little more than indoctrination (Chazan, 1985; Kohn, 1997). However, SEL informed by religious pluralism will help to guard against this type of hegemony by ensuring that the well-being of each particular religious tradition, ethical perspective, and cultural community is recognized as playing an essential part in contributing to the health of the whole society.

(3) Too much emphasis in current moral education has been placed on consensus building and avoiding conflict (Jensen & Knight, 1981; Keith, 2010; McClellan, 1999; Valk, 2007). Religious pluralism constructively recognizes the deep moral differences between various religious and ethical worldviews, supporting SEL's aims to recognize both similarities and differences among individuals and groups while fostering peaceful coexistence.

(4) Scientific empiricism has been considered the only valid approach to moral reasoning in academia, ignoring the wisdom contained in religious texts and traditions that has helped to guide human interaction throughout history and remains a strong force in the lives of many people today (Eagleton, 2009; Monchinski, 2011; Noddings, 1993; Setran, 2005). SEL informed by religious pluralism would acknowledge the value of both scientific and religious perspectives and take into account the importance of meaning making and use of narrative methods of inquiry to determine right behavior.

In making these arguments, I will also examine the schizophrenic way religion is treated in America – by associating it with violence in the public sphere, while taking a cordial relations approach if and when it is discussed in educational and interfaith settings – avoiding any real engagement in conflicting viewpoints in both treatments. I will look

at various types of multiculturalism which have also prevented or at least not contributed to a better understanding of the role religion has in society. While these situations make the type of SEL instruction I am advocating more difficult, they also demonstrate why a SEL-religious studies model is so essential if we are to teach students how to live with our deepest differences without resorting to violence to settle conflicts.

As has been discussed in the prior chapter, SEL instruction has been criticized for lacking cultural sensitivity and a deep engagement with questions of diversity and the politics of power. I maintain that recognizing the fact of moral and religious pluralism, incorporating the ideal of religious pluralism in SEL instruction, and teaching about and through religion are essential to addressing these concerns. Incorporating these dimensions of religious pluralism in the curriculum is not simply an add-on but is actually essential for realizing SEL's mission to develop the competency necessary for one's ethical, social, and emotional well-being.

### **Religious Pluralism Supports a Philosophical Foundation for SEL**

As indicated in the prior two chapters, policymakers, researchers, and educators often fail to recognize that SEL cannot be separated from the moral assumptions embedded by the state in the learning standards, or from the moral assumptions made by teachers, students, and their families based on their own belief systems. Yet, SEL is as much about moral education as it is about developing cognitive and mental health skills and competencies. According to Huitt (2004), "Any framework for impacting moral and character development is arbitrary unless it is based on some philosophical foundation" (p. 6). However, Kristján Kristjánsson (2004), who places SEL and character education advocates in the same grouping, suggests "that many of their writings are lacking in



philosophical bite and rigour [*sic*]” because they have been written by non-philosophers (p. 214). He points out that the psychologists and educators who have been in the forefront of the movement have been science journalists, like Daniel Goleman (1995/2005, 1998/2000, 2006), or educational activists, like William Bennett (1993), Thomas Lickona (1991), and William Kilpatrick (1992) who wrote for parents, teachers, and the general public, rather than for academics.

Referring to the proponents of SEL, Kristjánsson (2004) argues that “Although their works tend to be interspersed with the odd nods to Aristotle, especially . . . a recognition of the moral salience of emotions, their ideas lack an explicit philosophical basis” (p. 214). He concludes that the SEL theorists have either been ill-equipped or simply did not care to establish philosophical roots for their ideas. Kristjánsson (2002; 2004; 2007) has taken it upon himself to “untangle” these roots by drawing upon the domains of philosophy, education, and psychology to offer a contemporary Aristotelian foundation for moral development strategies such as character education and SEL, which deserves our consideration. Kristjánsson’s approach is very consistent with Alasdair MacIntyre’s (2008) argument that the Aristotelian tradition regarding the teaching of virtues “can be restated in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments” (p. 259).

### **Untangling the Roots of SEL**

As previously indicated, one of the main purposes stated for SEL is to form moral, ethical citizens to sustain a democratic society. However, there is an understanding in Western philosophy that stretches back to the ancient Greeks that there must be a moral foundation for democratic values. This is based on the principle that

politics supervenes on morality. For Aristotle (1999), morality is understood as the desire for a civilized human existence. Virtues, or excellences, are those characteristics which enable one to play one's part in human society well. Living in a virtuous manner is believed to be one's highest calling, resulting in a good life. He viewed politics, or governance, as the highest good attainable by action, but recognized that it required a strong moral foundation. Aristotle said, "to be a competent student of what is right and just, and of politics generally, one must first have received a proper upbringing in moral conduct" (p. 7 [1095b5]). This argument also appears to apply to SEL.

Kristjánsson (2004) claims that emphasizing a particular set of political values without first establishing a core moral philosophy has the danger of putting "the cart before the horse" (p. 212). He states, "democratic values constitute an important addition to a foundation of 'moral basics'; but if the latter has not been firmly secured, the former will be doomed to float in thin air" (p. 213). For example, in order for values like autonomy, diversity, nondiscrimination, and nonrepression to have meaning, one must first hold human flourishing as the highest good, as Aristotle did.

Basing much of his critique on what Goleman (1995/2005) wrote in *Emotional Intelligence*, as well as the work of several others identified with EI and SEL, including Bar-on, J. Cohen, Elias, Mayer, G. Matthews, Roberts, Salovey and Zeidner, Kristjánsson (2007) concludes that it has been a misstep to choose EI as the theoretical foundation for SEL, rather than the teachings of Aristotle. For Aristotle (1999), the aim of education is to foster *eudaimonia*, a type of happiness, or flourishing, which represents the ultimate good for human beings. According to Kristjánsson (2007), Aristotle imagined a deeply moral personhood, where in order to reach one's full potential, the human self is required

to “think its feelings and feel its thoughts.” This self is richly embedded within a social context that recognizes that “we must balance and synthesize the demands of head and heart if ours is to be a well-rounded life, a life truly worth living” (p. 3). An intellectual and emotional understanding of self and others is a critical element of the personhood Aristotle imagined, as is also the case with SEL.

As indicated in Chapter One, one reason advocates of SEL use examples from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* is to demonstrate the importance of this unity and to emphasize their efforts to re-establish the connection between the head with the heart that had been severed by Descartes and other Enlightenment thinkers (Bar-on et al., 2007; Cohen, J., 1999; 2001; 2006; Goleman, 1995/2005; Pasi, 2001; Zeidner et al., 2009). However, Kristjánsson (2007) argues that after making a nod to Aristotle, they resume the reason-passion dichotomy by allowing the head to rule the heart. He says if they were to continue to follow Aristotle, they would recognize that one does not need “to be psychologically aware of one’s emotions in order to control their onslaught, but to be morally aware of them and to manage them from within, such that they help us to construct and maintain our self-respect” (p. 92). For Aristotle, emotions were best informed by reason, not subject to its control. According to Kristjánsson:

Self-respect is, in the Aristotelian view, an inner reason-driven mechanism which ideally infuses the emotions with vigour [*sic*], without the need for external control by a higher-level enforcement agency within the self (namely, self-control by emotion-purified reason). Aristotelian moral agents are at one with themselves; their selves are not bifurcated. (p. 92)

By focusing more on self-respect, as Aristotle did, rather than merely self-control, as is the EI emphasis, one’s emotional repertoire is broadened to effectively include the full range of emotions that are commonly identified as positive or pleasant, as well as

those that are viewed as negative or painful. Rather than believing that self-control requires one to suppress negative feelings such as anger (Goleman, 1995/2005), there are virtues, like righteous indignation, which are legitimate expressions when anger is an appropriate response to a particular situation (Aristotle, 1999). According to Aristotle, knowing what emotion to express and to what extent is based on *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, which is what guides *praxis*, or moral practice. Aristotle maintains that one cannot have *phronesis* without aiming at the ultimate good. Goleman's (1995/2005) notion of EI, on the other hand, advances a non-moral vision of well-being, or happiness, based on efficiency and worldly success, which seems to be guided by cleverness rather than *phronesis*. Aristotle distinguishes cleverness from *phronesis*, saying:

There exists a capacity called 'cleverness,' which is the power to perform those steps which are conducive to a goal we have set for ourselves and to attain that goal. If the goal is noble, cleverness deserves praise; if the goal is base, cleverness is knavery. That is why men of practical wisdom are often described as 'clever' or 'knavish.' But in fact this capacity (alone) is not practical wisdom, although practical wisdom does not exist without it. Without virtue or excellence, this eye of the soul, (intelligence,) does not acquire the characteristic (of practical wisdom). (pp. 169-170 [1144a25])

Kristjánsson (2007) identifies several additional ways in which Aristotelian emotional virtue serves as a better theoretical foundation for SEL, than does EI. He argues that EI's emphasis on character in general terms seems to be redundant, overlapping established research in the areas of personality and differential psychology. Aristotle on the other hand addresses specific character states that are characterized by distinct beliefs and the satisfaction or frustration of identifiable desires. According to Kristjánsson, "Aristotle's emotional virtues (and vices) have been specified well enough to serve as objects of possible moral assessment and educational intervention. They are

less likely to slip like sand through our fingers than is the less tangible EI” (2007, p. 87). Rather than seeking psychological and subjective criterion of actualization, and dealing with the short-comings of the EQi, MSCEIT, and other EI measurement instruments discussed in Chapter Two, Kristjánsson favors Aristotle’s approach. He states, “The criterion is a moral and objective one: whether or not the emotion is rationally formed and whether or not it hits the golden mean between the moral extremes of excess and deficiency” (p. 90). While defense of the objectivity of this criterion is outside the scope of this project, it does indicate that there may be more reliable means for identifying educational interventions and assessing SEL than what the current EI instruments provide.

Another short-coming identified by Kristjánsson (2007) is EI’s focus on conflict resolution through compromise, and emotional tranquility or harmony as the desired end-state. Kristjánsson argues that it is less likely to produce moral citizens than Aristotle’s emphasis on truth seeking and emotional vigor. Seeking truth over compromise and emotional harmony allows for more authentic democratic deliberation. Aristotle’s “proposed end-state is better described as one of emotional vigour [*sic*], in which creativity, originality and assertiveness have crucial roles to play, unencumbered by the self-imposed policing of ‘pure’ reason” (Kristjánsson, 2007, p. 93). Kristjánsson points to the argument made by John Stuart Mill regarding “the need to have one’s deepest convictions constantly challenged in order for them to retain their heart-felt vitality, urgency and immediacy” as the basis for this claim (p. 92). This emphasis on truth seeking is also in line with SEL’s emphasis on knowledge of self and others.

### **Examining Democratic Education as a Foundation**

While not addressing SEL directly, Amy Gutmann's (1987/1999) theory of democratic education also supports an Aristotelian foundation for SEL. Although Gutmann relies more heavily on Plato, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill to develop her theory, she begins her argument by looking to Aristotle to answer the question – “what kind of people should human education seek to create?” (p. 19). She bases her answer on Aristotle's claim that, “The citizens of the state should always be educated to suit the constitution of their state” (Aristotle, 1958/1969, p. 332). For Aristotle, the constitution referred not only to “an arrangement of offices,” but was also “a way of life” (p. 332, fn. 2). He argued, “Legislation is needed to regulate education, both for political and for moral reasons,” and that the education of the young should be the “chief and foremost concern” of legislators. “The type of character appropriate to a constitution is the power which continues to sustain it, as it is also the force which originally creates it” (p. 332). Aristotle is saying that the education required to sustain a democracy is different than one that is intended to sustain an oligarchy or plutocracy.

Gutmann recognizes the relativistic orientation of Aristotle's argument and likens it to Émile Durkheim's concept of rationalistic moral education. Durkheim (1922/2002) states his “aim is not to formulate moral education for man in general; but for men of our time in this country” (p. 3). The three of them, she argues, reject a “subjectivism” view of relativism, which claims that morality is nothing more than personal opinion. Instead, Gutmann (1987/1999) argues they favor :

the far more defensible view that the deepest, shared moral commitments of a society . . . serve as the standard for determining the justice of its educational practices . . . Education must be guided by the *principles*, not the practices, of a

regime. Educational relativism is conservative not in the narrow sense of maintaining the status quo, but in the broad sense of supporting existing social ideals (pp. 19-20, italics in original).

Acknowledging the difficulty in gaining agreement on what the best way of life is, Gutmann (1987/1999) reasons, should not curtail efforts to determine the purposes of education. “If this is the case, then believing in educational relativism is compatible with believing in any one of a wide range of incompatible interpretations of educational justice” (p. 21). Conceptions of human nature and the good life are products of the education we receive. She argues that:

“Nature” may set the bounds beyond which a society cannot accomplish its educational purposes. But the constraints of nature surely leave societies a vast choice among competing educational purposes. Education may aim to *perfect* human nature by developing its potentialities, to *deflect* it into serving socially useful purposes, or to *defeat* it by repressing those inclinations that are socially destructive. We can choose among and give content to these aims only by developing a normative theory of what the educational purposes of our society should be. (p. 22, italics in original).

Gutmann (1987/1999) proposes a democratic theory of education in which parents, professional educators, and other citizens share authority for establishing educational aims and developing moral character, “even though such sharing does not guarantee that power will be wedded to knowledge, that parents can successfully pass their prejudices on to their children, or that education will be neutral among competing conceptions of the good life” (p. 42). She claims that this sharing arrangement recognizes an inclusive form of social reproduction that prepares children to participate in democratic politics, as well as allows them to be members of several subcommunities, such as families and religious, racial, and ethnic groups, which contribute to the identity of the individual. These aspects of democratic education will be discussed more

thoroughly in Chapter Four.

At this point, it is Gutmann's arguments about moral freedom and the capacity to choose among good lives that deserves our attention relative to a philosophical foundation for SEL. "All societies of self-reflective beings must admit the moral value of enabling their members to discern the difference between good and bad ways of life" (1987/1999, p. 43). She identifies this cultivation of right reason as an essential purpose of education and recognizes that right reasoning cannot occur when a position of neutrality exists among ways of life. Gutmann argues "the good of children includes not just freedom of choice, but also identification with and participation in the good of their family and the politics of their society" (p. 43). While moral reasoning requires certain skills in order to deliberate, it is the norms and values within a particular context – the specific family, subcommunity, or larger community – that set the parameters for the deliberation.

Building on Aristotle's relativistic orientation for moral education and recognizing the pluralist nature of our society, Gutmann (1987/1999) adds that deliberations about the good life must also include commitment to limits related to nonrepression and nondiscrimination. In order to sustain a pluralistic democratic society, as exists in the United States, she makes the case that political and parental authorities should not be able to use "education to restrict rational deliberation of competing conceptions of the good life or the good society" (p. 44) or to exclude any educable child "from an education adequate to participating in the political processes that structure choice among good lives" (p. 45). Notions of nonrepression and nondiscrimination are embedded in the conviction that various religious, ethnic, racial, and political groups



should be allowed to thrive in our society. These principles simultaneously support individual and communal self-determination and deliberative freedom, which Gutmann views as essential to a democratic way of life.

Gutmann (1987/1999) recognizes that her theory of democratic education does not “command our allegiance independently of its congruence with our deepest convictions” (p. 47). In order to do so, would require “our commitment to share the rights and the obligations of citizenship with people who do not share our complete conception of the good life” (p. 47). Yet, American ideals, such as honesty, religious freedom, and mutual respect of persons, as well as the SEL objectives related to freedom of expression, opportunities for recognizing similarities and differences, and involvement in shared decision-making around mutual concerns (CASEL, 2003, 2005, 2012), all appear to demand no less.

It stands to reason, that if education is to enable students to discern the good life, knowledge of the competing interpretations within society and throughout human history would be essential to the process. Incorporating an appreciation of moral and religious pluralism in the philosophical foundation of SEL provides a framework for examining and sustaining not only our deepest convictions regarding the good life, but it also allows for examining and sustaining the ideals outlined in the First Amendment to the American Constitution: freedom of speech, religion, the press, to assemble, and petition the government. Doing so aligns SEL with the Western tradition of providing a moral foundation upon which to guide our democratic values.

Martha Nussbaum (1997; 2010) also proposes a theory of democratic education that could serve as the philosophical foundation for SEL. Although Nussbaum

recognizes the importance of awareness of local social circumstances, including local social problems and resources, she embraces the philosophy of the Greek Stoics who maintained “that we should give our first allegiance to *no* mere form of government, no temporal power, but to the moral community made up by the humanity of all human beings” (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 59, italics in original). Nussbaum argues that, “People from diverse backgrounds sometimes have difficulty recognizing one another as fellow citizens in the community of reason” (p. 63). She maintains that education should help students to become sensitive and empathic interpreters, enabling them to understand what is fine and just in other traditions, as well as their own.

The goal of education, according to Nussbaum should be to foster respect for the dignity of humanity in each person. It should not separate one group from another, either within or among nations. Education should foster “a human identity that transcends these divisions [and] shows us why we should look at one another with respect across them” (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 67). Incorporating an appreciation of moral and religious pluralism, this form of education recognizes not only ethnic, racial, and religious differences, but common rights, aspirations, and problems experienced in one’s own culture and in distant cultures, as well.

Nussbaum relies heavily on use of the Socratic method as the means for cultivating citizens for a healthy democracy. This method helps to show “students the possible narrowness and limitedness of their own perspective and [invites] them to engage in critical reflection” (1997, p. 70). The education she suggests is very consistent with SEL objectives. Nussbaum (2010) says, lessons should:

- Develop students’ capacity to see the world from the viewpoint of other

people, particularly those when their society tends to portray as lesser, as 'mere objects'

- Teach attitudes toward human weakness and helplessness that suggest that weakness is not shameful and the need for others not unmanly; teach children not to be ashamed of need and incompleteness but to see these as occasions for cooperation and reciprocity
- Develop the capacity for genuine concern for others, both near and distant
- Undermine the tendency to shrink from minorities of various kinds in disgust, thinking of them as 'lower' and 'contaminating'
- Teach real and true things about other groups (racial, religious, and sexual minorities; people with disabilities), so as to counter stereotypes and the disgust that often goes with them
- Promote accountability by treating each child as a responsible agent
- Vigorously promote critical thinking, the skill and courage it requires to raise a dissenting voice. (pp. 45-46)

This form of education requires a commitment to the ideal of critical questioning, which Nussbaum (2010) claims is not just central to liberal education in the Western tradition but can also be found in educational theory and practices in India and other non-Western cultures. She argues that instruction in philosophy and the humanities is essential to democracy, providing students with the skills and content "to think and argue for themselves, rather than defer to tradition and authority" (p. 48). Nussbaum maintains, "It is no sign of disrespect to any religious tradition to ask that its members use in the public realm arguments that can be understood by people from different traditions, or to encourage that sort of argument in class" (1997, p. 37). As citizens who value individual and communal self-determination and deliberative freedom, there is no getting around opening our deepest convictions to public scrutiny.

This contextual dimension of behavior, involving "the source of moral authority or direction" is "the devil in the details" which SEL advocates have tried to avoid by arguing that SEL is a values-neutral approach to socialization (Elias et al., 2008, p. 249). Yet if SEL is true to its mission, moral content cannot be omitted from instruction as

there is no values-neutral approach when socializing children to become citizens. It does not matter if you are creating citizens of the world, as Nussbaum proposes, or for a particular nation, as Gutmann advocates, or to sustain a specific political order, as Aristotle suggests, each theory recognizes the requirement for a commitment to some shared values and principles.

I have demonstrated that recognizing and articulating one's deepest beliefs has to be a part of SEL if it is to make any sense. Yet, if the aim of SEL is to prepare ethical citizens for the world or the United States, or to sustain democracy in general, or even more broadly to create ethical human beings, a shared commitment to its underlying values and principles is needed from all of the stakeholders. In order for that to occur, SEL demands a clearly articulated theory of democratic education to serve as its philosophical foundation. That foundation must be open to examination in order to resolve tension between one's personal beliefs and the commitment SEL requires to shared values and principles. In a pluralistic nation personal beliefs are bound to be reflected in a wide range of worldviews. Therefore, the point I am making here is that whatever theory of democratic education is used as a philosophical foundation, it must incorporate religious pluralism as an essential element.

### **Making a Case for an Ethic of Care**

In addition to the justice-based philosophical framework for SEL proposed by Kristjánsson (2002; 2004; 2007), Stephen Sherblom (2008) suggests a care-based moral framework. He argues that the ethic of care articulated by Carol Gilligan (1982; Gilligan, Ward, & Taylor, J., 1988), Nell Noddings (1984/2003; 2002), and others is also relevant to SEL. While "writings in SEL eschew philosophical moral discussion" and avoid the

use of overtly moral language (Sherblom, 2008, p. 93), reference to values like respect, empathy, honesty, fairness, and compassion are used throughout to express student behavior expectations. Sherblom maintains these values “suggest a philosophical framework deeply compatible with the ethic of care” (p. 93). While SEL and care ethics have evolved separately, Sherblom points out that they share a common understanding of the relational perspective of moral engagement and embrace “a deliberative process that legitimates affectively acquired knowledge such as empathic perspective taking or other compassionate attention to the welfare of others” (p. 92).

Formulation of a care-based theory of moral reasoning and development was first presented by Carol Gilligan in her groundbreaking publication, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982), and then expanded upon in *Mapping the Moral Domain: A Contribution of Women's Thinking to Psychological Theory and Education* (Gilligan et al., 1988). In these works, Gilligan and her colleagues laid out a challenge to the justice-based moral reasoning and development theories advanced by Lawrence Kohlberg and his colleagues, which dominated moral development thinking at the time. Gilligan, who had also been a colleague of Kohlberg at Harvard, “is credited with posing the most influential psychological critique of Kohlberg’s perspective as being insufficient to render the fullness of human moral deliberation and development” (Sherblom, 2008, p. 82). Gilligan’s critique centers around moral voice, moral orientation, and gender, particularly regarding the absence of the relational perspective in moral reasoning, which she initially viewed as an exclusively female phenomenon.

Gilligan, too, draws upon the ancient Greeks for inspiration for her theory. Citing

references from Virgil's *Aenied*, she states:

He exemplifies the dilemma of how to think about the self, how to represent the experience of being at once separate and connected to others through a fabric of human relationship. The representation of the self as separate and bounded has a long history in the Western tradition. Consonant with, rather than opposed to, this image of individual autonomy is a notion of social responsibility, conceived as duty or obligation. (Gilligan et al., 1988, p. 3)

However, Gilligan finds this line of thinking changed as a result of beliefs tied to Martin Luther's Reformation theology that led to "a world view in which the individual is embarked on a solitary journey toward personal salvation, a world view that is centered on the values of autonomy and independence" (Gilligan et al., 1988, p. xvii). She argues that this view separates the self from childhood attachments and identifications which play a critical role in shaping one's moral development and response to ethical situations. By placing so much emphasis on autonomy and individualism, too much value is placed on detachment. Gilligan points out that even the "Golden Rule" of reciprocity is based on a reference back to the self. Instead, she suggests that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the value of learning from and with others in ways that transforms the self, where the relationship is the reference for judgment.

In Gilligan's terms, there are at least two moral voices – one that addresses issues of justice, equality, rights, and reciprocity; and the other that speaks of care, not hurting, connection, and response. One values justice and autonomy, and the other values care and connection, each resulting in different ways of viewing the world and responding to moral problems. Yet, as science continues to play an ever greater role in our thinking, she observes that love has been left out of modern psychology making it difficult to address human attachments. Gilligan identifies the justice approach as seeking solutions

based on notions of fairness, while the care-based approach seeks inclusive solutions. “Whereas the fair solution protects identity and ensures equality within the context of a relationship, the inclusive solution transforms identity through the experience of the relationship” (Gilligan et al., 1988, p. 9). Without this process of mutual engagement, healthy moral development can give way to pathogenic detachment and disengagement. This is relevant to SEL and the dangers addressed previously about increasing one’s social and emotional competencies without a sense of right behavior, in that SEL is then as likely to result in producing clever criminals, as it is in producing ethical human beings.

While Gilligan approaches the importance of relationship in moral development from a psychological perspective, Nel Noddings (1983/2003; 2002) addresses caring from a philosophy of education perspective. Noddings (1983/2003), like Gilligan, recognizes traditional gender differences in moral orientation, equating “principles and propositions, in terms such as justification, fairness, justice” with the language of the father, while “the mother’s voice has been silent.” She argues that the foundation of ethical response is “human caring and the memory of caring and being cared for,” an approach that has been identified with the feminine experience (p. 1). Noddings maintains that responses based on principles and laws, tend to be associated with the power and authority of a detached one – historically, the father-figure. Actions rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness have tended to be associated with love and care from an attached one – historically, the mother-figure. The former is generally viewed as the disciplinarian doling out punishments and setting limits on behavior; the later as nurturing, giving praise and rewards, and encouraging flourishing.

Acknowledging that men and women can transcend notions of masculine and feminine, Noddings says that “if we want males to participate fully in caring, a change of experience is required, starting in childhood” (p. xvi). The kinds of experiences Noddings suggests are very much in line with SEL’s emphasis on knowledge of self and the perspectives of others.

Rejecting ethics based on principles and rules because of the frequency with which violent deeds are done in the name of principle, and also challenging the notion of universalizability of the “right” response to similar ethical situations, Noddings (1983/2003) stresses the uniqueness of human encounters and our longing for caring. She insists, “We want to be *moral* in order to remain in the caring relation and to enhance the ideal of ourselves as one-caring” (p. 5, italics in original). This ideal as one-caring is the “good” that motivates us to meet the other morally. According to Noddings:

Since we are dependent upon the strength and sensitivity of the ethical ideal – both our own and that of others – we must nurture that ideal in all of our educational encounters . . . we are dependent on each other even in our quest for personal goodness. How good *I* can be is partly a function of how *you* – the other – receive and respond to me. Whatever virtue I exercise is completed, fulfilled, in you. The primary aim of all education must be the nurturance of the ethical ideal . . . It is the recognition of and longing for relatedness that form the foundation of our ethic, and the joy that accompanies fulfillment of our caring enhances our commitment to the ethical ideal that sustains us as the one-caring (p. 6, italics in original).

Noddings’ ethic of care is very consistent with SEL’s two pronged approach involving the relationships between teachers and students, as well as the environment in which these relationships take place. The interaction between the one-caring and the one cared-for is the primary focus of the ethic of caring. But, when distance or other factors make individual interaction impossible the one-caring then focuses on those cared-about,



typically through the development and maintenance of social policies. According to Noddings (1983/2003; 2002), both individual actions and social policies must be assessed with regard to the extent which they contribute to, or make difficult, or impossible the conditions for caring relations to flourish. In this way, the ethic of care is also compatible with the justice ethic, in that “caring-about may be thought of as the motivational foundation for justice, and we need to use justice when it is logistically impossible to exercise caring-for” (1983/2003, p. xvi). However, Noddings cautions that the ultimate aim is to ensure that caring-for actually occurs as a result of the policy so that justice and caring-about do not miscarry the original intent.

Similar to SEL, the ethic of care requires educators to engage in true dialogue with parents to form trusting and cooperative relationships so that educators may engage in true dialogue with their students. This dialogue, according to Noddings (1983/2003, 2002), must be open to all areas of intellectual interest to the students, including matters that lie at the heart of human existence, such as questions about God, death, loving, killing, sex, hope, fear, and hate. “The school, ideally, is a setting in which values, beliefs, and opinions can be examined both critically and appreciatively” (1983/2003, p. 184). Noddings suggests that students not only be exposed to information about religions, but also “have opportunities to feel what the other is feeling as a result of deeply held beliefs.” Through this “exposure to the beauties and flaws of religion” and other issues that affect us deeply, students will “learn what it means to embrace an ethic of caring.” Noddings advocates for:

a form of dialectic between feeling and thinking that will lead in a continuing spiral to the basic feeling of genuine caring and the generous thinking that develops in its service. Through such a dialectic, we are led beyond the intense

and particular beliefs to which these feelings are attached, to a realization that the other – who feels intensely about which I do not believe – is still one to be received. (p. 186)

In response to those parents who fear that this exposure will cause their children to “lose” the religion the parents want the child to embrace, Noddings (1983/2003) replies, “If a particular set of beliefs is so fragile that it cannot stand intellectual examination, or so uncharitable that it cannot tolerate caring relations, then indeed it should be lost” (p. 185). Noddings also argues that the open discussion of one’s values and beliefs is just as likely, if not more likely to affirm one’s deepest convictions. However, she is very sensitive to the needs of those parents who feel their beliefs are being undermined. She stresses the importance for educators to demonstrate caring and creativity in their encounters with these parents in order to reach amicable solutions to conflicts.

For Noddings (2002), the highest priority is the maintenance of nonviolent relations. She views the care theory as a philosophy that guides, rather than prescribes, providing room for local deliberation and judgment. “In this sense social policy guided by an ethic of care has something in common with Aristotle’s *phronesis*” (p. 69). However, the focus is not on individual character, but on relational definitions of self and caring that “respond to the needs of people who disagree at the local level” (p.77). With an ethic of care serving as its philosophical foundation, an adequate social policy, such as SEL, would allow for local dialogue and compromise between parents and educators to resolve conflicts regarding contested values and convictions regarding instruction.

Establishing a broad, undergirding philosophical foundation that would support all dimensions of SEL is beyond the scope of this project. Instead, I am pointing out that

existing justice-based and care-based theories are available to serve as a foundation for SEL. While I favor a hybrid theory that applies an ethic of care to a democratic education philosophy, my point is that a number of theories are available to provide the philosophical and moral foundation that SEL lacks. However, no matter what approach is taken, I maintain that moral and religious pluralism must be essential elements of any philosophy supporting SEL.

Whether a justice-based, care-based, or some hybrid approach is selected, it will need to incorporate a commitment to moral and religious pluralism that enables students to freely discern a conception of the good life, along with knowledge of competing interpretations which exist within a complex, democratic society, like the United States. Without the element of pluralism, SEL instruction lacks the content needed to help students develop the reasoning and actions required for right behavior. This content is what gives meaning to the SEL skills and defines the range of appropriate moral actions and ethical decisions one is expected to demonstrate within societal norms. Additionally, moral and religious pluralism provide the grounding for the disposition to support right behavior. Using the skills and competencies acquired through SEL, students will be better prepared to act in a manner that is consistent with American values like honesty, equality, autonomy, respect, and compassion, as well as support one's freedom of and from religion.

### **Religious Pluralism Helps to Guard against Hegemony**

While moral education has been seen as a legitimate activity of schools throughout much of recorded history, the education provided has traditionally been based on the values, attitudes, and behaviors prescribed by the religious beliefs and practices of

the dominant group of the community with little regard to other worldviews. There have also been those throughout the centuries who have opposed this stance. Chazan (1985) identifies this as the “anti-moral education tradition,” which “surfaced in American education most vividly in recent times in the radical educational reform literature of the 1960s and in the revisionist histories of the 1970s” (p. 91). Although this tradition does not represent one unified movement, most of the objections raised deal with concerns about imposition and indoctrination of a particular set of values, attitudes, and behaviors, and who decides what this content will be. There are also those who argue on epistemological grounds that “because of the speculative, non-scientific, non-agreed upon nature of the contents,” moral education is not appropriate for the young. (p. 95).

According to Chazan (1985), these critics maintain that students should only receive instruction in “nonmanipulative social skills” that will enable them to mold and shape their own lives as they see fit, not based on some predetermined kind of person they are to become. Positions such as these largely stem from negative reactions to the hegemonic practices of Western political powers that have allowed the dominant group to exert social, cultural, ideological, and/or economic influence over other less politically powerful groups both within and between nations (Freire, 1970/2000; Kohn, 1997; Mouffe, 2005). However, religious pluralism that involves an energetic engagement of the groups within the society helps to guard against this type of hegemony by affirming “the unique identity of each particular religious tradition, [ethical perspective], and community, while recognizing that the well-being of each depends upon the health of the whole” (Patel, 2008, p. 21). While religious pluralism may not be a sufficient element on its own for SEL instruction to avoid hegemony, it goes a long way to safeguard against

indoctrination of a single worldview.

### **Exposing the Hidden Curriculum**

For more than 100 years, the moral education and behavior expectations in American public schools were based on the values and views of the ruling elite who initiated the common school movement, the majority of whom were white, conservative, middle-class, Protestant men (McClellan, 1999; Reese, 2005; Rury, 2005). Horace Mann, one of the most prominent leaders of the common school movement, “helped to establish the idea that publicly supported education was intended to serve children representing the full range of religious beliefs and cultural practices in society.” However, this range was determined by the understanding he “and scores of like-minded men and a few women” held regarding a “nonsectarian form of Christianity” (Rury, 2005, p. 76). Mann “argued that moral education was the most important element of popular schooling, emphasizing the importance of a nondenominational Christian foundation to public schooling” (p. 77). This foundation was intended to impart norms and values related to proper behavior, as well as prevent irresponsible behavior.

The Protestant values embedded in the common schools movement were subject to opposition from their inception on the basis of them being hegemonic (although that was not the term that would have been used at the time). “While Protestants had subdivided into numerous denominations, they usually agreed on certain fundamental truths. Catholics, agnostics, and atheists, of course, saw things differently” (Reese, 2005, p. 36). The embedded values in the public schools contributed significantly to the establishment of private parochial schools by Catholics, Lutherans, and others who did not want their children indoctrinated with the pan-Protestant moral education Horace

Mann and his colleagues had instilled in the public common schools (Fraser, 1999; Marty, 2000). Yet, Mann's notion of moral education remained an explicit element of American public schools throughout the nineteenth century and well into the first half of the twentieth century, with vestiges still present as part of the hidden curriculum.

Moral education in American public schools then began to flounder somewhat aimlessly since the 1960s due to continued criticism and legal challenges. This has resulted in the removal of explicit moral education in many American public schools (Fraser, 1999; Jensen & Knight, 1981; McClellan, 1999). Additionally, increased religious pluralism within the American population, public acceptance of atheism, and attention given to multiculturalism and globalization, all which began to take place more rapidly during the second half of the past century, have further contributed to the confusion and lack of consensus about the moral education that should be provided in American schools, both public and private (Eck, 2001; Moore, D., 2007; Noddings, 2008). However, when explicitly teaching the Protestant values embedded in the common schools stopped, many of these values still remained as an aspect of the hidden curriculum instead of an intentional part of the formal curriculum (Jackson, 1968; Giroux & Purpel, 1983).

In order for the SEL goals to be achieved, it is necessary to recognize and understand the source of the existing moral assumptions being made in the hidden curriculum because moral practices and beliefs can be so ingrained that they exist in the classroom without question. Yet, they continue to play a large role in defining the norms related to desirable, undesirable, and problem behavior. These assumptions, therefore, have a significant role in the allocation of school and life rewards and punishments

(Jackson, 1968; Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1998; Hlebowitsh, 1994). This situation has led to the criticism that the typical public school code of conduct teaches all students to “act white,” or more accurately, in line with the values of the white, conservative, middle-class, Protestant men who led the common schools movement. This has had the effect of dismissing or marginalizing the values of other racial, ethnic, political, income, and religious groups (Delpit, 2006; Lareau, 2000; 2003; Lipman, 2004; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999; Yu, 2004).

Knowledge and reinforcement of the school’s desired behavior norms at home is said to privilege some students and disadvantage those who do not know how to “act right.” This situation is believed to result in behavior problems and lower academic achievement for those students who do not come to school with this knowledge (Bourdieu, 1973/2000; Delpit, 2006; Lareau, 2000, 2003; Ogbu, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). This has resulted in a disproportionate number of these students being placed in special education classes and even being completely pushed out of school through expulsions or their voluntarily dropping out (Franklin, 1994; Lipman, 2004; Noguera, 2003).

If SEL is to avoid the hegemonic nature that has been problematic with prior moral education initiatives in American schools, the structure of the school, as well as the entire curriculum, need to be explicit with regard to moral practices and aims (Fine, 1993; Yu, 2004). According to Meira Levinson (1999), if this does not occur, “the hidden curriculum holds the overt curriculum hostage” (p. 84). She argues that even if the hidden curriculum has been used in the past to teach students to be docile and obedient to prepare them for relationships of subordination and dominance in the economic sphere,

this does not need to be its purpose. “Not until children learn from the hidden curriculum to suppress their autonomy can they begin again to develop it through the overt curriculum” (p. 84). Recognizing this paradoxical relationship, Levinson points out that many of the character traits associated with the capitalist economic system, such as patience, delayed gratification, time-management, deference to other’s expertise, and self-control, are also compatible with living a fully autonomous life.

Levinson (1999) suggests “that insofar as the hidden curriculum can be known and controlled, and insofar as many of its lessons actually further children’s development of autonomy rather than diminish it, the hidden curriculum can be turned into a boon rather than a burden” (p. 87). Preferring to use the term “informal” as opposed to “hidden” to describe this aspect of the curriculum, Levinson stresses the importance of its knowable and addressable nature, so that it need not be either hidden or deleterious. Recognizing that the informal curriculum is as important as the formal curriculum in a student’s development, Levinson cautions educators to be vigilant in ensuring that they are not unintentionally socializing their students to conform to the autonomy-diminishing aspects of capitalism that served the needs of the industrialization era.

### **Responding to the Conditions of Modern Society**

Levinson (1999) proposes a model of liberal education that responds to the conditions of modern society in a way that is necessary to achieve the desired SEL outcomes and also has the potential to avoid the autonomy-diminishing aspects of capitalism that she warns about. Her notions are based on an understanding of contemporary liberalism that is comprised of three constitutive elements:

- (1) *The fact of pluralism* – “People subscribe to a huge range of values,



sources of identity, and conceptions of the good that often conflict with each other and are as often incommensurable” (p. 9).

- (2) *A legitimation process* – A public “process for the establishment of the state and/or the principles of justice by which the state operates” (p. 9).
- (3) *Substantive liberal institutions* – Outcomes of the legitimation process which result in a “constitutional democracy accompanied by a broad range of specified individual liberties and accompanying governmental duties (p. 10).

It is Levinson’s (1999) argument for the necessity to accept, and even embrace, “the deep and irremediable pluralism in modern society” (p. 9) that is most relevant to this project and for recognizing religious pluralism as an essential element of SEL. She maintains:

The fact of pluralism has enormous implications for what principles and institutional structures will be agreeable to all potential citizens of a state. Principles that appeal to non-pluralistic values, or that reject the existence of pluralism entirely, are unlikely to gain widespread support from individuals in a position of deliberative equality and freedom. The same is true for the kinds of reasons that individuals can offer during the legitimation process for adopting one principle of justice over another. Arguments such as, ‘The Bible tells us that we must . . .’ do not sufficiently respond to the fact of pluralism, because only believers can take them seriously as reasons of action – although . . . to *prevent* people from using biblically based arguments may be equally non-responsive to pluralism, since some people believe that the Bible provides the *only* fundamental moral reasons for action.” (p. 10, italics in original)

In a pluralistic society that values autonomy, different conceptions of how the good is to be achieved must be recognized as legitimate, regardless of whether those conceptions are based on philosophy, science, religion, cultural beliefs, or some combination of these schools of thought. Levinson (1999) suggests that the notion of autonomy must be constructed so that it “on one hand, effectively distinguishes between autonomous and heteronomous people and does not permit self-enslavement, but on the other hand, does permit the adoption of deep commitments, including love, loyalty,

religion, and patriotism” (p. 30). She further advises “we must recognize that these commitments are simply *necessary* for the construction and maintenance of the self, and thus must be fostered and protected” (p. 31, italics in original). This conception of autonomy incorporates the conditions for autonomous action, such as self-knowledge and critical thinking skills, which are also desired social emotional skills, as well as conditions for individual agency.

Levinson’s (1999) conception also involves “a commitment to the development and preservation of cultural coherence. Individuals must be able to feel embedded within a culture or set of cultures, and to mediate their choices via the norms and social forms constitutive of their culture(s)” (p. 31). Culture contributes significantly to one’s sense of identity and agency (Appiah, 2007; Phillips, 2007; Sen, 2006; Taylor, C., 1991; Taylor, C. & Gutmann, 1994). Additionally, individuals must have the opportunity to develop “broad facets of their personality – emotional, intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic, and moral – in order to make autonomous choices both about specific pursuits and about the broad direction of their lives” (Levinson, 1999, p. 32). As indicated previously, one of the criticisms of SEL has been its lack of cultural sensitivity and a deep engagement with questions of diversity. Incorporating the fact of pluralism, particularly religious pluralism, in SEL instruction would address this concern by fostering an environment which allows one’s cultural coherence and personality to be developed and maintained, while providing experiences to learn about other cultures and worldviews. The desirability of this aspect of identity and agency formation will be discussed again in the next chapter.

### **Acknowledging Deep Moral Differences**

While the importance of recognizing cultural differences began to receive attention in the mid-1960s, addressing religious pluralism has been largely ignored in America (Eck, 2001; Wilkerson, 1997). An extensive review of the literature regarding multicultural education is beyond the scope of this project. However, there are many examples that illustrate that much of this literature focuses more narrowly on issues of race, ethnicity, class, and/or gender (including Au, 2009; Hawley & Nieto, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pollock, 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Even literature regarding culturally responsive teaching makes only a slight reference, if any, to the religious diversity found in almost all public school classrooms (Gaitan, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

This situation is beginning to change, as a growing body of literature is emerging that addresses the necessity of religious pluralism as a component of multicultural, civic, and moral education (including Banks, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2003; Fleming, M., 2001; Grelle & Naylor, 2002; Macedo, 2000; Macedo & Tamir, 2002; Moore, J., 2009; Power & Lapsley, 1992; Salili & Hoosain, 2006; Samovar et al, 2010; Taylor, L. S. & Whittaker, 2003; Warren, D. & Patrick, 2006). Religion is again gaining recognition in academic circles as one of the three major social institutions that form the deep structure, along with family and state (a term used interchangeably with nation and other governmental bodies in this project), “that members of a culture turn to for lessons about the meaning of life and methods for living that life” (Samovar et al, 2010, p. 49). It is within these structures that unconscious assumptions are formed about how the world works and how one deals with important topics such as God, the good life, and death.

The “how” and “why” answers to questions related to these topics unify the culture and provide its members with a worldview and the cultural coherence that Levinson’s (1999) describes as essential to one’s identity.

There are some aspects of culture, like language, clothing, cuisine, music, behavior, and other tangible aspects that tend to receive the most attention in the name of multicultural education in American schools (Banks, 2002). However, even when discussions involve explorations that include different values, norms, and perspectives, they often fail to get at the deeply held beliefs transmitted through religion, families, and communities that provide the foundation for moral and ethical behavior (Levy, 2000; Salili & Hoosain, 2006). These deeply held foundational moral values and attitudes are the ones which people throughout history have been willing to die for, as well as commit acts of violence against other human beings. This aspect of culture will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

While some may argue that “different cultures embody rival and incommensurable moral views, making cultural pluralism the embodiment of moral pluralism,” Jacob Levy (2000, p. 98) cautions that cultural pluralism should not be confused with moral pluralism. He explains:

Moral pluralism is the claim that the fundamental goods of human life, the moral values, are plural, unrankable, incommensurable, and often incompatible. We are often forced to make tragic, agonistic choices among them, not because of flaws or unjust circumstances but in the very nature of things, in the nature of the goods, values, and ideals themselves. (p.100)

According to Levy (2000) this understanding is not the same as moral relativism, because “the incommensurability of the great goods does not disparage the difference between good and evil (or between goods and evils)” (p. 100). The absence of some sort

of metric to measure them when they come into conflict is what distinguishes these values. Additionally, these values and virtues come together with practices and habits to form rival moral universes, which only make sense as wholes. Many of these rival moral universes are reflected in the differing worldviews of the major world religions (Prothero, 2010). Levy (2000) argues resolving moral conflicts require a commitment to foundational principles of complex equality and shared understandings, particularly related to conceptions of justice.

C. Taylor (2011) provides an explanation which I believe illuminates the foundational principles Levy (2000) has identified and is also in line with Levinson's (1999) understanding of contemporary liberalism. C. Taylor maintains that due to the fact of pluralism, modern democracies need to be secular, in that there must be a separation of church and state that results in some kind of neutrality. According to C. Taylor, this complex requirement must seek to maximize religious liberty, equality, and fraternity. He provides a three-principled model of secularization to meet this requirement:

(1) No one must be forced in the domain of religion, or basic belief. This is what is often defined a religious liberty, including, of course, the freedom not to believe. This is what is also described as the "free exercise" of religion, in the terms of the U.S. First Amendment. (2) There must be equality between people of different faiths or basic belief; no religious outlook or (religious or areligious) Weltanschauung can enjoy a privileged status, let alone be adopted as the official view of the state. Then, (3) all spiritual families must be heard, included in the ongoing process of determining what the society is about (its political identity), and how it is going to realize these goals (the exact regime of rights and privileges). (p. 309)

The principles that Levy (2000) and C. Taylor (2011) suggest are meant to help define the difference between good and evil as they relate to a range of acceptable and

unacceptable behaviors within the shared community. Levy maintains that deep moral differences need not result in enmity between groups. However, he does acknowledge that, “relations of cultures constituted by uncombinable values will be competitive, even when their formal relationship is one of peaceful coexistence” (p. 103). Similarly, C. Taylor also recognizes that realization of these goals can sometimes conflict and that there are no timeless rules based on pure reason for resolving these conflicts. Instead, he maintains that “situations differ very much, and require different kinds of concrete realization of agreed general principles; so that some degree of working out is necessary in each situation” (p. 310). Why this working out of principles is both so difficult, as well as essential, will be addressed next.

I maintain this understanding of moral and religious pluralism is a critical element in teaching students how to work out these differences, as well as for achieving the desired SEL outcomes in a nation as religiously diverse as the United States. To do otherwise, perpetuates the legitimacy of a hegemonic moral curriculum that exists implicitly in American public schools, allocating greater benefits to some students than to others. Incorporating the ideal of moral and religious pluralism in the SEL curriculum acknowledges students’ First Amendment rights, especially regarding the freedom of speech and religion. I contend that the kind of energetic religious pluralism being proposed is a necessary element, albeit not the only condition, to keep SEL from becoming hegemonic. As indicated, another condition which must be met to avoid the short-comings of prior moral education efforts is the need to openly face the deep moral differences that exist in our society, which will be addressed next.

### **Religious Pluralism Constructively Recognizes Deep Moral Differences**

In addition to placing too much emphasis on hegemony and conformity, prior moral education efforts have also been criticized for placing too much emphasis on consensus building and avoiding conflict related to deep moral differences (Fraser, 1999; Jensen & Knight, 1981; Keith, 2010; McClellan, 1999; Valk, 2007). However, the type of religious pluralism that I am proposing as an essential element of SEL allows students to constructively recognize our deepest moral differences in a culture that legitimizes dissent and provides a public, pluralistic space for learning how to negotiate the limits of tolerance. In order to make this point, it is necessary to first review the history around conflict avoidance and the tendency to minimize differences as part of the common school legacy and the multicultural movement. I will try to demonstrate the people continue to turn to religion to explain their lives no matter what forces call it into question. Therefore, we need to derive good from this rather than trouble. Rather than turn our backs on this reality, schools need to confront religion. I will also argue that the secularization model proposed by C. Taylor (2011) to handle diversity by emphasizing religious liberty, equality, and fraternity provides foundational beliefs to support this approach, as well as SEL's citizen-building objective, provided that there are legitimate channels for dissent over how these ideals are best reflected in everyday life.

### **Moving Controversial Beliefs into the Public Sphere**

Because the common school movement in the United States evolved from a Protestant-centered instruction model, many of the strongest advocates for the common schools had been trained as clergy. As has already been indicated, much of the culture, habits, and beliefs of the movement's founders became institutionalized. Additionally,

these schools were governed by local school boards who thought it appropriate to instill the values of the dominant religious group in the community (Mattingly, 1975).

Similarly, the parallel parochial school systems that developed continue to be based on the culture, habits, and beliefs of the religious denominations that sponsor them. In order to perpetuate this hegemony, educators in the United States have gone to great lengths to avoid controversy in the classroom (McClellan, 1999).

Horace Mann and the other leaders of the common school movement emphasized “putting sharp political and sectarian views outside of the classroom” (Mattingly, 1975, p. 46). Divorcing politics from education was done to avoid controversy and divisive political contentiousness in order to gain support for the common schools. This approach also persisted in response to the social upheaval that began in the 1960s. “Educators avoided controversial moral questions and elevated tolerance into the primary value of the school, in order to create or preserve peace among their competing and often quarreling constituencies” (McClellan, 1999, p. 78). This legacy to avoid controversy in the classroom at almost all costs continues to this day. David Tyack (2003) summarizes this situation as follows:

The search for consensus and avoidance of controversy in civic education has left a mixed legacy. Consider Horace Mann’s aversion to teaching students about controversial questions. Too much conflict of values, he believed, would drive parents away from the public schools. And today, many teachers worry that introducing value-fraught issues could disrupt the tenuous order of their classrooms or lead to legal challenges in a litigation-prone society. Yet if the public school could teach only about those matters on which people supposedly agreed, how would students learn to understand or manage their fundamental differences either as youths or as adult citizens? Avoiding controversy has sometimes made the school the buttress of the status quo, a ‘museum of virtue’ disconnected from everyday life. (p. 38)

As indicated earlier in this chapter, one of the short-comings identified in the



current SEL literature is a focus on conflict resolution through compromise, with emotional tranquility or harmony as the desired end-state (Kristjánsson, 2007). This emphasis will not always serve well to meet the aim of SEL to recognize and appreciate not only similarities among individuals and groups, but differences, as well. All viewpoints must have an opportunity for expression and be open to examination in a liberal democracy (Gutmann, 1987/1999; Levy, 2000; Noddings, 1983/2003; 2002; Taylor, C., 2011). It is critically important to teach that compromise and consensus are not always possible, and may not even be desirable in some situations (Aristotle, 1999; Mouffe, 2005; Zimmerman, 2002).

There must be legitimate channels for dissent in order to keep differences in moral and political views from escalating into oppression and other forms of violence (Hunter, 1994; Keith, 2010; Mouffe, 2005). The legitimacy of debate and dissent is paramount to an open society, especially regarding right behavior. Jonathan Zimmerman (2002) tells us, “In the end, debating our differences may be the only thing that holds us together” (p. 228). The kind of religious pluralism proposed in Chapter One, based on energetic engagement, would enable these debates to take place in a constructive manner, minimizing the impulse to resort to violence in order to be heard.

In order to sustain themselves, all societies, particularly those organized around a political system, must have at least a few common values and beliefs that they pass on to their young (Gutmann, 1987/1999; Mouffe, 2005; Noddings, 1983/2003; 1993; 2002; 2006a). By necessity, in a pluralist liberal democracy these common values and beliefs must provide guidance for addressing the inevitable tension between liberty and unity. From this understanding “of moral conflict there can be no question of moral relativism,

for if nothing is better or worse than anything else there can be no such conflict” (Wringe, 2006, p. 98). These values and beliefs must help define the negotiated principles and goals discussed earlier that Levy (2000) and C. Taylor (2011) suggest are needed when there are deep moral differences related to the range of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors within the shared community. These values and beliefs are also critically important in helping students to recognize the difference between political (us versus them) and moral (good versus evil) considerations, which will be discussed later in this chapter. In essence these values and beliefs must enable us to answer questions such as, “How can freedom to dissent coexist with a cohesive school and coherent society?” (Tyack, 2003, p. 34) and “How should we live with our differences on such issues as sexual orientation, abortion, and physician-assisted suicide? (al-Hibri, Elshtain & Haynes, 2001, p. 10).

MacIntyre (2008) claims that the difficulty in answering these questions stems from the deep differences in understanding human action through some version or other of the oppositional lens of liberal individualism originating in the European Enlightenment and the classical Aristotelian tradition with its search for *truth* as it was reinterpreted by Thomas Aquinas. MacIntyre argues that over time:

the precepts that are thus uttered were once at home in, and intelligible in terms of, a context of practical beliefs and of supporting habits of thought, feeling, and action, a context that has since been lost, a context in which moral judgments were understood as governed by impersonal standards [of virtue] justified by a shared conception of the human good. (p. ix)

However, according to MacIntyre (2008) our society has no shared moral first principles to achieve moral consensus and settle conflicts. Instead, he sees:

conflict and not consensus at the heart of modern social structure. It is not just

that we live too much by a variety and multiplicity of fragmented concepts; it is that these are used at one and the same time to express rival and incompatible social ideals and policies *and* to furnish us with a pluralist political rhetoric whose function is to conceal the depth of our conflicts . . . Modern politics is civil war carried out by other means. (p. 253, italics in original)

What MacIntyre is saying reflects the dominant approach to addressing difficult and divisive issues during the past 50 years. This approach has focused on identifying common ground in order to resolve conflicts, and to some extent serve the common good, with the goal of achieving a more unified, albeit diverse, America (al-Hibri et al, 2001; Niebuhr, 2009; Tyack, 2003). However, an outcome of these efforts has been the growing recognition that religion, faith, and spirituality are not only private affairs, but that there are also public dimensions to them expressed in our public discourse regarding moral and ethical issues. In looking at religion in American public life, Martin Marty, religion scholar and chair of The American Assembly Religious Leadership Council, claims “As America grows ever more pluralist in fact and outlook, paradoxically the sight and voice of religion are more evident” (in al-Hibri et al, 2001, p. 16).

This realization is quite problematic because the ideological legitimization of the Western nation-state has been based on a religious-secular distinction, placing religion in the private sphere outside of the public secular realm. C. Taylor (2011) argues that this is the wrong model. Instead of the relation between state and religion, he maintains that secularism “in fact . . . has to do with the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity” (p. 310). He says, “There is no reason to single out religion, as against nonreligious, ‘secular’ (in another widely used sense), or atheist viewpoints” (p. 311). This religious-secular distinction has roots in the notion of liberal individualism originating in the European Enlightenment and its opposition to the moral authority

claimed by religious hierarchies. However, contrary to what many Enlightenment scholars predicted, religion has not faded away and remains a force that should not be ignored.

### **Accepting the Staying Power of Religion**

Based on more than a million interviews conducted since 2008, Frank Newport (2012), Gallup editor-in-chief, concludes in his book *God is Alive and Well: The Future of Religion in America* that the nation is moving in the direction of a religious renaissance and that religion is already powerfully intertwined with every aspect of society. In the introduction to his book, *Beyond Tolerance*, in which he chronicles ways that Americans are building bridges between people of faith, Gustav Niebuhr (2009) claims, “In the United States, as in much of the world, religious belief is often central to people’s lives – a direct contradiction of expectations created by the Enlightenment three centuries ago. Despite the complaints of its most ardent despisers, religion is not going away” (p. xx). In its *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* of more than 35,000 people, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2008) found that 92% of Americans believe in the existence of God or a universal spirit. Approximately 78% identify as Christians, less than 5% follow other religious traditions, and slightly more than 16% indicate that they are unaffiliated. Even among the unaffiliated, “people who identify themselves as atheist (21%) and a majority of those who identify themselves as agnostic (55%) express a belief in God or a universal spirit” (p. 8).

While about a third of the respondents (34%) said that their personal experience was most important in shaping their political views, more than double the number who cited their religion as being the main influence, “the Landscape Survey confirms that

there are strong links between Americans' views on political issues and their religious affiliation, beliefs and practices. In fact, religion may be playing a more powerful, albeit indirect, role in shaping people's thinking than most Americans recognize" (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008, p. 17). Based on the findings from the survey, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life concluded, "what is clear is that religion remains a powerful force in the private and public lives of most Americans" (p. 19).

Therefore, it appears essential for educators to acknowledge the diversity of belief systems present in the nation, as well as the world. One avenue to do this involves helping society move toward improving the response of the democratic state to diversity by incorporating in SEL instruction the ideals espoused in C. Taylor's (2011) three-principle model of secularization that stresses religious liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Stephen Prothero (2010) recommends a strategy that could be very useful for doing this in a way which is very much in line with SEL's emphasis on recognizing individual and group similarities and differences:

Rather than beginning with the sort of Godthink that lumps all religions together in one trash can or treasure chest, we must start with a clear-eyed understanding of the fundamental differences in both belief and practice between [them] . . . In relationships and religions, denying differences is a recipe for disaster. What works is understanding the differences and then coming to accept, and perhaps even to revel in, them. After all, it is not possible to agree or disagree until you see just what the disagreements might be. (p. 335)

Unfortunately, as indicated in Chapter Two, there is only passing mention in the literature acknowledging the challenge religious diversity poses to SEL instruction (Cohen, J., 2006; Elias et al., 2008; Kristjánsson, 2004). SEL instruction in general has been criticized for lacking cultural sensitivity and a deep engagement with questions of diversity and the politics of power (Hoffman, 2009). These criticisms are not unlike

some criticisms of multiculturalism. While some view minimizing the importance of differences due to a desire not to offend anyone, others (including Brown, W., 2006; Eagleton, 2009; Phillips, 2007; Valk, 2007) see it as a means for the dominant culture to maintain superiority and trivialize other cultures. The tendency to minimize unfriendly feelings will be discussed later in this chapter.

John Valk (2007) claims “secular religious attitudes and ‘selective multiculturalism’, erodes the distinctiveness of particular religious traditions upon which many cultures are founded, and ignores the depth of particular religious communities necessary in promoting the public good” (p. 280). He attributes this to the modern emphasis on individual autonomy and a shift to moral individualism that fails to recognize the “whole person” as someone who is also an engaged participant in society with commitments to others and to common goals. Valk credits this imbalance to the influence of John Rawls who argues for a “thin theory of the good” in order to arrive at “acceptable principles of justice.” Valk challenges the neutrality of this position which he maintains fosters conformity and consensus around a secular worldview. Instead, he advocates for schooling that acknowledges “a plurality of perspectives” that “would cease enforcing commonality at the expense of particularity and would nurture commonality through particularity, attempting to ‘find agreement *within* moral diversity not in spite of it’, encouraging students all the while to work together despite their deeply held differences” (p. 281, italics in original). Valk argues that commitments to benevolence and justice are anchored in high moral standards that are found in particular religious creeds, ethical perspectives, and cultural communities, not in a moral vacuum.

In line with Valk’s (2007) argument regarding the importance of religion to

government, Terry Eagleton and Stephen Macedo report that President Dwight Eisenhower was quoted in the New York Times in 1948 as saying in Groucho Marx style: “Our government makes no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious belief – and I don’t care what it is” (quoted in Eagleton, 2009, p. 143; Macedo, 2000, p. 135). Macedo sees this as an essential element of American identity, “To be American is to have a religion.” However, Eagleton claims that this view reflects an environment in which religious faith is both vital and vacuous. “God is ritually invoked on American political platforms, but it would not do to raise him in a committee meeting of the World Bank.” He argues that:

Advanced capitalism is inherently agnostic . . . Modern market societies tend to be secular, relativistic, pragmatic, and materialistic . . . The problem is this cultural climate also tends to undermine the metaphysical values on which political authority in part depends. Capitalism can neither easily dispense with those metaphysical values nor take them all that seriously. (p. 143)

This situation, Eagleton (2009) believes, “breeds a red-neck fundamentalism,” the kind espoused by ideologues of the religious right, as well as Islamist terrorists. This fundamentalism confronts a major contradiction in Western civilization: the need for foundational beliefs and truths and a chronic incapacity to believe deeply in a shared doctrine. He explains it this way:

Liberalism of the economic kind rides roughshod over peoples and communities, triggering in the process just the kind of violent backlash that liberalism of the social and cultural kind is least capable of handling. In this sense, too, terrorism highlights certain contradictions endemic to liberal capitalism. We have seen already that liberal pluralism cannot help involving a certain indifference to the content of belief, since liberal societies do not so much hold beliefs as believe that people should be allowed to hold beliefs. Such cultures display a certain creative indifference to what people actually believe, as long as those beliefs do not jeopardize these very principles of freedom and tolerance . . . Such cultures foster a purely formal or procedural approach to belief, which involves keeping too-entrenched faiths or identities at a certain ironic arm’s length. Liberal society is

in this sense one long, unruly, eternally inconclusive argument, which is a source of value but also of vulnerability. A tight consensus is desirable in the face of external attack; but is harder to pull off in liberal democracies than in any other kind of state, not least when they turn multicultural. (pp. 144-145)

Because advanced capitalism does not require much spiritual commitment from its subjects, only a kind of automated, built-in consent to work, consume, pay taxes, and generally obey the laws of the land, Egelton (2009) suggests, it fosters an ideology that is free of self-reflection. This results in a kind of multiculturalism that “embraces difference as such, without looking too closely into what one is differing over. It tends to imagine that there is something inherently positive about having a host of different views on the same subject . . . Such facile pluralism therefore tends to numb the habit of vigorously contesting other people’s beliefs” (p. 147). This leads to a common culture that is understood to be one in which “outsiders are incorporated into an already established, unquestionable framework of values, while leaving them free to engage in whichever of their quaint customs poses no threat to this preordained harmony. Such a policy appropriates newcomers in one sense, while leaving them well alone in another. It is at once too possessive and too hands-off” (p. 153). Egelton instead advocates a more radical view for the common culture “in which everyone has equal status in cooperatively determining a way of life in common” that is consistent with SEL.

Also, germane to the discussion here is Egelton’s (2009) observation that while the concepts of civilization and culture cannot be completely separated, our established, or dominant, way of life is generally viewed as what defines Western civilization (us); in contrast to what has previously been defined as barbarism, has now been replaced by viewing non-Western people as having cultures (them). Anne Phillips (2007) shares this



view, stating that “the distortion attached to the term culture is that it is made to do for non-Western or minority groups what society often does for the rest . . . the language of cultural practice or cultural tradition is now mostly reserved for the practices and traditions of non-Western culture” (pp. 62-63). She points out that:

Culture remains relatively invisible to those in the hegemonic position, who may readily acknowledge the influence of class or gender on their attitudes and behaviour [sic], yet rarely cite culture as explaining why they think or act the way they do. I should say that I am not convinced that culture is lived in such a different way by those who find themselves in a minority. Nevertheless, the experience of being in the minority makes people more conscience of the distinctiveness of their culture, while the sense of being pressured to conform to majority norms sometimes (though not universally) makes them more committed to sustaining that distinctiveness. Culture also operates as a resource in mobilizing against majority dominance. With all this, it is hardly surprising if individuals occupying a minority position more commonly refer to their culture as a defining part of their identity and being. (p. 63)

However, in much of Western thought, group identity is considered problematic unless it is attached to a deep value and practice of individualization that guarantees individual autonomy and deliberative rationality. As expressed earlier, cultural and religious habits and thoughts are privatized and marginalized to choices one has a right to, but are viewed as becoming oppressive when they are employed to govern law and politics. According to Wendy Brown (2006):

Liberalism prides itself on having discovered how to reduce the hungers and aggressive tendencies of collective identity while permitting individuals private enjoyment of such identity. This solution involves a set of interrelated juridical and ideological moves in which religion and culture are privatized and the cultural and religious dimensions of liberalism are disavowed. Culture and religion are private and privately enjoyed, ideologically depoliticized, much as the family is; and, like the family, they are situated as ‘background’ to *homo politicus* and *homo oeconomicus*. Culture, family, and religion are all formulated as ‘havens in a heartless world’ rather than as sites of power, politics, subject production, and norms. (pp. 169-170, italics in original)

Individualizing matters of culture and religion, on one hand, reduces them to

idiosyncratic individual beliefs or behaviors. On the other hand, it places individuals into groups “in which subjects are identified with and reduced to certain attributes or practices, which in turn are held to be generative of certain beliefs and consciousness” (Brown, W., 2006, p. 43). Inevitably, these groupings “invoke stereotypes – stylized representations that deal in probabilities and typical features, and flatten out much of the difference” (Phillips, 2007, p. 58). Liberalism demands that these groups be tolerated, while claiming “the tolerating body – whether the state or an unmarked identity – is neutral or secular. All otherness is deposited in that which is tolerated, thereby reinscribing the marginalization of the already marginal by reifying and opposing difference to the normal, the secular, or the neutral” (Brown, W., p. 45). This form of multiculturalism “masks the working of inequality and hegemonic culture as that which produces the differences it seeks to protect,” overlooking the workings of power and histories of domination (pp. 46-47). Phillips and W. Brown both support alternative discourses and practices that are relevant to this project that take into consideration how issues of power, social forces, and justice produce and regulate both individual and group identities.

Notions that all cultures are basically the same and differences should not be challenged, or that “our” culture sets the standards by which others should or should not be tolerated, undermine SEL in that these approaches have a tendency to misrepresent both individual and group differences. These notions of multiculturalism run the risk of minimizing the internal diversity within a group, while ignoring some of the essential differences between groups (Brown, W., 2006; Phillips, 2007). Additionally, issues of representation emerge over who speaks authoritatively on the essence of the group. This

results in power, or political, conflicts over who has a voice in this decision. Phillips (2007) endorses an approach to multiculturalism which supports the aims of SEL, religious pluralism, and democratic citizenship, not only in terms of recognizing similarities and differences between self and other, but also as a basis for shared decision-making. She favors a somewhat loose understanding of *the group* as opposed to the more typical corporatist representation which involves designated authorized representatives.

Her approach:

recognises [sic] the often-crucial significance of group difference in structuring our lives and aspirations, and the importance of achieving a system of representation that reflects more of that difference. While the markers of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and religion continue so profoundly to shape our lives – and to shape the way others view us – they will continue to be associated with key differences in experience, values, interests, and aspirations that should then be represented in the decision-making process. This makes it a matter of pressing concern to ensure an equitable representation of the diversity of identities, interests, and perspectives, but it does not treat measures to achieve this goal as bringing about the representation of *a group*. (p. 168, italics in original)

Phillips (2007) stresses “the importance of treating people as agents, not captives of their culture or robots programmed by cultural rules . . . [even though] this throws up difficult questions about what constitutes autonomy or consent” (p. 176). Phillips claims that “the clear policy implication is that institutions should be developed that will better enable individuals to articulate what they want . . . [making] it easier for people to get their voices (not someone else’s) heard” (p. 178). Her notion of an individual-centered, as opposed to a group-based, process for addressing differences has significant potential for keeping cultural and moral conflicts focused on the content of the different ideas, values, beliefs and/or practices that are being contested rather than merely becoming power struggles. She suggests that, “Solutions to multicultural dilemmas are best arrived

at through discussion and dialogue, where people from different cultural backgrounds explain to one another why they favour [sic] particular laws or practices, and develop the skills of negotiation and compromise that enable us to live together” (p. 180). Rather than falling into a power struggle between clearly delineated groups, differentiated by what in reality are often exaggerated extraordinary differences in values and perspectives, Phillips’ approach recognizes differences, while favoring SEL’s aim for peaceful coexistence.

W. Brown (2006) also favors an approach that fully recognizes different cultural, religious, and ethnic claims and embraces the potential for the transformation of binary constructions of Self/Us and Other/Them into opportunities for learning from each other. Rather than using tolerance to depoliticize these claims when they surface in the political realm, she advocates:

using the occasion to open liberal regimes to reflection on the false conceits of cultural and religious secularism, and to the possibility of being transformed by their encounter with what liberalism has conventionally taken to be its constitutive outside and its hostile Other. Such openings would involve deconstructing the opposition between moral autonomy and organicism, and between secularism and fundamentalism . . . These deconstructive moves bear the possibility of conceiving and nourishing a liberalism more self-conscious of and respective to its own always already present hybridity, its potentially rich failure to hive off organicism from individuality and culture from political principles, law, or policy. This would be a liberalism potentially more modest, more restrained in its imperial and colonial impulses, but also one more capable of the multicultural justice to which it aspires. Above all, it would be a liberalism less invested in the absolute and dangerous opposition between us and them. (pp. 174-175)

Tracing the opposition between moral autonomy and organicism back to the “Cartesian splitting of mind from embodied, historicized, cultured being,” the autonomous individual is fully rational and in command of a will, while for the organicist

creature, “culture and religion (culture *as* religion, and religion *as* culture – equations that work only for this creature) are saturating and authoritative . . . Through individuation, so this story goes, culture and religion as forms of rule are dethroned, replaced by the self-rule of men” (Brown, W., 2006, pp. 152-153, italics in original). Under this construction, as has been pointed out previously, religion and culture become “background” that an autonomous, rational one chooses to “enter” and “exit” at will, while illiberal beings, lacking an individual will and conscience, are under the domination of irrational religious beliefs.

Eagleton (2009), like W. Brown (2006), recognizes the importance of deconstructing this opposition. He argues that:

One of the most pressing problems of our age, then, is that civilization can neither dispense with culture nor easily coexist with it . . . Civilizations kill to protect material interests, whereas cultures kill to defend their identity. The more pragmatic and materialistic civilization becomes, the more culture is summoned to fulfill the emotional and psychological needs that it cannot handle. The more, therefore, the two fall into mutual antagonism . . . Religion falls on both sides of this fence simultaneously, which is part of its formidable power. (p. 156)

Particularly in the United States, religion is a civilizational matter because of the deeply felt religious beliefs of its founders and the principles enshrined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights, as reflected in Eisenhower’s statement. It is also a cultural matter because of the diversity of worldviews held by its citizens. Without some knowledge of religious beliefs and differences in worldviews, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the difference between political (self/us versus other/them) and moral (good/right versus evil/wrong) disputes waged as part of the current culture wars.

In fact, Eagleton (2009) says, “In some quarters, the language of religion is replacing the discourse of politics” (p. 165). This can be quite dangerous, because as

Hunter (1994) and others (Mouffe, 2005; Todd, 2010; Todd & Säfström, 2008) point out, cross-culture disputes cannot be resolved through power politics because they have a tendency to result in escalating forms of violence with at least one side wanting to eliminate the other. Even in the classroom, “various forms of violence, such as silencing, accusations, and the refusal to listen” (Keith, 2010, p. 560) are used to suppress controversial viewpoints, rather than seeking a respectful understanding of differences. Therefore, rather continue to keep up an illusion that religion is only important in the private sphere, the proposed model of SEL would acknowledge religion’s influence in the public sphere as well, and help students to distinguish between political and moral disputes. In order to do this, there need to be public forms of conflict that allow those with competing viewpoints to recognize each other as legitimate opponents.

### **Accommodating Conflicting Beliefs in the Public Sphere**

In addressing one of the main purposes of democratic education, what Sharon Todd and Carl Säfström (2008) have to say about the notion of respect for those who hold differing points of view, is very relevant to SEL. They suggest that teachers create:

a common symbolic space in order to cultivate what Mouffe (2005) refers to as ‘conflictual consensus.’ For the commonality here is not one founded on respect for the rational subject, nor is it found in our agreement with one another, but on the necessity of living with the tensions that are inherent to our pluralistic world. The creation of such a space requires a willingness to face conflict, to channel that conflict into political forms amenable to the furthering of democracy, and to attend to those moments of ethical disruption that reveal themselves as an openness to the other. If disagreement, dissent, and conflict are necessary to democracy, then the challenge for educators is to offer those hospitable conditions – no matter how conditional – whereby students can learn that holding a view passionately does not disqualify them from participating meaningfully in democratic forms of life. (Education for a Democratic Promise section, ¶ 5)

Their understanding of democracy is largely based on the work of radical

democratic theorist Chantal Mouffe (2005), who views pluralism as an ontological condition of our world. She also views pluralism as being unavoidably antagonistic. Rather than seeking harmony and consensus, Mouffe views those efforts as undermining the democratic struggle. Instead, she describes an agonistic form of democracy that is a continually evolving, contested political practice emerging out of pluralism. For her, democracy is a transformative, political process through which different voices compete for their place in the political order. Therefore, Mouffe's model of democracy is:

one that deals with the inevitable conflicts that arise out of holding different viewpoints, subject positions, and identifications, which are always amenable to change over time. For her, the plural nature of social life cannot thereby be 'overcome,' nor should it be, for if pluralism is to have any political meaning the conflicts it gives rise to need to occupy an important place in any theory of democracy" (Todd, 2010, p. 217).

For Mouffe (2005), democracy represents the struggle between competing interests to establish hegemony. She maintains that, "Since all forms of political identities entail a we/they distinction, this means the possibility of emergence of antagonism can never be eliminated" (p. 16). Therefore, Mouffe claims that current political frameworks are insufficient for taking into account the role of "passions," the various affective forces that are at the origin of collective identities. She says, "By putting the accent either on the rational calculation of interests (aggregative model), or on moral deliberation (deliberation model), current democratic political theory is unable to acknowledge the role of 'passions' as one of the main moving forces in the field of politics and finds itself disarmed when faced with its diverse manifestations" (p. 24). Mouffe suggests that social antagonism be channeled into democratically amenable forms of conflict, which she identifies as "agonism." Mouffe explains it this way:

While antagonism is a we/they relation in which two sides are enemies who do not share any common ground, agonism is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. They are ‘adversaries’ not enemies. This means that, while in conflict, they see themselves as belonging to the same political association, as sharing a common symbolic space within which the conflict takes place. We could say that the task of democracy is to transform antagonism into agonism. (p. 20)

Interpreting Mouffe, Todd (2010) claims, “The transformation of antagonism into agonism therefore involves understanding my opponent not in terms of moral categories (good and evil, for instance), but in specifically political terms . . . conflicting positions are bound by a ‘conflictual consensus’ about symbolic claims to liberty and equality; but how these are defined, imagined, and communicated are contingent – they are the very stuff of *political* disagreement” (p. 218, italics in original). She calls this shift from harmony to agonism useful “in three ways: (1) it gives an unsentimental account of pluralism as having profound meaning in defining political life; (2) it grants different views an agonistic role in the formation of democratic politics; and (3) it offers a *political* language (not a dialogic one) for understanding conflict and how to shape it into democratic practice” (p. 220). Todd also notes that this approach makes us more aware that:

We can never simply assert universal principles (about liberty and equality, for instance) as though they can be assumed to speak for all transparently. That is, it is only through cultural, religious, and linguistic practices that freedom and equality come to have meaning. Indeed, it is in the process of translation through which claims to universality are made that they can be made intelligible at all . . . It is not as if claims to universality in political projects have not altered over time and place – human rights, civil liberties, and foundational political universals such as liberty and equality are continually being expanded to include previously excluded groups. (p. 224)

This model provides a structure and language for recognizing differences and



disagreeing without fighting to the death. This clearly supports the SEL goal for students to develop the disposition for non-violent coexistence with those who do not share their beliefs and worldviews. However, Todd (2010) cautions:

This does not mean accepting, acquiescing to, agreeing with, or merely tolerating different views; this would be absurd. However, it does require a sustained openness to listen to other perspectives and to counter and respond. It requires treating each other as legitimate adversaries who are engaged in debate and struggle over meaning within a set of contesting norms and competing perspectives . . . the very struggle for intelligibility as a political process keeps us mindful of the ways in which universal claims—even those that are well intentioned—are always incomplete and actually depend on dissonant voices for their re-articulation” (pp. 226-227).

By providing students with the space and time to express different views and create a culture of pluralism, Todd and Säfström (2008) remind educators “this work needs to be conducted in an atmosphere where what consistently remains on the table is the extent to which such views can become part of a viable and robust democratic project. This is not an ‘everything goes’ approach to all the views on offer in the classroom” (Education for a Democratic Promise section, ¶ 2). Instead, they offer a notion of conditional hospitality in which expressions of disagreement, dissent, and conflict are channeled into political projects that promote ongoing democratic struggle. Recognizing the limits for practicing democracy in schools, they suggest instead that educators play an important role in orienting students to these expressions by tying them to larger political articulations.

Robert Roemer (2007) also describes a pluralistic space which he maintains exists both in schools and in society that is defined by the limits of tolerable diversity, which is similar in function to Todd and Säfström’s notion of conditional hospitality. Roemer

identifies two types of diversity that are relevant in schools: one type recognizes differences in learning, resulting in pedagogy for diversity; and the other one recognizes the pedagogical value of diversity. He notes “what counts for diversity is a moving target . . . cultural and social influences determine, to some extent anyway, what type of diversity is at any moment consequential for pedagogy” (p. 177). He argues that in order for diversity to be valuable in the schools, “the difference used to distinguish ‘us’ from ‘others’ is such that there is no room for ‘others.’ This is a limit of diversity. It can be identified by discovering that which everyone teaches but for which no one is seen as a teacher” (p. 180). Roemer is referring to how students acquire the civic virtues necessary for citizenship. He claims that this occurs in:

a pluralistic, perhaps even secular, space within which it is possible to act without important aspects of one’s identity, such as religious affiliation, marital status, or sexual orientation, taking on primary importance. The importance these aspects of one's identity might have in the private realm is not replicated in the public realm. To the extent that this public, pluralistic space exists and is constitutive of civic life in contemporary Western culture, the beliefs supporting it qualify as that for which there are no teachers. (p. 180)

These beliefs and practices are virtually taught by all in a variety of reinforcing ways. According to Roemer (2007), “The presumption is that on this matter there is no diversity: a student's life in the schools is public, and therefore different from the student's private life, and in public the student must be able to negotiate pluralism of belief in what is good” (p. 181). This presumption reflects what Eagleton (2009) calls the “liberal paradox that there must be something close-minded about open-mindedness and something inflexible about tolerance” (p. 127). Roemer states, “What might be a boundary that cannot be transgressed in private must be permeable in public” (p. 182). Those who are unable or unwilling to accept this presumption place themselves “outside

the boundary of civic life as that is understood in Western culture . . . [making] it impossible to share life together” (pp. 181-182). This aspect of pluralism does not require individuals to abandon subgroup identities, as Roemer explains:

While public, pluralistic space does not in itself entail that differences such as religious affiliation, ethnicity, and sexual orientation be ignored, either in schools or in society, it does require that such differences be rendered to some degree inconsequential, that they do not trump everything else. Differences that are fundamentally important in private can be noted in public, but when noted they are not to interfere with common life together. (p. 181)

This is in line with D. Miller’s (1997) argument that when religious fundamentalists remove their children from the public schools because they are unwilling to expose their children to other people’s conception of the good life, they relinquish their rights to citizenship. While this language may seem harsh, both Roemer (2007) and D. Miller are emphasizing the importance to society of maintaining an inclusive collective identity among its members. Todd and Säfström (2008) also support the idea that within the school community there is no room for “others” – only legitimate adversaries. They encourage educators to keep the following in mind, “Instead of telling students that the work of democracy is to create one “we” through consensus building, the point rather is to come to an acknowledgement of their implication in creating – and sustaining – exclusionary forms of belonging in holding certain points of view collectively” (Education for a Democratic Promise section, ¶ 3).

Todd and Säfström (2008) view it as the responsibility of the teacher to establish limits on views that directly threaten the ongoing project of working for democracy, as well as to encourage and recognize when “students respond to another’s passionate position with generosity and welcome – even when, and perhaps especially when, they

disagree with this very position” (Education for a Democratic Promise section, ¶ 4).

Teachers that utilize these approaches will be preparing their students to engage in the kinds of conversations necessary for achieving several of the SEL goals related to living in a pluralistic society, as well as learning how to participate in the ongoing redefinition of the limits of diversity.

For this to occur, the tradition of avoiding conflict must be replaced with a culture of pluralism that recognizes the diversity of worldviews present not only within in the classroom, but in society and beyond, as well. Instead of ignoring differences, “expressions of diverse values in the classroom need to be examined in relation to the ongoing political climate, social fears, and available identifications in order to provide students with symbolic alternatives, with new forms of political identification, and new languages that legitimate others’ points of view” (Todd & Säfström, 2008, Education for a Democratic Promise section, ¶ 2). Religious pluralism as an essential element of SEL allows students to develop the skills and language required to confront our deepest differences and discern the distinction between political and moral disputes in a hospitable environment. It is within this public, pluralistic space that students can learn to negotiate the limits of tolerance for moral and political projects which threaten ideals like religious liberty, equality, and fraternity which bond Americans together as a nation of diverse people.

### **Place of Religion in American Society**

Prior to creating the kind of public, pluralistic space described above, schools will need to confront the schizophrenic treatment of religion in America. I will examine how on one hand, the American practice of privatizing religion has resulted in the public

portrayal of religion as radical, violent, irrational, and negatively emotional, contributing to the present culture wars. I will show that on the other hand, the emphasis in religious studies, interfaith dialogue, and multicultural education has focused on minimizing differences, finding common ground, and maintaining cordial relationships. Also, as discussed in the prior section, in a less favorable light, multiculturalism has also resulted in trivializing religion and culture and substituting them for Other. I will argue that these inconsistent and incompatible portrayals of religion, must give way to a more balanced interdisciplinary, cross-cultural studies approach that examines the world religions, as well as the changes taking place in the nature of religiousness in America.

### **Portraying Religion through a Negative Lens**

One of the most damaging effects of the religious-secular distinction that stands in the way of adopting C. Taylor's (2011) three-principle model is the public portrayal of religion. According to William Cavanaugh (2009), this "religious-secular distinction has been used to marginalize certain practices as inherently nonrational and potentially violent, and thus to be privatized, in order to clear the way for the more 'rational' and peace-making pursuits of the state and the market" (p. 10). He argues that the artificial distinction made in Western societies between religious and secular violence has allowed types of exclusion and violence labeled secular to avoid full moral scrutiny. He hypothesizes that:

These arguments are part of a broader Enlightenment narrative that has invented a dichotomy between the religious and the secular and constructed the former as an irrational and dangerous impulse that must give way in public to rational, secular forms of power. In the West, revulsion toward killing and dying in the name of one's religion is one of the principle means by which we become convinced that killing and dying in the name of the nation-state is laudable and proper. The myth of religious violence also provides secular social orders with a stock character, the

religious fanatic, to serve as enemy. (pp. 4-5)

The enormity of violence linked to religion is not dissipating, as demonstrated in Mark Juergensmeyer's (2003) *Terror in the Mind of God*, in which he traces the global rise in violence attributed to religion. Juergensmeyer sees a link between what is happening around the world and in the United States "to currents of thinking and cultures of commitment that have risen to counter the prevailing modernism – the ideology of individualism and skepticism – that has emerged in the past three centuries from the European Enlightenment and spread throughout the world" (p. 232). He views this as a "loss of faith" in secular nationalism. Juergensmeyer argues that "the principle that the nation is rooted in a secular compact rather than a religious or ethnic identity – is in crisis . . . The fear of a spiritual as well as a political collapse at modernity's center has, in many parts of the world, led to terror." He ties this to the "deprivatization" of religion and the uncertainty that results when authority is in question. Juergensmeyer views religion and violence as "ways of challenging and replacing authority. One gains its power from force and the other from its claims to ultimate order" (2003, p. 231). He cautions, "Few religious activists are willing to retreat to the time when secular authorities ran the public arena and religion remained safely within the confines of churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues" (p. 241).

While less violent than many other religious struggles in other parts of the world, the rise of the Protestant right in American politics during the mid-to-late twentieth century and the ensuing culture wars in many ways epitomizes this phenomena. Although very comfortable with the ideology of individualism, this movement surfaced as a reaction to mounting skepticism about what was happening in this country. Fearing

the loss of Protestant hegemony, the growing presence of atheism and Islam in society, and perceiving an increasingly antireligious and immoral government, proponents mobilized to restore what they believe to be the nation's lost religious moorings (Martin, 1996/2005).

Although some may see the emergence of the religious right as a recent phenomena, its roots and presence are deeply embedded in American history. The adherents of the religious right view themselves as the truest embodiment of what it means to be 100% American. This claim stems from the American narratives emanating from the Puritans. Sarah Palin's frequent use of President Ronald Reagan's 1980s references to John Winthrop's "Shining City Upon a Hill" sermon, which he originally gave in 1630, is an indication of this ongoing connection (for example, May 23, 2012 post on <http://www.sarahpac.com/> accessed May 28, 2012).

It was in response to the increasing challenges to Protestant domination in the public schools that the religious right became more visible and even more organized. In the 1940s, concern "that their beloved children would abandon faith in God, live and die outside the church, and spend eternity in hell," prompted evangelical fundamentalist leaders to form Youth for Christ International (Martin, 1996/2005, p. 25). It was out of this movement that Billy Graham and other leaders of the twentieth century religious right began their careers.

As the Supreme Court and the federal government became more involved in dealing with local school issues, such as the *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) decision to end segregation, evangelical fundamentalists became more concerned about increasing centralized government and losing control over curriculum matters. The

1960 election of John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, further demonstrated the declining privilege that Protestants had long enjoyed. Additional blows to Protestant domination were the Supreme Court decisions involving *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962) and *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963) banning Bible reading and teacher-led prayers. Paul Weyrich, an organizer for the religious right during this period, maintains that the 1978 U.S. Internal Revenue Service threat of denying Christian schools tax-exempt status was the tipping point (Martin, 1996/2005, p. 173). It appears that it was a combination of factors, mostly related to educating their children, more than anything else, that facilitated the rise of the religious right in the 1970s.

From their perspective, conservative Christians felt directly under attack by the federal government. They could no longer “maintain a Protestant hegemony in the nation and in the education of its youth” without running into possible government interference (Fraser, 1999, p. 175). Even those communities that were not affected by desegregation orders felt the impact of these other decisions. This resulted in a call to action by “Christian patriots” to fight to regain control of a Protestant America by becoming more actively involved in local and national politics.

Currently lacking visible leadership, like the structure once provided by the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition, a broad-based religious right coalition still exists. Signs of it are visible through those who continue to coalesce around Sarah Palin and the Tea Party movement (Bullock, 2012; Lugg & Robinson, 2009). Galvanizing issues for the Protestant right today involve abortion, same sex marriage, and stem cell research, as well as schooling. Once opposed to public funding for Catholic schools, Christian fundamentalists are now advocating for “school choice” and public vouchers for tuition



so that their children can attend Christian schools and not be exposed to worldviews that contradict their family's beliefs. This tension and conflict is only likely to increase as support for a national curriculum to prepare students for democratic citizenship and global employment replaces local curriculum control (Miller, D., 1997).

Public imagery in America reinforces the impression and stereotype that introducing religious voices to resolve conflicts over the common good, only makes matters worse (Carter, 1994; Harris, 2004). Marty agrees with this observation, stating:

In such [situations], faith communities bring more heat than light. What has been called *odium theologicum*, the peculiar and passionate form of hatred among thinkers in faith communities devoted to reconciliation, shalom, peace, is rather harmless when it is confined to the echo chambers called seminaries and sanctuaries. But let it appear in the public sphere, and temperatures will rise along with voices. (in al-Hibri et al, 2001, p. 20, italics in original)

While Marty (in al-Hibri et al, 2001) maintains that this stereotype is not completely accurate, there is enough truth to it that he argues it must be addressed. Marty is pointing to the emotional dimension of religion, which he indicates is most likely to show up in public places where he says it exhibits what Alexis de Tocqueville called “the habits of the heart.” This is likely to include the political sphere, schools and universities, voluntary associations, the marketplace, and just about anywhere freedom of expression may occur. Marty warns that these habits “cannot easily be restrained or suppressed. But they can easily be misused” (p. 17).

Boler (1999) traces this understanding of emotion and religion throughout Western philosophy, beginning with Plato and taking hold in the emergence of Cartesian rationality in the seventeenth century. From a feminist perspective, she argues that “in Western culture, emotion has been most often excluded from the Enlightenment project

of truth, reason, and the pursuit of knowledge” because of the exclusion of women and the resulting “masculinization of thought” (pp. 9-10). As indicated in Chapter One, Boler claims, “The view of emotions as symptoms of the failings and moral evil of women remains a bedrock of Western Protestant cultures. In part because of their association with women’s imperfection in the eyes of God, emotions signify vice rather than virtue” (pp. 41-42).

The explanations above are provided to illustrate how violence, emotions, and irrationality have become negatively associated with religious viewpoints. This very brief overview is intended to shed some light on why there has been such reluctance to recognize the public dimensions of religion. It also begins to address why educators have been reluctant to embrace religious and moral pluralism, as well as engage in classroom discussions involving our deepest moral differences.

Nevertheless, some effort is being made to change this. Niebuhr (2009) has written about the ways that some Americans are building bridges between people of faith. In describing his motives for chronicling these efforts, he says:

What interests me in writing this book is the idea that some people choose to build networks that deliberately cross boundaries in an era in which religious differences are so explosive. Call it a quiet countertrend: It directly challenges violence in God’s name, even if it does not replace it. At its heart, it’s a grassroots educational process in which the goal is to gain knowledge about individuals and their beliefs in a way that lessens fear. It is a new activity in the world, an entirely new phenomenon on our history. It is a social good, a basis for hope, and a tendency that ought to be nurtured and cultivated. (p. xix)

The novelty Niebuhr (2009) expresses regarding conversation and collaboration across religious boundaries may be somewhat overstated. However, his acknowledgment that this is a social good and something to be cultivated supports my argument for

making religious pluralism an essential element of SEL instruction.

### **Minimizing Unfriendly Feelings**

Unfortunately, related areas of instruction, such as religious studies and multicultural education, offer little guidance in how to accurately portray religion. I would add that an unresolved understanding about the function of spirituality and faith in the production of knowledge has also contributed to the exclusion of religion from academic studies, a subject which will be addressed later in this chapter. Regrettably, when the study of religion in higher education does occur, it appears to have also taken the same path of avoiding controversy as has public elementary and secondary education.

D. G. Hart (1999) points out that:

what has been common in the study of religion has been the marked absence of anything that might reasonably be described as religious polemic. Instead of teaching the real conflicts and disagreements that exist among religious traditions, a practice that obtains in other academic disciplines, religious studies has invariably promoted interreligious dialogue . . . discussions of religious diversity among religion scholars have generally assumed that ‘unfriendly feeling is somehow abnormal in a religiously plural society.’” (p. 250)

Others agree that much like religious studies, critical comparison has been difficult because multiculturalism and multicultural education has also tended to embrace the practice to not offend (Hunter, 1994; Keith, 2010; Kamat & Mathew, 2010).

Sangeeta Kamat and Biju Mathew (2010) criticize much of the multicultural education in the United States for its decontextualized, ahistorical treatment of religion in an effort to produce narratives that are benign and palliative to all. They argue that it is a misdirected goal to portray religious communities only in a positive light. Leaving out consideration of moral underpinnings, social histories, and political struggles both within and between religious groups results in misrecognition of members of the group. When this occurs,

“difference is reified and works towards (re)producing a separatist and exclusionary social identity” (p. 366). Instead, they favor an educational approach that does not “cling to difference and augment it, nor [attempts] to relativise it, but overcome[s] cultural misrecognition by transforming the conditions that produce it.” Kamat and Mathew are not alone in recognizing problems caused by over-simplifying or glossing over differences, as well as the desirability of transformative resolutions to cultural conflicts.

As a follow-up to his 1991 publication of *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, James Davison Hunter (1994) wrote *Before the Shooting Begins: Searching for Democracy in America's Culture War* in which he argues that multiculturalism has not equipped “people to come to terms with the cultural differences underlying public controversy” (p. 200). He explains:

Though it seems that multiculturalism approaches pluralism and diversity more seriously than previous efforts, the program actually promotes a vision of pluralism in which differences are flattened out. Ironically, then, the official story is one of celebrating diversity, but as a consequence of its method for understanding culture, the subtext of multiculturalism in all its expressions is one in which the differences among cultures are finally reduced to ‘sameness.’

According to Hunter (1994), the subtext of sameness results from at least three factors which cause multiculturalism to be no more effective than prior efforts to “educate citizens into pluralism.” He identifies the following factors:

(1) *Trivializing Culture* – culture is reduced to life-style choices and collective experiences, frequently discussed in terms of foods, clothing, holidays, folklore, modes of communication and expressing caring, and so on. But in terms of the norms and values that comprise the “commanding truths so deeply embedded in our consciousness and in the habits of our lives that to question them is to question reality itself” (p. 200), such as

religious beliefs, they are presented as matters of individual choice to embrace or reject as one sees fit.

(2) *Relativizing Culture* – beliefs, values, and customs, while they may be different, are presented as if they serve the same functions and/or answer the same basic human questions for people all around the world. Since all cultures function in basically the same way, “one may surmise that no one culture can be shown to be better or worse than another . . . The content of all cultures needs to be respected, valued, affirmed, and accepted” (p. 203). While the intent may be to undermine ethnocentrism, Hunter maintains that is also teaches “children, albeit implicitly, not to take their own culture (or anyone else’s) seriously . . . The particular truths children have been socialized into, and the institutions that embody and communicate these truths, then lose their authority” (p. 205). Knowledge and truth are then viewed as instruments of power.

(3) *Sentimentalizing Culture* – emphasis is placed on cultivating self-esteem and positive feelings about one’s self, which is in line with “the Enlightenment ideal of universal dignity – that all human beings are worthy of equal respect and esteem . . . The net effect of this explicit linkage is a glossing over of Difference” (p. 207). It reinforces the idea that no matter whatever differences that may exist between cultures, all people share common emotions and a common need for recognition and esteem – “we’re really not so different after all.”

In this way, Hunter (1994) maintains that “multiculturalism undermines the authority of cultural norms and cultural institutions . . . Culture is homogenized.” He concludes:

A direct consequence of this is that moral judgment becomes not only

inappropriate, but impossible. Since the substance and content of culture (its truth claims) are, for all practical purposes, hollowed out, we are left with no standards by which we can judge good from bad, right from wrong, excellent from shoddy – except the standard that no one’s feelings are hurt. (p. 208)

Approximately 15 years after Hunter wrote this, findings from interviews conducted during 2008 with 230 18-23 year olds by Christian Smith, Kari Christoffersen, Hilary Davidson, and Patricia Snell Herzog (2011) validate what Hunter is saying. They found that:

American emerging adults are a people deprived, a generation that has been failed, when it comes to moral formation. They have had withheld from them something that every person deserves to have a chance to learn: how to think, speak, and act well on matters of good and bad, right and wrong . . . It is not that emerging adults are a morally corrupt lot (although some of them are). The problem is more that many of them are simply lost. They do not adequately know the moral landscape of the real world that they inhabit. And they do not adequately understand where they themselves stand in that real moral world. They need some better moral maps and better-equipped guides to show them the way around. (p. 69)

In an attempt to avoid coercive moral absolutism and having received poor instruction about how to think about moral issues, the emerging adults in the study were found to be unprepared for coherent and convincing moral reasoning (Smith et al., 2011). The researchers were struck by the high degree of moral individualism expressed, with 60 percent of their respondents indicating “that morality is a personal choice, entirely a matter of individual decision. Moral rights and wrongs are essentially matters of individual opinion, in their view” (p. 21). These emerging adults do not want to be judged, nor are they comfortable judging the behavior of others.

One of things Smith and colleagues (2011) found to be most problematic is the lack of reasoning tools and skills to discern the difference “between strong moral and religious claims that should be tolerated, if not respected, and those that deserve to be

refuted, rejected, and opposed” (p. 27). Another potential problem is the lack of grounding in any articulated moral framework, as evidenced by 72 percent of respondents indicating that their moral knowledge and behaviors are “*based upon ‘instinct’*” (p. 52, italics in original), with approximately 40 percent (the most frequently chosen answer) selecting “*doing what would make you feel happy*” as the criteria for deciding between right and wrong in a particular situation (p. 51, italics in original).

One of the more troubling findings in this data is the hesitancy these emerging adults have about linking their feelings to a shared moral framework or obligations of citizenship. Smith and colleagues (2011) “found that the majority of emerging adults say they do not or would not refer to moral traditions or authorities or religious or philosophical ethics to make difficult moral decisions, but would rather decide by what would personally make them happy or would help them to get ahead in life” (p. 60). This high degree of moral individualism allows one to “think that people believing something to be morally true *is what makes it* morally true” (p. 61, italics in original). Then, when individuals from different cultures believe different things about right and wrong, the parties involved are unable to recognize the difference between political (us versus them) and moral (good versus evil) disputes, seeing knowledge and truth only as instruments of power. When members of a society conclude there are no moral truths at all, it leads “to moral skepticism, subjectivism, relativism, and, ultimately, nihilism” (Smith et al, 2011, p. 62).

This trajectory is exactly what Hunter (1994) is alluding to in the title of his book, *Before the Shooting Begins*, in which he makes the argument that culture wars cannot be resolved through power politics because ultimately they only result in escalating forms of

violence. He claims, “It is only in facing up squarely to the differences implicit within a pluralistic society that the full humanity of all our controversies is made tangible, and that the dialectic central to democratic governance is made vital” (p. 242). Hunter argues that making transformation of conflict the goal, rather than winning artificially polarized legal and political contests, has the potential to change the trajectory of America’s current culture war. He believes this can best be done through “the substantive give-and-take of people living and drawing from different cultural traditions” (p. 243).

Novella Keith (2010) also contends that in actual practice multicultural education frequently employs some variant of a pedagogy of cordial relations: “in which diversity is valued and celebrated, without considering the contentious and difficult. Whether unconsciously or through avoidance, multicultural education thus manages to ignore institutional and personal practices that perpetuate inequality and injustice” (p. 540). Instead, she favors a pedagogy for difference that brings attention to binary constructions of Self and Other and replaces them with a relationship that fosters Self-Other transformation, much in the same way articulated by Hunter (1994) and Kamat and Mathew (2010).

Keith (2010) proposes a model with the teacher as social therapist that is very consistent with SEL: “this involves the teacher having self-knowledge and being a vulnerable self while also fostering an environment in which students connect across their differences, are able to broach difficult subjects, engage in constructive conflict, and are self-motivated to work together” (p. 558). She warns that unless teachers “find ways to address the fears, defensiveness, and other negative emotions” that accompany differences, these emotions will become part of an unacknowledged curriculum that



produces inequitable educational outcomes for students (p. 569). Keith is not alone in recognizing that a failure to proactively address differences produces inequality.

Instructional approaches which have focused on religion as a social phenomena, or from a literary or historical standpoint, have also been influenced by conscious, and sometimes unconscious, efforts to minimize any critical comparison between other faith traditions and the Protestant assumptions that have dominated American public education. According to D. Moore (2007), these approaches have often failed to take into account a range of perspectives needed in order to gain a better understanding of the topic being studied. In many situations, the religious significance has been removed from its broader social, cultural, and political context. She contends, “that our lack of understanding about the ways that religion itself is an integral dimension of social/historical/political experience coupled with our ignorance about the specific tenets of the world’s religious traditions significantly hinder our capacity to function as engaged, informed, and responsible citizens of our democracy” (pp. 3-4). Consequently, she cautions that this fuels culture wars, promotes religious bigotry, and stymies historical and cultural understanding. D. Moore’s arguments that teaching about religion from a cultural studies perspective should be an integral part of the American public schools’ K-12 curriculum supports my premise for religious pluralism as an essential element of SEL.

D. Moore (2007) states that “Secular education thwarts democracy when religion is trivialized, banned, or simply omitted from consideration as an important historical, cultural, and social phenomenon” (p. 198, n. 25). Recognizing that religion has been and continues to be an inextricable component of the human experience, she maintains that

the failure to acknowledge its role in the history and culture of civilizations “sends the message that religion is primarily an individual as opposed to a social phenomenon. In fact, the very notion that religious devotion can be characterized as a ‘private’ affair is itself a Protestant Christian construct and speaks to its cultural hegemony” (p. 5). D. Moore echoes ideas presented by Gutmann (1987/1999) in *Democratic Education*, as well as those presented by critical education theorist Paulo Freire (2000/1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, to ground the theoretical framework for what she proposes the purpose of education *should* be.

Borrowing from Gutmann, D. Moore (2007) asserts that democracy requires that citizens have the skills and virtues of deliberation that enable them to “continually review, interrogate, and debate the underlying values that are promoted in the name of democracy as a central expression of democracy itself” (p. 11). Deliberation in this sense calls for individuals to be able to articulate their own beliefs and positions, as well as evaluate the assumptions of others. This necessitates that the family (parents) and the polity value both diversity and individuality and have a shared role in shaping the moral education of our youth.

This is not easy because, as Gutmann (1987/1999) explains, education in a deliberative democracy requires “our commitment to share the rights and obligations of citizenship with people who do not share our complete conception of the good life” (p. 47). Similarly, D. Miller (1997) says, “religious fundamentalists and other such groups cannot have it both ways . . . [they] can legitimately argue about the content of public education – they can complain if their children are taught in ways that unnecessarily bias them against their parents’ faith – but they cannot claim the right to withdraw from it

altogether” without relinquishing their rights to citizenship (p. 145). Therefore, before our education systems can cultivate deliberative abilities in ways that promote the moral character and civic responsibility that SEL promises, there must be some willingness by parents, educators, and policy makers to allow students to engage with views that challenge those taught at home.

D. Moore (2007) maintains that when this occurs, schools must then inspire and empower students to see themselves as moral agents by helping them to develop critical thinking skills, self-confidence, and humility. In doing so, schools will need to move away from, what Freire (2000/1970) calls “Banking education [which] resists dialogue; [to] problem-posing education [which] regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality” (p. 83). In the banking models, students take in the information and “answers” presented by their teachers. Problem-posing methods respect students as being capable of wrestling with challenging issues and developing their own answers.

Freire (2000/1970) argues that critical thinking must be fostered so that structures of oppression are not reproduced unconsciously. In order to challenge hegemonic or other oppressive structures, D. Moore (2007) agrees that students need to become involved in the conscious social reproduction of an inclusive society which values tolerance and freedom of expression. She maintains that a cultural studies approach, by explicitly addressing issues related to power, enables “the complexity of the cultural construction of value claims [to] be understood more fully and positions scrutinized in light of the democratic values being promoted” (p. 82).

D. Moore (2007) argues that a cultural studies approach offers students the best

opportunity to develop the skills needed to participate in a deliberative democracy and that it is an effective approach to teaching about religion. However, expanding this practice in the classroom will not be easy because of the potential for controversy it poses. Administrators and educators are likely to confront resistance from parents and other members of the community based on prior experiences with intentional and unintentional sectarian instruction and the wide-spread lack of understanding about the First Amendment clauses regarding the separation of church and state. Also, as indicated earlier, those who believe that the Protestant Christian nature of the country represents the “true” intention of the founding fathers, are likely to object to any more than the cursory mention of other worldviews and efforts to legitimize perspectives from other faith traditions. Secularists are also likely to object to any mention of religion fearing indoctrination of the beliefs held by those in power. Additionally, educators who favor simplicity and banking methods of instruction will not eagerly embrace the complexity and ambiguity involved with a cultural studies approach, which as D. Moore indicates, requires “the employment of multiple lenses to understand the subject at hand” (p. 82). These challenges will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Susan Jacoby (2009) offers another perspective on the challenges to this type of education, arguing that, “the United States has proved much more susceptible than other economically advanced nations to the toxic combination of forces that are the enemies of intellect, learning, and reason, from retrograde fundamentalist faith to dumbed-down media . . . Many of these forces combine a deep reverence for learning with a profound suspicion of too much learning” (p. 30). She maintains that Americans lack curiosity and the desire for first-hand evidence of different opinions due to mental laziness and an anti-

intellectual orientation. Jacoby adds, “Nearly all Americans are afflicted by a poverty of language that cheapens humor and serious discourse alike” (p. 7). She also claims that the video/digital culture has resulted in providing a form of education that renders individuals unable to think and fantasize beyond the “prepackaged visual stimuli, accompanied by a considerable amount of noise” (p. 15). Many of these negative side effects related to technology and the media are similar to those that Postman (1996) also warned about. This conditioning also makes it difficult for students to engage in the creation and analysis of the types interdisciplinary cross-cultural narratives that D. Moore (2007) and others encourage.

The cultural studies approach that D. Moore (2007) proposes has the potential to overcome some of the weakness that other multicultural efforts have had in relation to moral education. She advocates a form of moral pluralism that is quite consistent with the model of SEL that I am proposing. D. Moore’s model not only recognizes democratic values such as tolerance and freedom of religious expression, it also explicitly addresses issues related to power. The other forms of multiculturalism discussed have either ignored religion, resulting in a secular form of moral education devoid of attention to conflicting faith-based beliefs, or they have followed an explicit or implicit sectarian model that advanced the prevailing moral perspective of the dominant group without giving legitimacy to any other perspectives. In both instances, by failing to take an inclusive approach to the diversity of beliefs present in society, these other multicultural efforts have also failed to adequately represent the democratic values they portend to promote.

D. Moore’s (2007) approach enables students to become involved in the

conscious social reproduction of an inclusive society. It not only demonstrates the complexity of the cultural construction of value claims, but it also requires that these claims to be scrutinized in light of the ideals of our society, much in the same way that the model suggested by Todd & Säfström (2008) does. Unfortunately, Jacoby (2009) and Smith and colleagues (2011) may be correct that Americans suffer from a poverty of language and lack curiosity, creativity, and the desire for first-hand evidence of different opinions and worldviews. If this is true, it will be nearly impossible to implement the kind of SEL curriculum that I am proposing. However, there appears to be growing interest in the desire to better understand the spiritual dimension of human beings which would then provide the demand for what I am suggesting.

### **Expanding the Definition of Spiritual**

The shift which has been taking place within many religious traditions away from an emphasis on authoritarian dogma to a greater understanding of the spiritual dimension of human beings supports the kind of dialogue in the classroom that an SEL curriculum informed by religious pluralism would provide. Rabbi Michael Lerner (2006) provides a definition of *spiritual* that is useful for this project. He says, “Its focus is on the yearning of human beings for a world of love and caring, for genuine connection and mutual recognition, for kindness and generosity, for connection to the common good, to the sacred, and to a transcendent purpose for our lives” (p. 158). While spirituality is generally associated with religious beliefs, this definition also encompasses many of the views of secular humanists (Epstein, 2010). It also addresses the missing attention to commitments of love that Gilligan (Gilligan et al., 1988), Noddings (1983/2003; 2002), and Levinson (1999) addressed earlier.

In *The Future of Faith*, Harvey Cox (2009) suggests that changes are occurring in the nature of religiousness. Religions are becoming less regional due to globalization, less hierarchical and patriarchal due to increased lay leadership and initiative, and also less dogmatic and more practical. He claims, “Religious people today are more interested in ethical guidelines and spiritual disciplines than in doctrines” (p. 223). While acknowledging that these changes have evoked fundamentalist reactions, he argues that the fundamentalists “are attempting to stem an inexorable movement of the human spirit whose hour has come. The wind of the Spirit is blowing.”

Cox (2009) sees these changes occurring in many of the world religions, including Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, but perhaps most noticeably within Christianity. He has identified three Christian periods: the “Age of Faith” associated with Jesus and his immediate followers to whom “‘faith’ meant hope and assurance in the dawning of a new era of freedom, healing, and compassion that Jesus had demonstrated” (p. 5); the “Age of Belief” associated with efforts to replace faith *in* Jesus with tenets *about* him, including the actions and aftermath of Emperor Constantine to make Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire; and a new chapter in the Christian story that is just beginning to emerge, the “Age of the Spirit” which is “enlightened by a multiplicity of cultures and yearning for the realization of God’s reign of *shalom*” (p. 224, italics in original). Cox further explains:

‘Spirituality’ can mean a host of things, but there are three reasons why the term is in such wide use. First, it is still a form of tacit protest. It reflects a widespread discontent with the preshrinking of ‘religion,’ Christianity in particular, into a package of theological propositions by the religious corporations that box and distribute such packages. Second, it represents an attempt to voice the awe and wonder before the intricacy of nature that many feel is essential to human life without stuffing them into ready-to-wear ecclesiastical patterns. Third, it

recognizes the increasingly porous borders between the different traditions and, like the early Christian movement, it looks more to the future than to the past. (pp. 13-14)

The cover of the April 9, 2012 edition of *Newsweek* featured the headline, “Forget the Church FOLLOW JESUS”; inside the magazine an article by Andrew Sullivan echoes what Cox is saying about a return to following the moral teachings demonstrated by Jesus. Sullivan (2012) writes:

It may, in fact, be the only spiritual transformation that can in the end transcend the nagging emptiness of our late-capitalist lives, or the cult of distracting contemporaneity, or the threat of apocalyptic war where Jesus once walked. You see attempts of this everywhere – from experimental spirituality to resurgent fundamentalism. Something inside is telling us we need radical spiritual change. (p. 31)

Others have specifically recognized the need for a renewed interest in the role of spirituality in education (including Gutierrez, 2005; Lantieri, 2001a; 2001b). Robert Gutierrez (2005) views it as essential to civic education. For him, spirituality is defined as an emotional state that allows one to transcend the material concerns of the world, enabling the individual to “feel as one with other fellow citizens of the community, the nation, and even the world. Such spirituality should not hold religious spirituality as a mutually exclusive consciousness, but it should be able to stand on its own, not dependent on religious beliefs” (p. 71). This understanding appears to be quite consistent with the secularization model proposed by C. Taylor (2011) and discussed earlier in this chapter.

Gutierrez (2005) believes the founding fathers of this nation had this secular morality in mind “not to interfere with the general sense of morality emanating from established religions, but was to be one which the civic politic could count on no matter



what the personal moral beliefs of individuals might be.” He argues that civic education should be based on a set of values that emanate from the principles laid out in our Constitution, along with “a non-ending study of what has led societies to survive and advance” (p. 72). This would enable teachers and students to engage in a moral process “which in part is very settled and in part is open to debate and discussion.” Such an approach is also very consistent with SEL instruction informed by religious pluralism.

Linda Lantieri (2001a; 2001b; Lantieri & Nambiar, 2012), a pioneer in the SEL movement, also stresses the importance of nurturing the spirituality and inner lives of teachers and students. She views the spiritual as “a realm of human life that is nonjudgmental and integrated. It is about belonging and connectedness, meaning and purpose” (2001a, p. 7). Lantieri maintains that “spiritual experience cannot be taught. But it can be uncovered, evoked, found, and recovered.” Like others, she agrees that spirituality involves “the conscious recognition of a connection that goes beyond our own minds or emotions. It’s the kind of experience that sometimes leaves us without words to describe it” (p. 8). This is frequently referred to as the “Mystery” which humans throughout history have sought to understand in an attempt to give meaning and purpose to our lives (Cox, 2009; John Paul II, 1998). Lantieri argues that the First Amendment is misunderstood by too many Americans in that “it certainly was never meant to suffocate such an important part of life as our spiritual experience” (p. xiii). She is in agreement with so many others who contend that “our society has built an almost impenetrable wall” between the outer world of secular education and the inner life of the mind and spirit (p. xii). In order to dismantle this wall or at least build a bridge over it, Lantieri argues that the divide between reason and emotion, religion and science, rationality and faith must be

overcome. It is this understanding that supports my fourth argument for why religious pluralism is an essential element of SEL instruction.

### **Religious Pluralism Acknowledges the Value of Scientific, Religious, and Philosophic Perspectives**

In addition to the reality of unprecedented religious diversity in the country (Eck, 2002), the American commitment to religious liberty is enshrined in the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. However, American educators have been reluctant to address religious pluralism for many reasons, not the least of which has been a fear of the conflict and division that might result, as discussed in the prior section. Yet, another reason is an almost exclusive reliance during the past century on the scientific method and reasoning as the basis for moral understanding (Setran, 2005). An emphasis on science as the sole basis for moral inquiry has marginalized the consideration of perspectives based on intuition, belief in revealed moral absolutes, and wisdom found in religious narratives and traditions. This has minimized “the diversity of perspectives that would encompass true democratic deliberation” (p. 130). If the mission of SEL is to reunite the head and the heart, as discussed in Chapter One, exclusive reliance on the scientific paradigm must give rise to a new paradigm that includes consideration of faith-based religious and philosophical perspectives, as well.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, many of the practices in the public schools began to be challenged by those who sought a greater reliance on science and the removal of all religious references from the curriculum. Gradually more secular values began to dominate school decisions and the content of traditional moral education gave way to more scientific moral improvement projects. This continued throughout most of

the twentieth century, as tremendous changes took place in American society. The teaching of Protestant sectarian values in public schools was unequivocally ruled unconstitutional; and women, racial and ethnic minorities, and even students rejected the social status quo. Schools most notably began experiencing “a crisis of authority” in the 1960s with school desegregation and demands for multicultural education by minorities and women, followed by the students’ rights movement in the 1970s (Banks & Banks, 2003; Grant, 1988; Metz, 1978).

The public schools were charged with implementing a new moral order involving demands such as “racial integration programs, in-school services for persons with disabilities, and efforts to combat sexual discrimination . . . this new order resulted in the breakup of the old world based on local traditions and unwritten consensus” (Grant, 1988, p. 181). The changes in the moral order brought on by new student populations and public expectations presented significant challenges to the public schools. Unprecedented disputes over the “true” source of moral authority came from every direction. Whose culture, habits, and beliefs the public schools are to teach as “right behavior” remain highly contested concerns. In response to these questions, Noddings responds, “In a sense *everyone’s*” (1993, p. 139, italics in original). I contend that incorporating religious pluralism in SEL provides the means to do this, while establishing a new, more balanced, paradigm that takes into account both faith and reason as sources for moral wisdom.

### **Eliminating Science’s Exclusive Hold on the Curriculum**

A review of how this “crisis of authority” arose is in order. During the late 1880s, a group of educators, often referred to as humanists, began to espouse the need for

schools to provide a secular form of moral education based on a common core of values aimed at supporting civic participation. John Dewey (1909/1975) was one of the most vocal proponents of this position, which he presented in *Moral Principles in Education*. Dewey argued against the traditional method of direct moral instruction, which he claimed only taught *about* morals and had very little influence on a student's actual moral growth and behavior. Instead, he addressed a "larger field of indirect and vital moral education, the development of character through all of the agencies, instrumentalities, and materials of school life" (p. 4). Several organizations were formed to support these efforts, including the Character Education Institution, the Character Development League of New York Schools, and the International Committee on Moral Instruction and Training in Schools (Jensen & Knight, 1981).

From their inception, American public schools have been viewed as one of the most ideal venues for carrying out moral improvement projects. Commenting on the effectiveness of instruction in character development, Charles Peters (1933b) said that, "We in America have in general vast faith in 'education.' Whenever we find some weakness in our social order we bethink ourselves of 'education' through the schools as the way to remedy it. But it is probable that we greatly overestimate the potency of formal education as a means of affecting conduct," (p. 214). Peters (1933a; 1933b), like Dewey, was involved in early efforts to apply scientific research methods to test the effectiveness of character education strategies in preventing and reforming antisocial behavior.

As one of the leading proponents of the progressive "scientific movement" in education, Dewey advocated the integration of instruction with life experience and

opposed the traditional, direct, subject specific approach to education. Operating out of concern for the fragmented and mechanized world that was taking shape, Dewey (1916/2007) argued, “Moral education in school is practically hopeless when we set up the development of character as a supreme end, and at the same time treat the acquiring of knowledge and the development of understanding, which of necessity occupy the chief part of school time, as having nothing to do with character,” (p. 258). He and his colleagues favored a more indirect approach of addressing character development across curriculum areas, as opposed to isolated “character” lessons.

Hugh Hartshorne (1930) also agreed with Dewey that new instructional methods were needed. The approaches suggested by Dewey (1909/1975; 1916/2007), Hartshorne, and their colleagues were meant to ensure that moral education did not revert to an unquestioned indoctrination of the code of conduct practiced by one dominant group or conglomeration of groups. Dewey and Hartshorne argued that their approaches would allow students to be socialized with an awareness of multiple perspectives without promoting or dismissing the underlying beliefs which shape one’s moral conscience.

Hartshorne and Mark May were responsible for the largest character education evaluation project during the late 1920s. They analyzed the results of tests given to 11,000 students, and concluded that there was “no correlation between the students’ behavior and specific training in good moral habits or virtues,” (Jensen and Knight, 1981, p. 96). Writing about the need to develop new methods for training teachers to teach character education, Hartshorne (1930) said:

We no longer derive our ethical standards from established authorities, whether of church, state, family, convention, or philosophical system. We may feel uneasy and lost without such authorities even while we repudiate them . . . we are left

without the effective weapon by which our fathers succeeded in cowing us into proper submission to established ways of acting and thinking – the weapon of moral certainty. (p. 202)

Hartshorne (1930), like Dewey, argued that schools would need to do more than provide “preachments, courses, activities, and moral tone.” Although he made these observations more than eighty years ago, the strategies he proposed are quite consistent with the aims of SEL. Hartshorne said that schools would need to create an environment based on:

a plane of respect for all persons involved in them. Such respect implies trust, courtesy, personal interests, concern for difficulties and limitations, enlarging contacts and opportunities, free discussion of moral problems and ideals, and tolerance of differences of opinion. But the school which makes possible this thoroughgoing humanizing of all its personal relations has yet to be built. (p. 204-205)

Writing about the social life of France around the same time period as Dewey at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Durkheim (1922/2002) argued, if morality is to be constructed independent of any theological conception in a secular, democratic nation, moral authority must then rest in society as a whole. He stated that because religion and morality have been so entangled, it is difficult to separate them. Yet, in separating them, a social being must take the place of God, the ultimate rule maker. In assuming this role, society must be accepted as “something other than a sum of individuals; it must constitute a being *sui generis*, which has its own special character distinct from that of its members and its own individuality different from that of its constituent individuals” (p. 60). Durkheim’s view is different from Dewey’s more privatized Americanized interpretation of the individual and society as one (Dill, 2007).

Dewey’s (1909/1975) “morality through experience” model relies on a

constructed common moral conscience that emerges out of ongoing shared experiences, dialogue, and critical engagement that begins as a part of a child's schooling process. Durkheim (1922/2002) instead maintained that the individual needs "an end that transcends him . . . some objective for the need for devotion and sacrifice that lies at the root of all moral life" (p. 260). Both Dewey and Durkheim believed that religions would go away, and instead, the secular society would form a collective conscience which would set the nation's moral rules, anchored in the evolving history and shared experiences of its people.

However, religion has yet to be replaced by a well-defined collective conscience in America, as predicted by Dewey. Instead, Eagleton (2009) argues that "religion has proved far and away the most powerful, tenacious, universal symbolic form humanity has come up with" (p. 165). He maintains that no "other symbolic form has managed to forge such direct links between the most absolute and universal of truths and the everyday practices of countless millions of men and women." Eagleton concludes, "Religious faith has established a hotline from personal interiority to transcendent authority – an achievement upon which the advocates of culture can only gaze with envy" (p. 166).

Unlike those who envisioned the end of religion, replaced by society as the source of moral authority, liberal Protestant educators, like George Albert Coe and Hartshorne, found the new direction in moral education quite compatible with their religious beliefs. They, too, rejected the direct teaching of codified virtues and instead advocated "scientific and democratic decision making about moral and social issues" (Setran, 2005, p. 108). Liberal Protestant theologians and liberal educational theorists were allies of

liberal progressive education. “Both sought to deemphasize the transmission of authoritative content and to emphasize instead the functional value of content derived from democratic inquiry. Both were indebted to evolutionary theory and to the scientific mindset it fostered” (p. 112). Both were also optimistic about the role of education in furthering “a ‘procedural democracy’ [that] would free students from the tyranny of authoritative teachers and/or moral content and allow for flexibly developing values appropriate to concrete situations” (p. 114). Coe, in particular, viewed this approach as consistent with “his social gospel-oriented understanding of the Kingdom of God” (p. 108). He even advocated that the term “kingdom of God” be substituted with “democracy of God” to more accurately reflect the intent of the American experiment in self-governance.

In Coe’s view, ideals such as equality and justice, the descriptive or substantive aims of democracy, were intertwined with participation in decision-making, the procedural aim of democracy. He was quite critical of the character education schools were providing because it failed to provide students with the process skills to question and address the ill effects of the emerging industrial order, such as poverty and unemployment, as well as the impotency of existing codes of conduct to respond to the modern world of competitive marketing and self-centered cooperation. Using the “example of a corporate leader who was ‘cooperatively’ developing unjust labor policies, [Coe] surmised that the failure to surround individual virtues with the socio-economic context within which they would be practiced meant that the ideals themselves would become unwitting instruments of the immoral status quo” (Setran, 2005, p. 117). Coe argued that schools were not engaging students in critical inquiry about the meaning of



the new social and structural relationships, leaving the students unprepared to apply ideals in the vastly different private and public spheres of modern life.

A shift from character formation to personality development also began to take hold in the 1930s. The traditional Protestant emphasis on personal salvation and civic responsibility fit well with the secular scientific strategies for changing individuals and society, which were gaining popularity in the period after World War I. According to Heather Warren (1998):

Earlier in the century in the face of mass immigration America's [Protestant] churches had extolled the merits of 'character' and 'character education' as the chief way for mediating private conviction and public action that would preserve democracy, but in the late 1930s they sounded this theme in the new key of personality: promoting the inner growth and freedom of each individual would safeguard America from moral decay and totalitarian regimes. (p. 537)

These moral reform goals, which were generally based on faith principles and religious values, were seen as compatible with scientific objectives, which were based on reasoning and secular values, such as efficiency and professionalism.

A schism among Protestant denominations was also taking shape during this same period, in part over the teaching of evolution versus creation in the public schools. While mainline Protestant social thought was evolving to resolve potential conflicts between faith and science, fundamentalists insisted on biblical inerrancy and a focus on personal salvation (Martin, 1996/2005; Zimmerman, 2002). Additionally, Coe and other liberals viewed the focus on individual goodness as a diversion to questioning unjust economic and social policies supported by conservative interests. "Because schools were consumed with personal behavior and virtues designed for a world of close-knit personal relationships rather than the large-scale economic and political realities fostering class,

race, and religious enmities, they were powerless to promote world brotherhood” (Setran, 2005, p. 119).

In the wake of World War I and with World War II taking shape, “mainline Protestants asked schools to transmit an expansive, ‘social’ brand of Christianity, stressing the Bible’s proclamation of peace in this world rather than its promise of salvation in the next one” (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 132). These views clashed not just with the fundamentalist Protestant movement, but with those of Jews and Catholics at the time. Not gaining much support for their efforts to get public schools to address social issues, liberal Protestants turned their attention to ecumenism and then to the civil right movement. However, there is little doubt about the critical role they played in applying the scientific method to moral understanding and gaining acceptance of its use in the public schools during the 1930s and early 1940s (Setran, 2005).

The nation’s emphasis on improving the instruction of science and mathematics consumed much of the attention of the education establishment during the late 1940s and through the 1950s. Interest in child psychology replaced the emphasis that had been placed on moral and religious education (Zimmerman, 2002). An excellent example of how this played out is the development of educational objectives taxonomies that were developed by Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues. Their *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives – Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* was published in 1956 as an outcome of the interest first expressed by a group of psychologists at the 1948 American Psychological Association Convention who were involved in achievement testing. In their initial planning for the taxonomies, they recognized three major domains of educational objectives: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. However, their *Taxonomy of*

*Educational Objectives – Handbook II: Affective Domain* was not published until 1964.

According to Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964) the affective domain includes, “Objectives which emphasize a feeling tone, an emotion, or degree of acceptance or rejection. Affective objectives vary from simple attention to selected phenomena to complex but internally consistent qualities of character and conscience” (p. 7). One of the reasons they provided for the delay in producing this volume was the absence of evaluation materials for grading and certifying student achievement related to character and conscience. They found a lack of “systematic effort to collect evidence of growth in affective objectives” which was in contrast to the efforts to evaluate cognitive objectives which are “easier to teach and evaluate” (p. 16). They found that teachers were reluctant “to grade students with respect to their interests, attitudes, or character development” (p. 17). However, they noted:

To be sure, a student who is at one extreme on these affective objectives may be disciplined by the school authorizes, while a student at the other extreme may be regarded so favorably by teachers that he receives whatever rewards and honors are available for the purpose (e.g., the teacher’s attention, appointment to prestige classroom positions, etc.). (p. 17)

Deep philosophical and cultural values related to the privatization of one’s beliefs, attitudes, values, and personality characteristics, as well as the slow attainment of affective objectives, were cited as barriers to the development of adequate assessment techniques. Krathwohl et al. (1964) opined, “Gradually education has come to mean an almost solely cognitive examination of issues. Indoctrination has come to mean the teaching of affective as well as cognitive behavior” (p. 18). Attributing the public-private dichotomy of cognitive and affective behaviors to deeply rooted Judaeo-Christian values and the democratic traditions of the Western world, they were cautious in suggesting the

need to reexamine our understanding of education, indoctrination, and appropriate behavior.

However, Prichard (1988) argues, “Socialization is not indoctrination until it becomes deliberate, a conscious attempt to transmit contestable social values and at the same time withhold available instruction regarding the critical evaluation of the justification of those values” (p. 477). Yet, issues of indoctrination had become highly contested matters between conservative educators, who “heralded improved methods of delivering unchanging moral content” and liberal educators, who “contended that methodology itself was the moral content of the modern world” (Setran, 2005, p. 122).

Conservative methodology was criticized as being a “tool of propaganda” involving mystical and ritualistic practices and rules, generally related to religious and patriotic ideals, used to maintain the status quo. “Moral decisions were to be reached by locating and defining a problem, isolating it into component parts, suggesting possible solutions, deliberating over probable outcomes, and finally, selecting and testing hypotheses in the real world” (Setran, 2005, p. 123). Science instead of willpower should be the method for determining “right” behavior, proponents argued. “Centered in empirical realities that were ‘common to all’ rather than ‘particular to me,’ science resisted the self-protecting standards of conservative models, investing every individual with the capacity to contribute to moral decisions” (p. 124). Liberals and progressives began to more exclusively place their faith in the scientific method, just as I am arguing that the proponents of SEL have done.

When Dreeben (1968/2002) initially wrote *On What Is Learned in School*, he understood that the acceptance of independence and achievement were contested moral

values, while arguing that universalism and specificity were nonideological matters. In the prologue to the 2002 edition, he addresses his omission in recognizing the “hidden curriculum,” which places unquestioned emphasis on certain moral ideals, while ignoring others, and “that themes treated more narrowly in the past have come to be examined more in their complexity” (p. xix). However, with this understanding, his work remains ever more relevant when he says “the process of schooling is problematic in that outcomes morally desirable from one perspective are undesirable from another; and in the making of school policy the price to be paid must be a salient consideration in charting a course of action” (p. 86). As the aims and content of a 21<sup>st</sup> century American K-12 education continues to be debated, he concluded that it is in fact issues of universalism and specificity which have become the most contested. It is this contest that SEL instruction which does not embrace religious pluralism fails to acknowledge.

The current model of SEL reflects the stand schools began to take in the 1960s. According to B. Edward McClellan (1999), an education historian, “by the 1960s deliberate moral education was in full-scale retreat in the nation’s schools. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s a variety of forces challenged the place of moral education, and schools either rapidly adopted a careful neutrality on moral questions or became entirely indifferent to them” (p. 70). Local administrators feared controversy among community members and an inability to gain consensus on the values and character traits that the moral education curriculum would address. McClellan concluded that if explicit moral education was provided at all, schools were generally opting to implement instructional models that focused on process or skills versus content, avoiding absolute values. It is out of this milieu that SEL emerged, as pointed out in Chapter One.

By the 1980s, schools working with a scientific, skills-based approach to moral education, much like SEL, began to increase in number. Brief reviews of two of the more widely recognized models are provided below:

*Values Clarification Model* – This model was the first to have an impact on changing moral educational practices. It was initially developed by Louis Rath, Merrill Harmin, and Sydney Simon, and later modified by Howard Kirschenbaum. It focuses on instilling a process of valuing, instead of teaching a set of fixed values. The developers produced abundant instructional materials and pedagogical advice, making it easily accessible to teachers. Some favored this model because of its focus on process, while others criticized it because of the relativism it encouraged (Jensen & Knight, 1981, McClellan, 1999, Ellenwood, 2006).

*Cognitive Development Model* – This model is based on Lawrence Kohlberg's six stages of moral development (Kohlberg, 1966). It focuses on activities related to moral dilemmas that encourage students to move to higher stages of moral reasoning. While this model has been around since the 1960s and undergone some revisions, schools have been reluctant to implement it and it has not yet had a noticeable impact on instruction (Jensen & Knight, 1981, McClellan, 1999, Ellenwood, 2006).

About this time, some other trends were also taking shape. There was a growing dissatisfaction within American intellectual circles with scientific and technocratic reasoning as the sole means for understanding and promoting moral development, which will be discussed below. As discussed earlier, shifts were also taking place within many religious traditions away from an emphasis on authoritarian dogma to a greater understanding of the spiritual dimension of human beings (Cox, 2009; Epstein, 2010). In

addition to an increased awareness of spirituality, the role of faith in shaping one's beliefs and commitments – both religious and secular – began to receive quite a bit of attention.

Relevant to this project is that unquestioned faith in the scientific paradigm is one of the commitments that began to come under increasing scrutiny in the late 1990s. In defining what faith has come to mean, Eagleton (2009) expresses it this way, “Faith – any kind of faith – is not in the first place a matter of choice . . . It is rather a question of being gripped by a commitment from which one finds oneself unable to walk away. It is not primarily a question of will” (p. 137). He goes on to clarify:

It is just that more is involved in changing really deep-seated beliefs than just changing your mind. The rationalist tends to mistake the tenacity of faith (other people's faith, anyway) for irrational stubbornness rather than for the sign of a certain interior depth, one which encompasses reason but also transcends it. Because certain of our commitments are constitutive of who we are, we cannot alter them without what Christianity traditionally calls a conversion, which involves a lot more than just swapping one opinion for another (p. 139).

The exclusive faith in the scientific method to explain all human behavior began to be challenged. This led several educators, psychologists, philosophers, and social critics to begin to shed light on some of the short-comings of an educational system focused on information processing while neglecting the importance of meaning making (including Bruner, 1996; Kane, 1999; Nussbaum, 1997; Postman, 1996). One of the criticisms they lodged is that this type of education results in highly individualized notions of citizenship that lack the coherence and commitment to ideals required to sustain our liberal democracy (Eagleton, 2009; Hunter, 1994; Postman, 1996; Smith et al., 2011). They argue that ethical decisions are being reduced to relativistic power contests resolved through legalistic channels, and sometimes even violent means, instead of a critical examination of the moral issues involved. These criticisms have indirectly

helped the SEL movement gain traction by directing attention to the important roles emotions and social interactions have in the learning process and ethical decision-making.

In *The Culture of Education*, Jerome Bruner (1996), a psychologist who played an influential part in the cognitive revolution, describes his movement away from behaviorism and cognitive theories to develop a cultural psychology approach to education. Bruner recognized that a model of the mind based on information processing is limited by what he calls computationalism, an argument “that any and all systems that process information must be governed by specifiable ‘rules’ or procedures that govern what to do with inputs” (p. 5), as evidenced by a reliance on the scientific method and use of machine and computer metaphors to describe human thought processes. He contrasted this with a culturalism model of the mind based on meaning making, in which “learning and thinking are always *situated* in a cultural setting and always dependent upon the utilization of cultural resources” (p. 4), as evidenced in the use of narrative and hermeneutic methods to interpret ideas and events.

Bruner (1996) argues that computationalism requires a degree of clarity and consistency for rule-making and categorization that make it impossible to encompass unforeseeable contingencies. “But while there are a finite number of words, there are an infinite number of contexts in which particular words might appear” (p. 7). He concludes, “We are finally in a time when the intolerant puritanism of ‘scientific method’ is recognized as no less ideologically narrowing than the religious dogmas that it set out to destroy.” Bruner takes educators to task for devoting such “an enormous amount of pedagogical effort to teaching the methods of science and rational thought . . . Yet we



live most of our lives in a world constructed according to the rules and devices of narrative.” He advocates for a system of education that provides greater opportunities for developing the “sensitivity needed for coping with the world of narrative reality and its competing claims” (p. 149). Bruner’s cultural psychology approach to education takes into account the ways in which biological and cultural forces interact within a network of local particulars that frequently result in unique outcomes with competing interpretations among individuals and groups. This awareness of different individual and group perspectives is a key component of SEL (CASEL, 2003; 2005; 2012).

Attention to a network of local particulars is also an essential component of the caring model developed by Gilligan (1982; Gilligan et al., 1988) and Noddings (1984/2003; 2002) discussed earlier in this chapter. Their model focuses on developing caring relationships, taking into account the emotional component of moral growth. It in fact resulted as a reaction to the cognitive development model advanced by Kohlberg. Gilligan found his approach to moral reasoning to be incomplete and overly legalistic. She and other feminist “argued that Kohlberg’s system failed to take into account the fact that women went about the process of moral reasoning in a substantially different way,” paying more attention to relationships, context, consequences, and feelings of compassion and empathy (McClellan, 1999, p. 87). These scholars have argued that a program that incorporates both male and female perspectives would best benefit the moral growth of all students.

In *Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief*, Noddings (1993) states, “In both science and education today, we are beginning to understand the fragility of facts – those peculiar statements wrenched free from context and speaker ” (p. 144). Rather than

telling students *the truth*, she urges educators to “be prepared to present not only the full spectrum of belief but also the variety of plausible ways in which people have tried to reconcile their religious and scientific beliefs.” Nodding further advises, “When we try to educate for intelligent belief or unbelief, we must draw on a multitude of stories and use our best style of argumentation . . . to provide all participants with an opportunity to think things through and to participate in the eternal dialogue” regarding the point of human existence. As Samovar and colleagues (2010) pointed out earlier, religion is one of the major social institutions that form the deep structure “that members of a culture turn to for lessons about the meaning of life and methods for living that life” (p. 49).

Although limited educational materials have been developed to support the caring model, it has been referenced in SEL-related literature as a compatible approach to teaching ethical decision-making (Cohen, J., 1999; 2001; 2010; National School Climate Center, 2007). Integration of the care model and SEL informed by religious pluralism would provide the opportunity for the kind of dialogue Nodding (1993) suggests. However, in order to do this, educators will need to reintroduce much of the philosophical, spiritual, and moral language and methods of knowledge construction that have been eliminated from schooling due to a disproportionate reliance on reasoning and scientific methods.

### **Overcoming Simplistic Dichotomies**

Many contemporary scholars have demonstrated a renewed interest in the desire to address the long standing tension between religious and scientific beliefs (including Cox, 2009; Eagleton, 2009; Diener, 1997; Gould, 1997; Laszlo, 2006; Nord, 1999). Their interest reflects efforts to reconcile the simplistic dichotomies that have dominated

Western thought and divided reason, emotion, religion, science, rationality, and faith for all too long. Tony Monchinski (2011) makes a case that “all too often we conceptualize in antagonistic dualisms; it has to be emotion *or* rationality; its science or religion but it *cannot* be both; its reason *versus* faith” (p. 102, italics in original). Instead, basing his argument on developmental systems theory, he reasons that when it comes to living organisms, their environments, and their worlds, “it is never a situation of *either or*.” Echoing Stephen Jay Gould’s (1997) argument of nonoverlapping magisteria discussed earlier, Monchinski supports the notion that religion and science are “logically distinct and fully separate in styles of inquiry” and that for many people the “two domains hold equal worth and status for any complete human life” (p. 103). While Monchinski personally claims no need for religion, he does recognize how tightly integrated the two are in terms of what has traditionally been viewed as wisdom. He concludes, “science and religion, each in its own way, must be used to advance the human condition, not to hold it back” (p. 104). He urges educators to employ critical pedagogies that look to both science and faith as “we struggle collectively to make our lives more just, caring, and enjoyable” (p. 147).

Gould (1997) traces his argument to Pope John Paul II’s 1996 message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Pope Pius XII’s 1950 encyclical, *Humani Generis*, regarding the Catholic Church’s position on evolution. Both popes affirm that the theory of evolution does not conflict with Church teaching, provided that one accepts “if the human body takes its origin from pre-existent living matter, the spiritual soul is immediately created by God” (John Paul II, 1996, ¶ 5). John Paul II further explains his position:

The sciences of observation describe and measure the multiple manifestations of life with increasing precision and correlate them with the time line. The moment of transition to the spiritual cannot be the object of this kind of observation, which nevertheless can discover at the experimental level a series of very valuable signs indicating what is specific to the human being. But the experience of metaphysical knowledge, of self-awareness and self-reflection, of moral conscience, freedom, or again, of aesthetic and religious experience, falls within the competence of philosophical analysis and reflection, while theology brings out its ultimate meaning according to the Creator's plans. (§ 6)

In *Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship between Faith and Reason* (1998), John Paul II again discusses the distinction and compatibility of science and religion. He gives credit to Thomas Aquinas “for giving pride of place to the harmony which exists between faith and reason. Both the light of reason and the light of faith come from God, he argued: hence there can be no contradiction between them” (p. 58). John Paul II also quotes Pope Leo XIII, who wrote in 1879, “Just when St. Thomas distinguishes perfectly between faith and reason, he unites them in bonds of mutual friendship, conceding to each its specific rights and to each its specific dignity” (pp. 76-77). John Paul II is critical of those involved in the fields of scientific research and philosophy who have “not only abandoned the Christian vision of the world, but more especially rejected every appeal to a metaphysical or moral vision,” which he claims has created a crisis of rationalism that eventually leads to nihilism (p. 62). Acknowledging the mutual autonomy and profound unity of faith and reason, John Paul II contends:

Each without the other is impoverished and enfeebled. Deprived of what revelation offers, reason has taken sidetracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal. Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so runs the risk of no longer being a universal proposition. It is an illusion to think that faith, tied to weak reasoning, might be more penetrating; on the contrary, faith then runs the grave risk of withering into myth or superstition. By the same token, reason which is unrelated to an adult faith is not prompted to turn its gaze to the newness and radicality of being. (p. 64)

Like Durkheim, John Paul II (1998) recognizes the tendency of the human spirit to become introverted and paralyzed when “locked within the confines of its own immanence without reference to any kind of transcendent” (p. 102). John Paul II argues that:

Search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life . . . is all the more necessary today, because the immense expansion of humanity’s technical capability demands a renewed and sharpened sense of ultimate values. If this technology is not ordered to something greater than a merely utilitarian end, then it could soon prove inhuman and even become a potential destroyer of the human race. (p. 102)

Yet, not everyone agrees with the need for a “reference to any kind of transcendent,” particularly atheists, agnostics, and other nonreligious people. Sam Harris, author of *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (2004) and *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (2010), and Greg Epstein (2010), author of *Good Without God*, are two prominent examples. Harris (2004), identified as one of the New Atheists, claims:

If there are right and wrong answers to ethical questions, these answers will be best sought in the living present . . . If ethics represents a genuine sphere of knowledge, it represents a sphere of potential progress (and regress). The relevance of tradition to this area of discourse, as to all others, will be as a support for present inquiry. Where our traditions are not supportive, they become mere vehicles of ignorance. The pervasive idea that religion is somehow the source of our deepest ethical intuitions is absurd” (p. 171, italics in original).

Harris (2004) supports “finding approaches to ethics and to spiritual experiences that make no appeal to faith” because he maintains that “there is no reason whatsoever to think that we can survive our religious differences indefinitely” (p. 224). He argues that religious violence is still with us because there is no real foundation within the canons of any faith tradition for religious tolerance and religious diversity. Harris insists:

If our tribalism is ever to give way to an extended moral identity, our religious beliefs can no longer be sheltered from the tides of genuine inquiry and genuine criticism . . . Where we have reasons for what we believe, we have no need of faith; where we have no reasons, we have lost both our connection to the world and to one another . . . The only thing we should respect in a person's faith is his desire for a better life in this world; we need never have respected his certainty that one awaits him in the next. (p. 225, italics in original)

Grounding his thesis in the latest developments in neuroscience, Harris (2010)

objects to Gould's (1997) notion of nonoverlapping magisteria arguing that it cannot possibly be true. Harris says:

Meaning, values, morality, and the good life must relate to facts about the well-being of conscious creatures – and, in our case, must lawfully depend upon events in the world and upon states of the human brain. Rational, open-ended, honest inquiry has always been the true source of insight into such processes. Faith, if it is ever right about anything, is right by accident . . . Only a rational understanding of human well-being will allow billions of us to coexist peacefully, converging on the same social, political, economic, and environmental goals. A science of human flourishing may seem a long way off, but to achieve it, we must first acknowledge that the intellectual terrain actually exists. (pp. 6-7)

According to Harris (2004; 2010), the New Atheists, including Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens, and himself, see no possible compatibility between religion and science, aiming instead to destroy religion through the use of science. They also clearly view religion as an impediment to not only science but moral behavior, as well. However, Epstein (2010), an avowed Humanist, who also does not believe in God, is skeptical about an overreliance on science, saying, "Such language raises concern that the new atheism is cut off from emotion, from intuition, and from a spirit of generosity toward those who see the world differently" (p. xvi). Rather than engaging in war between religious and nonreligious people, Epstein advocates for the kind of energetic religious pluralism espoused by Patel (2008) and upon which this project is based.

### **Fostering a Common Morality**

Epstein (2010) has identified “three specific issues related to religious pluralism that need to be addressed in order for us to be good together, with or without God: religious literacy, interfaith cooperation, and the inclusiveness of religious pluralism” (p. 157). With regard to religious literacy, he supports teaching about religion in public schools provided atheism and Humanism are presented as more than footnotes to other religious traditions. He complains that “Humanism, secularism, and atheism have been unstudied, underresearched, and otherwise ignored by everyone from scholars of religion to the popular media” and reminds us that “one in five young people in America now considers him- or herself nonreligious” (p. 158). Epstein also points to the importance of interfaith cooperation on big issues, such as climate change, church-state separation, arms reduction, poverty, and torture. Unlike those who envision the end of religion, he advises:

Dream if you wish about a time when religion will be no more. No one can stop you. But in the mean time, reason requires us to acknowledge that religion is here to stay, and we human beings may not be if we do not find the collective moral motivation to beat back climate change, rein in terrorism before it realizes its most destructive hopes, and prevent the erosion of our democracies as economies shift and hopes are dashed. (p. 159)

In order for the type of cooperation and inclusive religious pluralism that G. Epstein (2010) envisions, he recognizes that deliberate effort will need to be made to invite not only frequently omitted religious minorities, particularly Muslims, to participate, but also Humanists, atheists, agnostics, and other nonreligious. Rather than allow *faith* to become “a cheap euphemism for belief in God, miracles, and the supernatural, as opposed to reason, empirical evidence, and this-worldly ethics,” he

suggests that inclusive language, such as “all religious and ethical perspectives” be used when recruiting people to participate in interfaith initiatives; specifically identifying and including individuals who will provide a nonreligious perspective in group discussions, program presentations, and/or to offer an invocation; and most importantly, by learning and teaching about nonreligious traditions (pp. 163-164).

Epstein (2010) embraces Niebuhr’s (2009) definition of *interfaith* as a grassroots educational process that recognizes similarities as well as differences. Like others already mentioned, he also recognizes the limits of science and reason in addressing the human desire, of both religious and nonreligious people, for experiential things of the heart; things often found in the ritual, culture, and community provided by religion. Epstein favors an approach much like the one that I am advancing that makes it possible for people with very different worldviews to come together and fashion a common morality to solve problems they share.

Paul Diener (1997) is another scholar who advocates for religious pluralism and he suggests an approach to morality that views religion and faith as relational, as opposed to inseparable or separable. Diener maintains that faith has an important role in shaping one’s beliefs – whether they are religious or secular. He urges religious and secular philosophical ethicists to develop an “attitude of hope” that allows them to be open to moral insights they can learn from each other, fostering a kind of reciprocity and interaction that makes a common morality possible in a pluralist society. He argues that all moral codes depend on faith by “simply believing in what cannot be proved.” Diener asserts:

At the very least, in order to know and do what is right or good, I have to believe



that this is what I ought to do. In order to treat others kindly and lovingly, I have to believe that I ought to be such a person. To truly practice honesty, compassion, and other virtues, I have to believe these qualities are real and of value. (p. 54)

Pointing to newer understandings of reality that recognize that “an individual is both separate and related, individual and social,” not “an isolated, lonely island” as portrayed in much of Western psychology, Diener (1997) supports his claim that while morality and religion are distinguishable activities, neither is “completely autonomous, without dependencies and influences” (pp. 71-73). He argues, “Both religious and philosophical ethics frequently fail to recognize how greatly each of them has been influenced by its respective cultural backgrounds and traditions” (p. 78). In addition to an attitude of hope, Diener favors an attitude of “principled pluralism and critical openness,” one that is “open to truth and wisdom wherever it may be found” (pp. 78-79).

He asserts:

Being open does not mean naively believing any idea that comes along, for a critical openness includes a commitment to the highest and best truth a person can accept and understand at a given time. In order to be critically open, a person must take a stand somewhere, must have a point of reference from which to be critical. Only those with some sort of identity, who to some extent know who they are and what they believe and value, are truly able to exercise critical openness. It is doubtful that a person lacking such an identity will be secure enough for genuine openness. (p. 79)

However, Diener, (1997) cautions that “religious traditions must be convinced of the need for moral consensus, a common morality, a global ethic. They must speak truthfully and forthrightly, bearing witness to their beliefs and convictions. They must also seek ways of communicating with people who speak other moral languages.” Quite relevant to this project, he also insists religions “must also be aware of religious pluralism and realize that no one religious group can dominate. Any unity achieved in their efforts

will be a unity with diversity” (p. 94). This is the kind of unity, based on the varied beliefs of religious and nonreligious people, that I maintain is an essential element of SEL if students are to eventually form the type of identity that allows them to exercise the critical openness Diener describes. Identity formation will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter, but is important to mention here because of the important role religion plays as an identity marker for the vast majority of Americans.

### **Granting Recognition to Intuition and Revealed Knowledge**

An important caveat of forming the common consensus that Diener (1997) and Epstein (2010) describe is one’s openness “to truth and wisdom wherever it may be found.” Scientific precepts only provide part of the process of knowing and understanding. Regarding the difficulty in measuring EI, Keith Oatley (2004) and Zeidner and colleagues (2004) urged the use of other sources of understanding, including coherence truth and personal truth used in psychology, as indicated in Chapter Two. While they agree that these sources of understanding are important, they point out that they are also highly sensitive to cultural values and therefore, not inclined to qualify as scientific truth that can be measured reliably and validly. Oatley maintains that is no reason to dismiss their usefulness and argues too much emphasis has been put on psychometrics. He cautions, “We must be careful not to confuse science with scientism (i.e., the belief that the procedures of science are potentially capable of solving all human problems” (p. 221).

Ervin Laszlo (2006), a philosopher of science and systems theorist, also appreciates the value of recognizing different ways of knowing and understanding. Laszlo bases his thesis on what he identifies as “science’s ‘re-enchanted’ concept of the

cosmos”:

At science’s advancing frontiers, leading theoreticians are discovering that the universe is not a domain of unconscious matter moving about in passive and empty space. They find that the universe is a dynamic co-evolving system, interconnected at all scales and in all domains. They recognize that this system conserves and conveys not only energy, but also information. And many of them are coming to the insight that in this universe consciousness is just as fundamental as energy, and more fundamental than matter. A consciousness and information imbued, interlinked, and co-evolving cosmos provides ground not just for an encounter between science and spirituality. It offers scope for the realization of a perennial vision: the discovery of a shared foundation of modern society’s empirically based and rationally elaborated scientific world picture, and of the intuitively grasped visionary concept that has informed humanity’s great mystical, religious, and metaphysical traditions. Science’s ‘re-enchanted’ concept of the cosmos gives us hope that we may be finding at last the ground that will bring about consistency and coherence between the rational left and the intuitive right sides of our brain – the common ground that will create a true *re-union* between rational science and visionary spirituality. (p. 5, italics in original)

Laszlo (2006) is not the only one who recognizes that intuition and revealed knowledge can also contribute valuable information, particularly with regard to human behavior. As John Paul II stated above, “the experience of metaphysical knowledge, of self-awareness and self-reflection, of moral conscience, freedom,” (1996, ¶ 6) enables us to continue to search for meaning when we come to the limits of science. He also advances the following argument (1998):

It is necessary not to abandon the passion for ultimate truth, the eagerness to search for it or the audacity to forge new paths in the search. It is faith which stirs reason to move beyond all isolation and willingly to run risks so that it may attain whatever is beautiful, good, and true. Faith thus becomes the convinced and convincing advocate of reason. (p. 76)

The point of this discussion is that an emphasis on science as the sole basis for moral inquiry prohibits knowing based on intuition and the consideration of perspectives based on modes of knowing most typically associated with religious experiences. This minimizes “the diversity of perspectives that would encompass true democratic

deliberation” (Setran, 2005, p. 130). However, in order for public schools to recognize the potential the study of religion has in serving as a source for guiding moral reasoning and right behavior, educators must be willing to acknowledge sacred texts and traditions as legitimate sources of wisdom. In spite of the constitutionality of doing this, legitimacy has primarily been ascribed only to empirical evidence and scientific reasoning largely due to the objections of both nonreligious people and religious people who have wanted only their particular beliefs taught (Lester, 2007). These objections to the model of SEL that I am proposing will be addressed in the next chapter.

### **Learning From and With Religion**

Warren Nord (1999; Nord & Haynes, 1998), a long-standing advocate for including the study of religion across the public school curriculum, maintains that, “When we uncritically initiate students into one way of thinking and systematically ignore the alternatives, we indoctrinate them and marginalize them in the process” (1999, p. 32). Additionally, he argues:

Because we disagree deeply about how to make sense of nature, it is profoundly illiberal to teach students to use only conceptual nets of science. Indeed, if students are to think critically about science rather than simply to accept it on authority, as a matter of faith, they must understand the religious alternatives. They must be initiated into a critical conversation about the nature and possible limits of science and about its relationship to various religious traditions. (p. 32)

Religions have centuries of life lessons and stories they can share with nonreligious citizens, as well as those from different traditions, regarding not only nature, but also right behavior, morals, and ethics (Cox, 2009; Diener, 1997; Eagleton, 2009; Nash, 1999; Nord, 1999; Nord & Haynes, 1998). To eliminate religion from the curriculum, or only draw attention to religion inspired violence, ignores the wisdom used

throughout human history to resolve conflicts and live peacefully in community with others (Carter, 1994). Additionally, drawing on this wisdom, accentuates the diversity of subcultures that form our present day American culture. “A system of education must help those growing up in a culture find an identity within that culture. Without it, they stumble in their effort after meaning. It is only in the narrative mode that one can construct an identity and find a place in one’s culture. Schools must cultivate it, nurture it, cease taking it for granted” (Bruner, 1996, p. 42). Learning from and with religion will help to provide this kind of education.

Stepan Ellenwood (2006) agrees with Bruner about the importance of narratives in understanding moral issues. He argues that developing Aristotle’s “habits of right action” and providing a moral school climate are not enough. Processing complex moral dilemmas requires more than a sophisticated set of thinking procedures related to cognitive functioning. Ellenwood uses Bruner’s terms to describe two modes of mental functioning: propositional thinking and narrative thinking. Ellenwood defines propositional thinking as, “a ‘logico-scientific’ attempt to arrive at conclusions which are abstract and independent” (p. 36). He distinguishes these two modes of mental functioning as follows:

Narrative thinking is enmeshed with people and events, with time and place. It is concrete and context-dependent, whereas propositional thinking is abstract and context-independent. To think narratively is to think in story form. Actions and ideas are lived out in the intuitions, intentions, decisions, and experiences of each individual. While propositional thought may be more highly regarded for many human ends and in academic settings, narrative thinking, in many ways, is more fitting and more effective in developing complicated moral understanding of the lives of young students, even in school settings. (pp. 36-37)

Recognizing “the importance of literature and culture in influencing our moral

compasses,” Ellenwood (2006) concludes, “Literature and biography can provide the productive connections between affective and cognitive ways of thinking” (p. 37). He argues that this link is needed to ensure that commitment to abstract principles like honesty, fairness, kindness, justice, equality, respect, and courage can be lived out in choosing right over wrong actions. He asserts “that analytic thought can inform intuitions and feelings, while at the same time intuitions and feelings can inform logical analysis” (p. 37). “Good stories draw us to the nuances of complex situations and this is an ideal opportunity for teachers to help students practice the habits of careful observation and precise language” (p. 43). Ellenwood claims that providing students with a rich and refined vocabulary that allows them to capture and respect subtleties and nuances is necessary so that these terms can be used to give meaning to real-life situations. This kind of careful and constant reflection is also key to achieving SEL’s goal for developing ethical decision making capabilities.

In addition to narrative inquiry, hermeneutics and heuristic inquiry are other methods of exegetical analysis and meaning making through interpretation or translation of texts and storytelling that can also be integral components of SEL, incorporating lessons from one’s own experiences, as well as from sacred texts and philosophic traditions. Use of these methods provides the opportunity to address the present spiritual void in public education, along with reasserting the importance of meaning making. Although having a long history in the study of religion and literature, Richard Rorty reveals the existing prejudice against non-scientific ways of knowing, when he writes, “‘Hermeneutics’ has a primarily negative meaning: it is something which is *not* scientific inquiry, as such inquiry has been traditionally understood” (Rorty et al., 1982, p. 1, italics

in original). However, this method continues to be a valid approach to interpreting literature and religious texts. It also has the potential to be used in SEL to illustrate how throughout history human beings have dealt with moral development and ethical dilemmas in an effort to provide meaning for one's existence.

While a more recently articulated methodology, "heuristic inquiry, as a method of telling stories, allows writers and readers to share and altogether participate in making meaning of human experiences" (Peña, Guest, & Matsuda, 2005, p. 180). In *Community and Difference: Teaching, Pluralism, and Social Justice*, Roberto Peña, Kristin Guest and Lawrence Matsuda demonstrate this method by bringing together a group of scholars to explore the challenges of diversity and the quest for social justice. Like Zimmerman (2002) who told us, "In the end, debating our differences may be the only thing that holds us together" (p. 228), these authors show that:

The process of writing their stories together has also altogether suggested that *community-in-difference* is possible and worthy of being achieved. Community-in-difference suggests that to combat discrimination and prejudice, and to enhance individual and social experience, it may be necessary to strive for plurality by continually examining the boundaries where difference as deficit and likeness as normalcy end and begin. Lacking such an analysis, it seems not only likely that discrimination and prejudice will continue to blossom but that because of practices and dispositions that favor discrimination and prejudice, individuals and groups will continue to lose opportunities to explore where freedom applies and where freedom oppresses individuals, groups, and society. (p. 179)

Most importantly, what students can learn from these methods is that focusing exclusively on the "logico-scientific," or on cognitive functioning, or on propositional thinking, is not sufficient when dealing with morality and ethics. As has been described, right behavior is constantly being contested and negotiated based on a given set of particulars (Gutmann, 1987/1999; Levy, 2000; Noddings, 1983/2003; 2002; Taylor, C.,

2011). Even Aristotle (1999) recognized that there are no universal expressions of right behavior for one to follow, except to seek the best response among available alternatives to the question at hand. The resulting action is unique to the time, context, and the individuals involved.

Coe, Dewey, and the others progressives, who initiated the “scientification” of moral education, were in large part repudiating the religious dogma and co-opting of values by corporate executives and state officials prevalent during their lives. However, their blind allegiance to the scientific method and rejection of tradition caused them to fail to recognize alternative ways of knowing and to replace one set of prescribed norms with a kind of scientific authoritarianism (Setran, 2005). By failing to value tradition, they may have constrained students in other ways. David Setran argues that instead, the loss of tradition became “a bondage to contemporary ideals as seedbeds of change” (p. 132). Omitting ancestral voices, they “failed to recognize that the wisdom and insights of the past could actually stir individuals to resist the status quo, that tradition could provide alternatives to present practice and thus serve as a critical force in the reconstruction of society” (p. 133). They also underestimated the human need for ritual, culture, and community that contributes to the lasting potency of religion (Eagleton, 2009; Epstein, 2010). Rather than perpetuate the resulting religion-science dualism that has dominated much of education at all levels during the past century, SEL informed by religious pluralism has the potential to provide students with the best knowledge and educational experiences that both domains have to offer.

### **Tying It All Together**

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate that teaching right behavior is



much more complex than mastering a particular skill set or following rules that have been imposed by those with the authority to do so – whether they come from secular, religious, or scientific sources. Right behavior is not static. Consensus about right behavior may only be achievable on a narrow set of ‘moral basics’ (Kristjánsson, 2002) or at the ‘local’ level, such as within a particular group, culture, or sub-culture (Bruner, 1996; Grant, 1988; Noddings, 2002) and then, only for a limited time. Colin Wrings (2006) tells us “the moral life requires constant effort and the sharpest attention, [becoming] increasingly important as we grow older and our actions assume increasing significance, and is awesome in the humility it demands” (p. 98). This requires not only knowing what you believe, but also something about the moral traditions that guide those who do not share your worldview or ethical perspective, but with whom you are neighbors and must share the world’s resources.

For these reasons, I am recommending that SEL instruction must be supported by a philosophical foundation that includes a commitment to religious pluralism guided by an ethic of care. Such a commitment, I have argued, is a critical component for helping to ensure that SEL does not become another hegemonic model of moral education. Additionally, I have shown that a genuine commitment to religious pluralism also necessitates structures within the classroom and between stakeholders to constructively deal with conflict, so that students, school personnel, parents, and other concerned citizens can have their voices heard without resorting to or incurring violence. Lastly, I have tried to make evident that in order to express themselves and better understand others, schools must recognize the spiritual dimension of human beings and teach more than reasoning and scientific ways of knowing. This will require pedagogy and language

that is informed by both psychology and philosophy, as well as the use of materials that enable students to learn from and with religion. These issues will be addressed in the next chapter.

However, parents in both public and private schools may not always support the efforts of teachers to introduce their children to worldviews that differ from those of the family (Gutmann, 1987/1999). Yet, not talking about the variety of moral perspectives present in American society, including those informed by agnosticism and atheism, compromises the ability of schools to help students develop a moral self and construct an authentic identity, as well as instill in students a sense of national unity and commitment to democratic values such as tolerance and freedom of expression, while respectfully acknowledging the deep differences of beliefs held by individuals (Brighouse, 2006). The failure to confront these critical challenges makes it nearly impossible for schools to effectively foster moral behavior, ethical decision-making skills, and the ability to deliberate public issues that SEL advocates promise.

Living in a liberal democracy requires an understanding of the norm of reciprocity. Harry Brighouse (2006) argues that this requires an openness to discussing the role religions have had, and continue to have, in defining one's beliefs and commitments. All students, in both public and private schools, need to be taught that religious differences should not result in the silencing of debate, but instead "religious and non-religious perspectives [should be] advanced and evaluated in a spirit of mutual respect" (Brighouse, 2006, p. 83). Instruction must take on the challenges of diversity which allows for the nonrepression and nondiscrimination of individual beliefs in the rational consideration of different views of the good life and the good society (Gutmann,

1987/1999). We must learn to construct community-in-difference (Peña, Guest, & Matsuda, 2005). These are of among the many challenges to implementing the model of SEL that I am advocating.

In the next chapter, I will examine some of the challenges that educators will need to consider and how they might go about incorporating religious pluralism in the SEL curriculum. I will examine issues that relate to: (1) the role religious pluralism plays in providing students with the language to construct a moral self and an authentic identity; (2) preparing teachers to discuss religion and other spiritual matters in the classroom; and (3) sharing power and fostering collaboration between educators, parents, and community members to support the proposed model of SEL in the schools.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**CHALLENGES TO INCORPORATING RELIGIOUS PLURALISM**  
**IN THE SEL CURRICULUM**

In the prior chapter, I argued that religious pluralism is an essential element of SEL from a macro, or philosophical, point of view. However, defending this claim merely serves as the bases for incorporating religious pluralism in the SEL curriculum in order to support human flourishing at the micro, or psychological, level. In this chapter, I will argue that incorporating religious pluralism will increase the likelihood of meeting the core SEL goals for students to develop a moral self and an authentic identity, as well as dispositions for non-violent coexistence with those who do not share their beliefs and worldviews. Acknowledging that individuals in American society look to different sources of authority for meaning making and guidance on right behavior must be articulated in the way the SEL outcomes for self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, healthy relationships, and responsible decision-making are dealt with. If these SEL goals are to be achieved, they must be addressed not only as a part of student instruction but also in terms of the environment in which school-family-community interaction occurs, as indicated in Chapter Two.

Among the biggest challenges for doing this is an American reluctance to recognize the public dimension of religion and other spiritual matters, as well as a diminished appreciation of the place of the good in our modern moral outlook

(MacIntyre, 2008; Taylor, C., 1989). These challenges are further complicated by an impoverished vocabulary to express these matters (Hunter, 1994; Smith et al., 2011; Taylor, C., 1989). I maintain that this situation impacts the extent to which students have the opportunity to develop an authentic identity and live flourishing lives. According to C. Taylor (1989), “Our identity is what allows us to define what is important to us and what is not . . . The condition of there being such a thing as an identity crisis is precisely that our identities define the space of qualitative distinctions within which we live and choose” (p. 30). He also claims that in order to allow students to construct an authentic identity, they must have the language to articulate their moral and spiritual intuitions. Many other scholars, who will be discussed in this chapter, also regard this as essential to human personhood and a crucial feature of human agency.

I will argue in this chapter that SEL informed by moral and religious pluralism gives educators the opportunity to help students develop the language and reflexivity to incorporate their ever-changing experiences into a healthy, integrated sense of self along with an understanding of citizenship in an inclusive environment. The reality that individuals look to different sources of authority for meaning making and guidance on moral issues cannot be ignored. While the resources that individuals rely upon can include, but are not limited to, one’s own experiences, friends, family traditions, society, popular culture, and the media, religion has been and continues to be a dominant force in shaping the moral and ethical identity and behavior of many people (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). When Congress passed the Religious Freedom Act in 1978 to end a history of intolerance to Native American religions, it wrote into the Act a recognition of the importance religion plays in shaping one’s identity. The Act, in part,

states:

Whereas the religious practices of the American Indian (as well as Native Alaskan and Hawaiian) are an integral part of their culture, tradition and heritage, such practices forming the basis of Indian identity and value systems . . . it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions. (quoted in Fleming, M., 2001, p. 20)

Yet, schools in pluralistic democratic societies like the United States continue to be challenged to balance the value ascribed to self-actualization and autonomy along with the need to socialize our youth in a manner which will foster a commitment to shared values and democratic processes that will sustain our national unity. The model of SEL that I am proposing is based on Gutmann's (1987/1999) notion of democratic education that supports an inclusive form of social reproduction that prepares children to participate in democratic politics, as well as allows them to be members of several subcommunities, such as families and religious, racial, and ethnic groups, that contribute to the identity of the individual. The proposed model also encourages the kind of nondiscriminatory and nonrepressive environment required for students to develop core SEL competencies, such as self-awareness and self-management, along with the ability to recognize individual and group similarities and differences.

Individual and group identities are constantly being renegotiated based on one's interactions with those who represent new or different affiliations (Putnam et al, 2010). As argued in the prior chapter, moral and religious pluralism provides an environment for discovery of self and others within a philosophical framework that supports human flourishing (Levinson, 1999; Levy, 2000). Therefore, I will argue that the proposed model of SEL fosters individual autonomy, as well as social cohesion and the capacity to

participate in shared decision-making around mutual concerns.

However, reversing the current trend regarding the absence of overtly moral language in American schools will require high levels of educator, parent, and community involvement to establish a new paradigm. Conscious effort will need to be made in order to make moral assumptions clear. Additionally, recognition of multiple interpretations of the good life and the good society will need to be incorporated in SEL lesson plans and classroom materials. In this chapter, I will examine these issues as they relate to: (1) the role religious pluralism plays in providing students with the language to construct a moral self; (2) preparing teachers to discuss religion and other spiritual matters in the classroom; and (3) sharing power and fostering collaboration between educators, parents, and community members to support the proposed model of SEL in the schools.

### **Students Need Language to Develop a Moral Self**

#### **Allowing Students to Construct an Authentic Identity**

In order to help students living in a multicultural society achieve the core SEL goals to develop an authentic identity and a moral self, as well as positive dispositions for non-violent coexistence with those who do not share their beliefs and worldviews, it is necessary to have some understanding of the interrelationships between the science and the philosophy behind concepts such as identity, self, emotion, and culture. In *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, C. Taylor (1989) traces the historical roots of modern identity in Western culture from a philosophical perspective. He defines identity as “what is it to be a human agent, a person, or a self” (p. 3). Piaget (Piaget et al., 1981), speaking from a psychological point of view, differentiates between the self and one’s

more socially constructed identity. Piaget tells us:

In effect, the self is activity that is centered on the self. The personality, on the other hand, develops at the time of entry into social life. Consequently, it presupposes decentration and subordination of the self to the collective ideal . . . personality in the strict sense can be defined neither in terms of the self alone nor as the self . . . It is . . . a matter of the fusion of one's work with one's individuality. (pp.71-72)

The notion of work that Piaget (Piaget et al., 1981) is referencing relates to the social roles that comprise one's group identities. Mental well-being ensues when the conscious, permanent self, according to Piaget, integrates one's group identities with one's individuality. These concepts can appear to be overlapping as it has also been suggested that there may be multiple manifestations of the self, including the private, public, and collective self (Matsumoto, 2007). For the purposes of this project, an authentic identity is one in which the inner, private self and the more socially constructed, public self are in harmony. In speaking of the moral self, I am referring to the inner, private self.

The concept of modern identity has received considerable attention in the domains of philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Yet, prior to the 1940s, *identity* was unknown as a technical term. Eric Homburger Erikson (1956; 1959) is credited with coining the terms "ego identity" and "group identity." He chose the term "identity" at least in part because of its interdisciplinary usefulness, linking his inspiration to observations made previously in psychoanalysis, social anthropology, and comparative education. Erickson (1956) uses ego identity "to denote certain comprehensive gains which the individual, at the end of adolescence, must have derived from all of his pre-adult experience in order to be ready for the tasks of adulthood" (p.



56). Erickson explains:

It is this identity of something in the individual's core with an essential aspect of a group's inner coherence which is under consideration here: for the young individual must learn to be most himself where he means the most to others – those others, to be sure, who have come to mean the most to him. The term identity expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others. (p. 57)

According to Andrew Weigert, J. Smith Teitge, and Dennis Teitge (1986), “The term [has] served prophetically to define a problem on which scholars from a wide range of disciplines, methodologies, theoretical orientations, and political leanings were to find common ground” (p. 7). They claim the functions of identity are “to anchor a sense of selfhood, authenticity, stability, and lifelong continuity without empty narcissism or fatuous self-searching” (p. 120). Scholars across disciplines generally acknowledge three major sources of influence in identity construction and maintenance: (1) universal psychological needs and processes; (2) individual personality dispositions; and (3) society and its subcultures (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Matsumoto, 2007).

Psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (2000) have developed a self-determination theory (SDT) that addresses three innate psychological needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness – which motivate and energize human actions and influence one's sense of self. The degree to which people are able to satisfy these basic psychological needs determine one's growth, integrity, and well-being outcomes. Additionally, they found that “intrinsic motivation will be facilitated by conditions that conduce toward psychological need satisfaction, whereas undermining of intrinsic motivation will result when conditions tend to thwart need satisfaction” (p. 233).

Deci and Ryan (2000) also cite research that showed, “increasingly with age, children displayed internalized regulation of behaviors that were originally externally compelled” (p. 238). However, they caution that this process does not happen automatically. “The degree to which people are able to actively synthesize cultural demands, values, and regulations and to incorporate them into the self is in large part a function of the degree to which fulfillment of the basic psychological needs is supported as they engage in the relevant behaviors.” They also maintain “the three basic psychological needs are universal and thus must be satisfied in all cultures for people to be optimally healthy . . . Nonetheless, there is considerable variability in the values and goals held in different cultures, suggesting that some of the avenues to basic need satisfaction may differ widely from culture to culture” (p.245).

In addition to the basic need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in all human beings, emotions also have a universal role in meeting these needs. According to David Matsumoto (2007), individuals are born with genetically encoded underlying dispositional traits that are triggered when a particular emotion is experienced. Dispositional traits refer to aspects and habits of emotion and mind that one displays in behavior and in relationships with others. Piaget (Piaget et al., 1981) identifies these as affective structures, claiming that the moment an experience is felt, feelings elicit well-determined affective structures that have been formed over time. According to Piaget, these affective structures provide the *energetics* for isomorphic intellectual structures, which together result in a response to the experience. Although he considers them distinct psychological processes, Piaget claims, “The ambiguity comes from the difficulty of separating the cognitive and affective elements which closely interpenetrate in the

most varied situations” (p. 9). Both Matsumoto and Piaget affirm that, like cognitive intelligence, these affective structures or dispositional traits, “may be modified and adapted throughout development and the life span via interactions with the [social and physical] environment” (Matsumoto, p. 1301).

Matsumoto (2007) finds that one’s biologically based emotion “program forms the basis of a universal psychological process related to emotion and is a part of basic human nature” (p. 1308). At the same time, he adds, individual personality differences vary, in that “some people are more easily aroused than others – the intensity of response and in the types of emotions that are more easily aroused.” Matsumoto further cautions that individual differences can be mistaken for cultural differences due to the influence culture has on both one’s identity and emotional responses. “As individuals engage with multiple situational contexts with multiple, culturally prescribed social roles, individuals situationally adapt to these, producing alterations in their underlying dispositional traits” (p. 1301). He explains, “Individuals in all cultures, however, probably have multiple senses of self, such as the private, public, and collective self . . . some of which are more encouraged in some cultures than others, and that the relative contributions of each in influencing behavior are dependent on the specific situational context in which behavior is elicited” (p. 1310). The significant point is that science has demonstrated what many philosophers, going all the way back to Aristotle, have said, “humans do not come into the world as blank slates” (Matsumoto, 2007, p. 1290). Even more relevant to SEL, while some dispositional traits are present at birth, they are also subject to change over time in response to social interaction, and therefore, can be influenced by one’s training and education.

Similarly, sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman (1967) tell us that human beings are “not born a member of society . . . [only] with a predisposition toward sociality” (p. 129). They too recognize that “the individual member of society . . . [must] simultaneously externalizes his own being into the social world and internalizes it as objective reality.” In doing so, the individual participates in both the objective and subjective reality of society. “To retain confidence that he is indeed who he thinks he is, the individual requires not only the implicit confirmation of this identity that even casual everyday contacts will supply, but the explicit and emotionally charged confirmation that his significant others bestow on him” (p. 150). Berger and Luckman speak to the importance of relatedness and state that this confirmation process applies to both identities that one likes, as well as those one may not like. They further warn, that unwanted identities tend to reduce one’s sense of relatedness to the group and require a difficult process of re-socialization in order to make changes. This confirmation process, or recognition, plays an essential role in understanding modern identity formation and maintenance.

According to C. Taylor (1991), “our identities are formed in dialogue with others, in agreement or struggle with their recognition of us” (pp. 45-46). C. Taylor (Taylor, C. & Gutmann, 1994) describes this as the politics of recognition. He claims this modern preoccupation with recognition is the result of the collapse of social hierarchies and the modern notion of dignity, as well as the emergence of the ideal of authenticity. C. Taylor tells us, the ideal of authenticity:

calls on me to discover my own original way of being. By definition, this cannot be socially derived but must be inwardly generated . . . My discovering my identity doesn’t mean that I work it out in isolation but that I negotiate it through

dialogue, partly overt, partly internalized with others. This is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity gives a new and crucial importance to recognition. My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others. (p. 47)

Relationships with significant others “are seen as the key loci of self-discovery and self-confirmation,” at the same time opening one’s self to the vulnerability of rejection and abandonment; while on the societal plane, “projecting of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that it is interiorized . . . denied recognition can be a form of oppression” (Taylor, C., 1991, pp. 49-50; similarly stated in Taylor & Gutmann, 1994, p. 36). This understanding is echoed by Nel Noddings (1984/2003) in her explanation that the failure of the teacher to accept the whole student in the education process has a negative effect on the student’s desire to learn, causing him to shut down and often times act out. Paulo Freire (1970/2000), similarly, describes this as the problem of humanization, which will be discussed below.

As for our identity-defining relationships with significant others, C. Taylor (1991) warns against instrumental and/or temporary relationships, as these relations are essential in giving “meaning to my life as it has been and as I project it further on the basis of what it has been” (p. 53). On the societal level, Taylor argues that the politics of equal recognition and the premise of a liberalism of neutrality regarding differences require a shared horizon of significance. This horizon provides a background for determining things that matter. According to Taylor:

Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God, or something else of this order *matters* crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands. (pp. 40-41)

One way to accomplish this horizon of significance in a pluralist society is by “developing and nursing the commonalities of value between us [by] sharing a participatory political life” (Taylor, C., 1991, p. 52). Overcoming the damaging effect of a lack of recognition is also what Freire (1970/2000) is talking about in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire relates this to issues of freedom and justice and what it means to be fully human. He argues that when people are “thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors,” both the oppressed and oppressors are dehumanized. “Because it is a distortion of being more fully human, sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so” (p. 44). He identifies this as the problem of humanization.

Freire (1970/2000) views the problem of humanization as a struggle to overcome the contradictions between opposing social forces. These contradictions refer to the problems resulting from hegemony and pressures to conform to unjust social beliefs and practices, as well as the tendency to place too much emphasis on consensus building and avoiding conflict related to deep moral differences, as discussed in the prior chapter. Freire, like C. Taylor (1991; Taylor & Gutmann, 1994), recognizes the importance of dialogical relations with others and the use of dialogue to negotiate conflicts. Even though an authentic identity cannot be socially derived but must be inwardly generated, one’s social world is an essential part of this process. For this reason, it is essential that SEL educators consider the relationship between culture, identity creation, and emotion.

### **Understanding Shared Emotional Realities**

As indicated above, there are universal psychological processes related to emotion that exist across cultures (Matsumoto, 2007). Mike Radford (2002) posits that this

qualifies them as public events open to common experience. He says, “we need to encourage [children] to understand that their feelings are not the private inner states that nobody else can really understand, but rather that they live in a social world of shared emotional realities and that this world is both a source of support but also of obligations” (p. 28). However, Geoffrey White (1994) points out that:

The tendency of many Western cultures to individuate emotions may produce discrepancies, gaps, and tensions between the social nature of emotion and its more internalized, psychological representation in popular culture. Thus, most of the culturally sanctioned institutions for identifying and transforming emotional distress in the West tend to strip away the social-moral-political contexts of emotion and focus on internal, psychological states of the individual. (p. 236)

Radford (2002) argues that we can more effectively educate one’s emotions through an objective understanding of the language and behavior associated with specific feelings than by viewing emotions as private, interior events. While feelings are not a product of social construction, the language used to describe them and the associated behaviors are, making them accessible through publicly agreed upon definitions and rules of application. He encourages educators to associate children’s learning with positive emotions.

According to Barbara Fredrickson (2001), positive emotions, such as joy, contentment, interest, pride, and love, serve to signal behavior to approach or continue an experience, while negative emotions, such as fear, sadness, anger, anxiety, and despair, generally signal specific action tendencies to escape or avoid an experience. Her research shows that in addition to broadening people’s thought-action repertoires, positive emotions, also “undo lingering negative emotions, fuel psychological resilience, and build psychological resilience and trigger upward spirals toward enhanced emotional

well-being” (p. 224). Rather than just being helpful in the moment, positive emotions have a lasting impact and have been shown to even shorten the duration of negative emotion arousal.

By making emotions public events, appraisal theories of emotion “suggest how emotions that seem extremely unfamiliar, once explained, may become comprehensible to people from a different culture” (Mesquita & Ellsworth, 2001, p. 233). The explanation must be provided in language that can be understood in terms of one’s existing vocabulary and cultural beliefs; that is, it must be translated into terms that are mutually understood by the parties involved. According to Phoebe Ellsworth (1994):

The basic premise is that the major dimensions of appraisal that make up emotion are general across cultures, and that similar patterns of appraisal along these dimensions will produce similar emotions across cultures . . . However, one must know something about the belief system of a particular culture in order to know whether these preconditions are met. Cultural belief systems define events as due to circumstances, or to a person’s own efforts, or to the behavior of others; as good or bad; as controllable or uncontrollable; as certain or uncertain; and differences in these kinds of cultural appraisals affect people’s emotional response to events. (p. 45)

However, just as in other areas of human experience where there are similarities and differences across cultures, there are risks of over-simplification. Sally Planalp (1999) warns us:

The danger is that when we emphasize differences, the contrast makes others seem nonhuman and threatening, but when we emphasize similarities, we may assimilate them into our own narrow view of what is human and fail to understand or appreciate the variations in human emotional experience and expression . . . In a world where people are becoming more deeply interrelated and where technologies prod an incredible rate of change, we need to appreciate many different ways of living, including different ways that humans live their emotional lives. (p. 234)

Ladd and Mize (1983), who in Chapter One were identified as among the first



researchers to develop a cognitive-social learning model to provide an explanatory framework and technology for evaluating social-skill training methodology, also recognized the importance of cultural sensitivity with regard to SEL. They explained, “Selection of valid social skills requires a knowledge of the behavior patterns that lead to acceptance within the subject’s peer culture . . . validity and acceptability of various social behaviors will undoubtedly vary with children’s maturity level, social class, and possibly their ethnic backgrounds” (p. 153).

By providing students with an objective understanding of the language and behavior associated with specific emotions they will be better able to learn to act appropriately in a particular setting. Deborah Watson and Carl Emery (2010) liken this to the development of what Pierre Bourdieu has identified as cultural and social capital. Bourdieu (1973/2000), as indicated previously, uses these terms to describe knowledge of the structures, practices, and dispositions associated with the transmission of power and privileges within a social system. Watson and Emery also recognize others who have similarly used terms like “identity capital” and “emotional capital” to describe resources that are essential to improving one’s lived experience. Watson and Emery state that overtime social and emotional dispositions and skills “become part of the individual identity and this allows for transferability across context boundaries” (pp. 778-779). While these competencies have a level of consistency across contexts, “different environments and social groupings can trigger different responses to similar situations” (p. 779). This understanding points to why SEL must involve more than a superficial engagement with cultural sensitivity.

## Recognizing the Social Construction of the Individual

Educators must be particularly mindful of the risks of over simplifying differences and similarities if they are to be successful in accomplishing the core SEL goals for students to develop an authentic identity and autonomous sense of self, as well as the disposition for non-violent coexistence with those who do not share their beliefs and worldviews. In *The Ethics of Identity*, Kwame Anthony Appiah (2007) explores the philosophical basis for claiming and recognizing difference, as well as the tension between the personal and collective dimensions of one's identity. He argues:

To be sure, not every aspect of the collective dimension of someone's identity will have the general power of sex or gender, sexuality or nationality, ethnicity or religion. What the collective dimensions have in common . . . is that they are what Ian Hacking has dubbed *kinds of persons*: men, gays, Americans, Catholics, but also butlers, hairdressers, and philosophers. (p. 65, italics in original)

Appiah (1994, 2007) maintains that one's identity is to a large extent the composite of labels given to the social groups to which one belongs either by choice or by ascription. Each of these labels has a script, or role, which contains the expectations, usually organized around a set of stereotypes about that kind of person. He argues that the content of these scripts can be determined by those of the same identity or ascribed by others as a shorthand for the social conception of individuals who meet certain criteria of ascription. Appiah (1994) takes exception to C. Taylor's (1991; Taylor & Gutmann, 1994) notion that each of us has "my own original way of being." Appiah argues that, "We make up selves from a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society. We do make choices, but we do not determine the options among which we choose" (p. 155). Appiah objects to what he views as Taylor's acceptance of collective identities that are too often imposed on individuals, making their options too narrow. Instead Appiah

favors John Stuart Mill's (2010) focus on "individuality." Both Mill and Appiah view individuality as one of the central elements of well-being and happiness.

In *On Liberty*, written in 1859, Mill (2010) advocates for the free development of the individual to act upon one's opinions as the primary purpose of instruction, education, and even civilization, provided the individual is not a nuisance to other people. "Where, not the person's own character, but the traditions of customs of other people are the rule of conduct, there is wanting one of the principal ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress" (p. 37). For Mill, development is the same thing as individuality. It is a quality to be cultivated so that people can learn from the experience of others "that one mode of existence, or of conduct, is preferable to another" (p. 38). Mill says:

Nobody denies that people should be so taught and trained in youth, as to know and benefit by the ascertained results of human experience. But it is the privilege and proper condition of a human being, arrived at the maturity of his faculties, to use and interpret experience in his own way. It is for him to find out what part of recorded experience is properly applicable to his own circumstances and character. (p.38)

The purpose of learning about others is not to promote uniformity, but instead to expand the options for further developing one's self, and eventually others. Mill (2010) explains:

It is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it and calling it forth, within the limits imposed by the rights and interests of others, that human beings become noble and beautiful objects of contemplation; and as the works partake the character of those who do them, by the same process human life also becomes rich, diversified, and animating, furnishing more abundant aliment to high thoughts and elevating feelings, and strengthening the tie which binds every individual to the race, by making the race infinitely better worth belonging to. In proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others. (p. 41)

This understanding of individuality is consistent with Abraham Maslow's (1950) conclusion that self-actualizing people "are more completely 'individual' than any group that has ever been described and yet are also more completely socialized, more identified with humanity than any other group yet described" (p. 33). Mill (2010) suggests that not all human beings desire or are capable of this level of development. However, he recognizes that "these few are the salt of the earth; without them, human life would become a stagnant pool" (p. 42). Mill claims, "Originality is a valuable element in human affairs. There is always need of persons not only to discover new truths, and point out when what were once truths are true no longer, but also to commence new practices, and set the example of more enlightened conduct, and better taste and sense in human life" (p. 42).

Even for those who may not reach such a high level of development, it is the liberty to choose how to integrate one's own experiences and the experiences of others into one's own life plan that is most important to Appiah and Mill. According to Appiah (2007):

Individuality is not so much a state to be achieved as a mode of life to be pursued. Mill says that it is important that one choose one's own plan for life, and liberty consists, at least in part, in providing the conditions under which a choice among acceptable options is possible. But one must choose one's own plan of life not because one will necessarily make the wisest choices; indeed, one might make poor choices. What matters most about a life plan . . . is simply that it be chosen by the person whose life it is" (p. 5)

Incorporating religious pluralism in the SEL curriculum in one way of expanding these options. It provides students with the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others both throughout history and in the present, as well as to constructively recognize

deep moral differences regarding the good life. This situation allows for the creativity Appiah (2007) says is required for making a self. Like C. Taylor, Appiah recognizes that one's identity is dialogically constituted. "An identity is always articulated through the concepts (and practices) made available to you by religion, society, school, and state, and mediated by family, peers, and friends" (p. 20). He argues that the self is the product of our interaction with others from the earliest moments of our lives. This "social feeling of mankind" is what forms the basis for morality.

In agreement with Mill, Appiah's (2007) conception of human happiness or well-being is rooted in our sociability, particularly our morality. Appiah argues:

To value individuality properly just *is* to acknowledge the dependence of the good for each of us on relationships with others. Without these bonds, as I say, we could not come to be free selves, not least because we could not come to be selves at all. Throughout our lives part of the material that we are responding to in shaping our selves is not within us but outside us, out there in the social world. Most people shape their identities as partners of lovers who become spouses and fellow parents; these aspects of our identities, though in a sense social, are peculiar to who we are as individuals, and so represent a *personal* dimension of our identities. But we are all, as well, members of broader collectivities. To say that *collective* identities – that is, the collective dimensions of our individual identities – are responses to something outside our selves is to say that they are the products of histories, and our engagement with them invokes capacities that are not under our control. Yet they are social not just because they involve others, but because they are constituted in part by socially transmitted conceptions of how a person of that identity properly behaves. (p. 21, italics in original)

For Appiah (2007) and others (Levy, 2000; Mill, 2010; Phillips, 2007; Sen, 2007), happiness is also based on an understanding that individuality, freedom, and autonomy are constitutive, not instrumental, elements of well-being. With regard to autonomy, they express concern that collective dimensions of identity can be oppressive and limit one's personal options. The collective dimension of identity involves many different scripts related to the various groups in which one is a member through birth, associations, and

alliances. All human beings face the challenge of weaving together these relationships to obtain a certain narrative unity that connects one's personal life to the larger narratives available within the social realm.

Yet, Sen (2007) points out that too often people are forced "within the enclosure of a single identity," such as religion, and then it is given priority over all other associations (p. 15). He argues, "The insistence, if only implicitly, on a choiceless singularity of human identity not only diminishes us all, it also makes the world much more flammable" (p. 16). He views the illusion of a single, unique identity as dangerously divisive and offers a solution:

The alternative to divisiveness of one preeminent categorization is not any unreal claim that we are all much the same. That we are not. Rather, the main hope of harmony in our troubled world lies in the plurality of our identities, which cut across each other and work against sharp divisions around one single hardened line of vehement division that allegedly cannot be resisted. (p. 16)

Sen (2007) maintains, "The descriptive weakness of choiceless singularity has the effect of momentarily impoverishing the power and reach of our social and political reasoning" (p. 17). Instead, we must recognize that "identities are robustly plural, and that the importance of one identity need not obliterate the importance of others. Second, a person has to make choices – explicitly or by implication – about what relative importance to attach, in a particular context, to the divergent loyalties and priorities that may compete for precedence" (p. 19). In doing so, one is able to identify with others in different ways that "can be extremely important for living in a society" (p. 19).

However, Sen (2007) warns that two different types of thinking operate against recognizing the multiple affiliations and loyalties people have. In addition to problems with "singular affiliation," discussed above, he also informs us about the danger of

“identity disregard,” which is reflected in many economic theories. Nomenclature such as “the economic man” or “rational agent” represents this type of thinking that ignores “the variety of motivations that move human beings living in a society, with various affiliations and commitments” (p. 21). Sen argues that this thinking fails to take into account the relative importance of the different affiliations and associations one values and how the prioritization among them and corresponding choices can be context specific. He says, “whether we are considering our identities as we ourselves see them or as others see us, we choose within particular constraints” (p. 31). Sen adds, “the community or culture to which a person belongs can have a major influence on the way he or she sees a situation or views a decision” (p. 34).

While cultural attitudes and beliefs do not invariably determine one’s reasoning and resulting choices, the extent to which they can influence them is of significant concern to many scholars (including Appiah, 1994, 2007; Brown, W., 2006; Levy, 2000; Phillips, 2007; Sen, 2007). These concerns are in large part due to the extent to which various interpretations of multiculturalism impact the individuals within a particular group, as discussed in the prior chapter. Initially applied to concepts related to the individual, “the language of identity was generalized from clinical, familial, or radical contexts, and used positively by groups to legitimize their own claims to social and legal recognition” (Weigert, Teitge, & Teitge, 1986, p. 28). In most instances this has been done by minority groups as a counter response to social and political conditions which supported the hegemony of the dominant group, while marginalizing, and even completely ignoring, the minority cultures within the society.

Culture, as discussed above, can be a positive source of support for the individual.

This is particularly true for minority and immigrant groups in a pluralist society where “your house of worship can become simply a house of community and identity” (Epstein, 2010, p. 178), especially when the dominant group suppresses public expression and acceptance of the group’s norms and values. However, when maintenance of the group’s beliefs, attitudes, and practices take precedence over individual autonomy, membership in the group can become oppressive. According to Sen (2007), “Just as social oppression can be a denial of cultural freedom, the violation of freedom can also come from the tyranny of conformism that may make it difficult for members of a community to opt for other styles of living” (p. 116). The pressure to conform can come from both within and outside of the group. Appiah (2007) refers to this as the tendency of “hard pluralism” in which the larger society leaves “groups free to do just about anything to their members short of physical coercion” (p. 74).

“Soft pluralism,” according to Appiah (2007), is trying “to find a point of equilibrium between the rights of individuals and the integrity of intermediate associations” (p. 79). This ideal of balancing is often linked with the notion of neutrality, as reflected in the First Amendment freedom *of* and freedom *from* religion. Yet, Appiah argues that there are many instances in a liberal democracy where the government cannot be neutral in allowing group autonomy – not even to religious groups. Although, he acknowledges that in many instances, U.S. laws provide some accommodation for religious practices because they are “likely to represent deeply constitutive aspects of people’s identity” (p. 99), as was indicated above regarding the Religious Freedom Act and the role of Native American religions as a source of identity. Appiah (2007) equates soft pluralism with C. Taylor’s (1991; Taylor, C. & Gutmann, 1994) notion of the politics



of recognition.

The politics of recognition, according to Appiah (2007) has become too much a part of the relationship between identities and the state. He complains that C. Taylor and others “seem to hold that the state itself, through government recognition, can sustain identities that face the danger of self-contempt imposed by the social contempt of others” (p. 101). He objects to this on the basis that the state is in essence imposing a compulsory identity on its citizens, as is the situation in the Canadian province of Quebec. According to Appiah, the politics of recognition makes it difficult for individuals who want personal dimensions of the self to remain “something that is not too tightly scripted, not too resistant to our individual vagaries” (p. 110). He claims that like the *parameters* used to define a successful life and *limits* that get in the way of that ideal life, “there is no bright line” between *recognition* and *imposition*. This is a fluid and shifting affair. The pluralism Appiah suggests is one that balances the interests between We the People and We the Peoples, along with consideration of “the interests of Me the Person, while acknowledging the enmeshment of them all” (p. 203).

Appiah’s criticism of the politics of recognition has merit regarding the potential overreach of the state, especially when educators act as agents of the state and participate in perpetuating a particular state sanctioned identity for a certain group of people. The negative identity historically ascribed to homosexuals in the United States and their denial of rights enjoyed by heterosexual couples is an example of what Appiah is complaining about. However, the politics of recognition can also be useful in schools to counter the negative stereotypes and discrimination that minority children face in the larger society.

Michael Merry (2005a) argues that an education for cultural coherence is appropriate for younger children and even advantageous in terms of providing a solid foundation for eventual autonomy. In laying out the educational aims of cultural coherence, he states:

First, persons need to identify with a particular notion of the good and possess the attendant capacity to pursue it. Second, unless choices are kept to a manageable level, there will be a lack of the coherence necessary to shaping identity and fueling agency. Third, without an adequate level of coherence, no clear standard emerges by which one's decisions may be evaluated. To elevate choice over a person's need for circumscribed boundaries is to ignore a person's need for what I will call limited guidance, a resource necessary for psychological health. While it may be true that older children possess the capacity to glean insights from alternative cultural views and appreciate the complexity of moral alternatives seen from multiple perspectives, it is commonly assumed that younger children lack the cognitive capacity and emotional maturity to make wise and sensible choices without reasonable limitations on those options made available to them. (p. 480)

For Merry (2005a), cultural coherence and autonomy are too often placed in false opposition to each other. Merry concurs with Meira Levinson's (1999) argument that learning to respect other cultures may even strengthen children's commitment to their own traditions. He points out that "too little recognition is given to the widespread hybrid identities of persons living in multicultural societies" (p. 484). One's cultural matrix "may encompass many sources, some of them even in tension with others . . . Each of us is socialized into a particular mode of being, and is even indelibly marked by it, though we may not identify with it from the inside" (p. 485). For Merry, and others (Appiah, 1994; 2007; Brown, W., 2006; Levy, 2000; Phillips, 2007; Sen, 2007), concern is about inherited identities and those who do not fully identify with the script assigned to them by the culture or religion into which they were placed by birth or socially ascribed to belong. For individuals in this situation, the critical issues center on the ease with

which one can alter their role and/or exit the group.

According to Merry (2005a), “In order for there to be *real* freedom to choose an exit from a community or its value system there must be adequate information provided concerning alternative ways of interpreting the reality to be faced” (p. 491, italics in original). An SEL curriculum informed by religious pluralism offers the potential to provide this information. Merry tells us, “it is not the type of school [public or religious] one attends that matters but the type of curriculum and instruction a school provides, as well as a staff that is committed to teaching respect and tolerance of others regardless of their differences” (p. 492). He adds:

An education for cultural coherence may very well provide persons with a vantage point from which to critique a culture of mass conformity, consumerism and materialism; it also may provide one with an efficacious moral foundation from which one draws strength in countering social injustice . . . Human cultures, far from seamless wholes that neatly distinguish themselves one from the other, are constant creations, re-creations, and negotiations of imaginary boundaries between ‘we’ and the ‘others.’ (p. 493).

Merry (2005a) maintains that an education that supports cultural coherence for young children, while allowing internal cultural debates among older students, and is open to cultural hybridity, satisfies the requirements for individual well-being and the conditions for autonomy. The secularization model proposed by C. Taylor (2011), as discussed in the prior chapter, for handling diversity by emphasizing religious liberty, equality, and fraternity provides the foundational beliefs to support this type of education and meet SEL’s citizen-building objective by providing legitimate channels for dissent over how these ideals are best reflected in everyday life. However, this type of education is not likely to gain support from those who oppose internal debates and want to maintain some notion of cultural purity, as well as those who oppose any instruction involving the

discussion of religion and spiritual matters in public schools and the public realm. These two camps fall into the categories of thinking that Sen (2007) warns about – those interests that favor “singular affiliation” being in the former, and those that practice “identity disregard” in the later. Confronting this opposition will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **Resisting the Tendency to Impose Identities**

In addition to challenges an individual faces related to maintaining, altering, and exiting a particular cultural and/or religious identity, SEL educators must also be mindful of the potential for cultural invasion to occur within a multicultural society. In defining this phenomenon, Freire (1970/2000) says:

The invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, in disrespect of the latter’s potentialities; they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression . . . The invaders mold; those they invade are molded. The invaders choose: those they invade follow that choice – or are expected to follow it. The invaders act; those they invade have only the illusion of acting, through the action of the invaders. (p. 152)

The oppressive conditions that Freire (1970/2000) is addressing are generally more subtle than overt in American schools and society. Although some members of minority groups might claim otherwise, as there are many examples of the ways in which cultural invasion takes place (including Delpit, 2006; Lareau, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). According to Lauren Langman (2003), one way it occurs is whenever the dominant culture limits the expression of minority cultures and religious groups to episodic events in which otherwise submerged identities are allowed to be articulated in highly ritualized forms. “Festivals and celebrations are also common occasions when the ordinary rules of emotional control are suspended” (Planalp, 1999, p. 230). In its most benign form,

celebrating Black History Month, Hispanic Culture Month, and similar ethnocentric events can function to secure the hegemonic structure when there is little opportunity outside of these activities to express one's cultural identity. According to Langman (2003):

These episodic identities serve to maintain social stability through controlled violations of the cultural order. These anti-structural releases can only exist for fleeting moments in marginal, interstitial, or even imaginary sites which tolerate the expressions of acts, feelings and identities that are usually forbidden or are taboo. Such realms provide spaces of freedom, equality, spontaneity and role reversals. As transitory, encapsulated realms of agency, with their own codes of conduct, inversions of norms and proscribed acts of transgressions of official codes are tolerated, even celebrated. (p. 224)

Not only does this happen to subgroup cultural expressions, but also to public expressions of religion traditions which have become mass-mediated spectacles.

Langman (2003) points out that, "In our global age, when consumerism is hegemonic, consumer culture provides space for transgression" (p. 226). One only needs to look at what has happened to religious holidays and symbols, such as Christmas, Halloween, and Mardi Gras, to see how they have been co-opted into spending frenzies associated with the consumption of large amounts of alcohol, overeating, overspending, and other taboo behaviors. Neil Postman (1996) tells us:

The carnage is painfully visible, for example, in the trivial uses to which sacred symbols are now put, especially in the United States . . . There is the story of a God-fearing nation seeking guidance and strength from the lessons of the Old Testament and the commandments brought by Moses. This is the same Moses who is depicted in a poster selling kosher chickens. Of Christmas and the uses made of its significant symbols, the less said the better. But it probably should be noted that Hebrew National uses both Uncle Sam and God (with a capital G) to sell frankfurters, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday is largely used as an occasion for furniture sales, and the infant Jesus and Mary have been invoked to promote VH-1, a rock-music television station. (p. 25).

Postman (1996) is not alone in viewing "this obliteration of the difference

between the sacred and the profane” (p. 25) as detrimental to “social institutions that draw their power from metaphysical sources . . . [such as] the enterprise of schooling” (p. 26). These views are in line with C. Taylor’s (1991) warnings that “if authenticity is being true to ourselves, is recovering our own ‘sentiment de l’existence,’ then perhaps we can only achieve it integrally if we recognize that this sentiment connects us to a wider whole” (p. 91). As indicated in the prior chapter, the metaphysical values that connect us to a wider whole also undergird the ideals of liberal democracy. However, as Eagleton (2009) told us in the prior chapter, “Capitalism can neither easily dispense with those metaphysical values nor take them all that seriously” (p. 143). Yet, the failure to confront the forces which turn sacred symbols, objects, and events into caricatures of their original meanings not only results in the marginalization of religion, it undermines the stability of essential social structures, including our form of government, as well as threatens one’s ability to construct an authentic identity.

To gain an understanding of just what that “wider whole” is, theorists such as C. Taylor (1989; 1991; Taylor, C. & Gutmann, 1994), Gutmann (1987/1999), Freire (1970/2000), Noddings (1984/2003; 1993) and Martha Nussbaum (1997; 2010; 2012) suggest that students engage in dialogue with their teachers and each other to question, probe, and inquire about their own culture and beliefs, along with other world cultures and beliefs, so that they will not take simplistic platitudes about cultural and religious differences at face value. SEL informed by religious pluralism offers the potential to counter the negative thinking which undermines our social systems and currently receive little attention in American schools.

The ability to interpret is necessary so that the moral dimensions of capitalism,

technology, and a consumer-driven global economy can be debated regarding their impact on all of humanity. In *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Nussbaum (2010) argues, “If the real clash of civilizations is, as I believe, a clash within the individual soul, as greed and narcissism contend against respect and love, all modern societies are rapidly losing the battle, as they feed the forces that lead to violence and dehumanization and fail to feed the forces that lead to cultures of equality and respect” (p. 143).

Nussbaum (1997; 2010; 2012) advocates that schools use the Socratic method to prepare students for political participation. She points out that it will “stimulate students to think and argue for themselves, rather than defer to tradition and authority – [people] believe that the ability to argue in the Socratic way is, as Socrates proclaimed, valuable for democracy” (2010, p. 48). In *Cultivating Humanity: A Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Nussbaum (1997) maintains that “membership in the world community entails a willingness to doubt the goodness of one’s own way and enter into the give-and-take of critical argument about ethical and political choices” (p. 62). She also advises that education for world citizenship must begin early within a context that disproportionately focuses on local and regional histories and cultures while reminding the student of the broader world in which one is a part.

Nussbaum’s suggestions are consistent with what Freire (1970/2000) describes as the permanence-change dialectic. Freire explains:

Cultural action is always a systematic and deliberate form of action which operates upon the social structures, either with the objective of preserving that structure or of transforming it. As a form of deliberate and systematic action, all cultural action has its theory which determines its ends and thereby defines its methods. Cultural action either serves domination (consciously or unconsciously)

or it serves the liberation of men and women. As these dialectically opposed types of cultural action operate in and upon the social structure, they create dialectical relations of permanence and change. The social structure, in order to be, must become; in other words, becoming is the way the social structure expresses ‘duration.’ (p. 179, italics in original)

According to Freire (1970/2000), the aim of the permanence-change dialectic is to resolve the antagonistic contradictions of social structures through cultural synthesis. As opposed to cultural invasion whose aim is domination, the aim of cultural synthesis is liberation. The actors learn from each other about the other’s world and become co-authors of new knowledge and new action that results in the enrichment of all parties. Freire maintains, “Cultural synthesis does not deny the differences between the two views; indeed, it is based on these differences. It *does* deny the *invasion* of one *by* the other, but affirms the undeniable *support* each gives *to* the other” (p. 181, italics in original). Cultural synthesis functions much like Merry’s (2005a) notion of cultural hybridity, that allows flexibility and adjustment in one’s identity and allegiances in order to resolve contradictions. Putnam et al. (2010) similarly found that:

the impact of increasing religious diversity among one’s friends over roughly a one-year time span . . . [increased] the likelihood of agreeing that religious faith is not essential to good Americanness. This finding suggests that interreligious contact can lead to a redefined social boundary . . . In other words, having a religiously diverse group of friends seems to lead to widening the circle of ‘we.’ (p. 542)

In order to facilitate this ongoing process of permanence and change, Freire (1970/2000) suggests a pedagogy of humanization aimed at developing the critical consciousness of both students and teachers. According to Freire this involves a type of problem-posing education that “regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality” (p. 83). The dialogue he is suggesting has two dimensions:



“reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (p. 126). When word and work come together it becomes praxis, capable of searching for truth and transforming the contradiction by creating a new reality that is satisfactory to the parties involved. The transformation that Freire encourages is consistent with the arguments made in the prior chapter regarding the role transformation plays in deescalating conflict and reducing violence (Brown, W., 2006; Hunter, 1994; Keith, 2010; Kamat & Mathew, 2010; Mouffe, 2005; Todd, 2010).

Freire (1970/2000), like Nussbaum (1997; 2010) and Noddings (1984/2003) stresses the importance of acting out of love as the source of motivation for engaging in dialogue. He cautions that this dialogue must be based on true commitment and “a profound love for the world and for people” (p. 89). It also requires humility, faith, hope, and critical thinking aimed at the continuing humanization of women and men. Freire views this as an ongoing educational process that affirms the authority and freedom of the individual to create and re-create an authentic identity, along with more just social structures. Freire’s pedagogy of humanization also thereby cultivates the kind of environment of nonrepression and nondiscrimination that Gutmann (1987/1999) claims is essential for human flourishing. It is also consistent with the emphasis SEL advocates place on freedom of expression, opportunities for recognizing similarities and differences, and participation in shared decision-making (CASEL, 2003; 2005; 2012).

### **Acknowledging and Nurturing the Moral Self**

Harvey Cox (2009), like Freire, recognizes that, “The self is not a static entity. It is a battle site” (p. 30). Cox concludes, “it seems clear that identity is inextricably tied up with ethics. ‘What should I do?’ is always linked to ‘Who am I?’” (p. 30). He adds, “the

'identity' that seemed in place last year will no longer serve. That is why the 'I' is not a problem that can be solved, but a mystery that remains with us as long as we live."

Drawing on the work of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, Cox describes this as "myself as mystery." He asserts that reflecting on myself and on myself reflecting, opens the self to not only the "universe within," it also opens one to the universe "out there" and to "the other people we meet and live with" (p. 31). Cox is saying that this inward gaze has the tendency to result in transcendence of the self, "it pushes me beyond myself toward a sense of responsibility, one that repeats itself and deepens with each encounter" (p. 33). Matsumoto (2007) also claims "humans are unique in that they have knowledge of self, knowledge of others, and knowledge that others know about the self. This knowledge is necessary in order to have morality, another uniquely human product" (p. 1292).

However, C. Taylor (1989) laments that contemporary moral philosophy "has no conceptual place left for a notion of the good as the object of our love and allegiance . . . as the privileged focus of attention or will" (p. 3). He claims that an emphasis on the procedural aspects of morality has suppressed our spiritual nature and moral intuitions regarding not only our concern about other people's lives, but also our own dignity and what makes our lives meaningful and fulfilling. According to Taylor, these matters involve "'strong evaluation,' that is, they involve discriminations of right and wrong, better or worse, higher or lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged" (p. 4). He maintains that moral intuitions are uncommonly deep, powerful, and universal.

C. Taylor (1989) calls for a retrieval that reasserts the place of the good in our

moral outlook and life, as well as an improvement in our impoverished philosophical language so that individuals are better able to articulate their underlying notions of the good. Several other scholars have also stressed the need for educators to do more to cultivate a shared language in order to better understand our emotions, articulate our beliefs, and acknowledge how these resources come together to guide right behavior (Epstein, 2010; Freire, 1970/2000; Hunter, 1994; MacIntyre, 2008; Nussbaum, 1997; Radford, 2002; Smith et al., 2011; White, 1994). SEL informed by religious pluralism provides this opportunity.

Although “articulating the good is very difficult and problematic for us,” C. Taylor (1989) says it is necessary because constitutive goods serve as moral sources. He also claims that to some extent our forebears were better able to articulate frameworks that expressed their commitment to the rights and ideals which still implicitly and explicitly serve as the foundation for our social structures. Fortunately, many empowering images and stories that have roots in religious and philosophical doctrines are still available to inspire us. Taylor maintains that they point to “something which remains for us a moral source, something the contemplation, respect, or love of which enables us to get closer to what is good” (pp. 95-96). He explains:

Moral sources empower. To come closer to them, to have a clearer view of them, to come to grasp what they involve, is for those who recognize them to be moved to love or respect them, and through this love/respect to be better enabled to live up to them. And articulation can bring them closer. That is why words can empower; why words can at times have tremendous moral force. (p. 65)

The stories and images that are part of our religious and philosophical traditions help us to connect our own narratives to the greater patterns of human history, providing meaning and substance for our lives. According to C. Taylor (1989), these moral sources

provide guidance for resolving “the tension or even conflict between our commitment to certain hypergoods, in particular the demands of universal and equal respect and of modern self-determining freedom, on one hand, and our sense of the value of what must apparently be sacrificed in their name, on the other” (p. 101). In line with Freire’s (1970/2000) understanding that these contradictions can be resolved through dialogue, C. Taylor also views the importance of articulacy in reconciling moral conflicts both within our culture and within ourselves.

By improving the moral language available, C. Taylor (1989) states new understandings of the good will be possible, along with new forms of narrativity and new understandings of social relations and bonds. He tells us this will make it possible for: “(1) our notions of the *good*, (2) our understandings of *self*, (3) the kinds of *narrative* in which we make sense of our lives, and (4) conceptions of *society*, i.e., conceptions of what it is to be a human agent among human agents” (p. 105, emphasis added) to come together to enable one to create and maintain a moral self and an authentic identity. C. Taylor admits that reconciliation of competing goods may not always be possible and efforts to articulate them may result in greater inner conflict. However, he argues that the risk is worthwhile because “we would have at least put an end to the stifling of the spirit and to the atrophy of so many of our spiritual resources which is the bane of modern naturalist culture” (p. 107).

According to C. Taylor (1989), this modern naturalist culture has roots in the belief that human beings have “a natural susceptibility to feel sympathy for others” (p. 5). This orientation leads to an understanding of moral reactions which have two facets. He tells us:

On one side, they are almost like instincts . . . on the other, they seem to involve claims, implicit or explicit, about the nature and status of human beings. From this second side, a moral reaction is an assent to, an affirmation of, a given ontology of the human. An important strand of modern naturalist consciousness has tried to hive this second side off and declare it dispensable or irrelevant to morality. (p. 5)

C. Taylor (1989) argues that there are many motives for doing this, but finds the justification related to “the great epistemological cloud under which all such accounts lie for those who have followed empiricist or rationalist theories of knowledge, inspired by the success of modern natural science” (p. 5). Yet, C. Taylor claims that, “what meaning there is for us depends in part on our powers of expression, that discovering a framework is interwoven with inventing” (p. 22). He objects to the “naturalist” tendency to deny these frameworks and “reject all qualitative distinctions and to construe all human goals as on the same footing, susceptible therefore of common quantifications and calculation according to some common ‘currency’” (pp. 22-23). C. Taylor maintains “that this idea is deeply mistaken . . . it is motivated itself by moral reasons, and these reasons form an essential part of the picture of the frameworks people live by in our day” (p. 23).

Building on C. Taylor’s argument and others made in this section, as well as in the prior chapter, I maintain that religious pluralism incorporated as an essential element in the SEL curriculum will correct this mistake and enable students to develop their moral capacities and challenge conditions which support unjust social structures and practices. An SEL curriculum that incorporates narratives from a broad range of religious and philosophical doctrines would provide the vocabulary and role models to enable individuals to compare various moral positions and articulate their own underlying notions of the good. This approach is consistent with Aristotle’s (1999) understanding

that there are no universal expressions of right behavior for one to follow, except to seek the best response among available choices.

In supporting the efforts of students to create a moral self and an authentic identity, this model encourages individual autonomy and human flourishing, as well as social cohesion by expanding the “we” and increasing the capacity to participate nonviolently in one’s social and political world. Grounded in Freire’s (1970/2000) pedagogy of humanism and Gutmann’s (1987/1999) notion of democratic education, it provides an overall framework to support an inclusive form of social reproduction based on a critical consciousness that encourages dialogue that leads to praxis and transformation. It encourages the kind of nondiscriminatory and nonrepressive environment required for students to develop central SEL competencies, such as self-awareness and self-management, along with the ability to recognize individual and group similarities and differences.

By incorporating strategies of care espoused by Freire (1970/2000), Noddings (1984/2003; 1993; 2008), Nussbaum (1997; 2010; 2012), and C. Taylor (1989; 1991; Taylor, C. & Gutmann, 1994), this model also helps to teach children how to act out of love not only in dealing with family members and others in their intimate subcultures, including particular religious, racial, and ethnic groups, but also in their participation in the broader society through democratic politics and daily social life. The proposed model is rooted in the morality and ethics discussed earlier by Cox (2009), Matsumoto (2007), and C. Taylor (2011) that connect one to the metaphysical sources and values that undergird the ideals of our democracy, such as equality, respect, liberty, civility, and justice.

SEL informed by religious pluralism would recognize the major influences of identity construction by taking into account not only universal psychological needs and processes and the role of emotions (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Fredrickson, 2001; Matsumoto, 2007; Radford, 2002), as well as individual personality traits and dispositions (Matsumoto, 2007; Piaget et al, 1981), but also the various values, norms, and practices of society and its subcultures (Appiah, 1994, 2007; Berger & Luckman, 1967; Freire, 1970/2000; Sen, 2007; C. Taylor, 1989,1991, Taylor, C. & Gutmann, 1994). It builds upon the notions of individuality and self-actualization espoused by Mill (2010), Maslow (1950), and Appiah (1994, 2007) that serve both the best interest of the individual and all of humanity. It also has the potential to be up front about the risks of oppression and pressures for conformity.

By addressing the psychological need for relatedness and the dialogical nature of identity construction, SEL informed by religious pluralism would enable students to connect to a wider whole (Nussbaum, 1997, 2010), expanding the “we” (Putnam et al., 2010), as well as encouraging transcendence of the self (Cox, 2009; Postman, 1996; Taylor, C., 1989; 1991; Taylor, C. & Gutmann, 1994). Teaching students how to fruitfully engage in this kind of dialogue has the potential to foster greater social cohesion and keep conflicts from escalating into increasing forms of violence by expanding the commonalities of value (Taylor, C., 1991) and acknowledging differences and possibilities for change (Freire, 1970/2000). Using examples from religious and philosophical traditions, students can learn how the permanence-change dialectic has taken place throughout human history. This can assist them in becoming more “change hardy” and open to transforming conflicts into new ways of coexistence and sharing

resources and political life.

The proposed model explicitly meets the SEL goal of preparing students for citizenship in our democracy by facilitating the development of competencies aimed at increasing one's capacity to participate in political life. Providing students with shared language to express universal emotions and feelings (Ellsworth, 1994; Mesquita & Ellsworth, 2001; Radford, 2002) and build on positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) will enable them to better express their beliefs and notions about the good (Taylor, C., 1989) and foster greater emotional and identity capital (Watson & Emory, 2010). Learning about other's beliefs and to question one's own beliefs is likely to result in increased identity capital and greater social cohesion emanating from an openness to cultural hybridity (Merry, 2005a). Rather than leading to cultural invasion, SEL informed by religious pluralism supports the ongoing development of both individual and collective identities within a diverse society.

The strength of this model is that it recognizes the risks of cultural invasion (Freire, 1997/2000; Langman, 2003; Postman, 1996) and oversimplification of one's identity (Appiah, 1994, 2007; Planalp, 1999). It takes into account the dangers posed by inherited and assigned identities, along with the potential limitations of their accompanying scripts and stereotypes (Appiah, 1994; 2007; Merry, 2005a). It also minimizes the risks of singular identities, as well as identity disregard (Sen, 2007). Most importantly, SEL informed by religious pluralism challenges the negative forces that undermine formation of a moral self and an authentic identity, as well as the ideals of a liberal democracy.



### **Teachers Must Be Prepared for Religion in the Classroom**

There are several challenges to helping students develop the skills and disposition to know the right thing to do and how to accomplish it. One of the biggest challenges is overcoming the history of American educators to avoid controversy in the classroom (Mattingly, 1975). Determining right behavior, or in Robert Kunzman's (2006) terms – “grappling with the good” – is bound to be controversial. Therefore, it is necessary that students learn the language they need to articulate their own beliefs and taught enough about what others believe in order to recognize shared values and respectfully negotiate the limits of tolerance regarding differences in defining right behavior. Teaching students to engage in authentic discussions about cultural differences and religious diversity, can help to reduce fear, mistrust, repression, and discrimination, encourage open dialogue around common concerns, and support shared decision-making (Banks, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2003; Eck, 2002; Haynes, 1998; Henderson, 2003; Moore, D., 2007; Nord, 1995; Nord & Haynes, 1998; Pollock, 2004; Salili & Hoosain, 2006; Samovar et al., 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 2003; Taylor, L. S. & Whittaker, 2003). Yet, few teachers are prepared to do this work (Moore, D., 2007; Noddings, 2006a).

While SEL, moral education, citizenship, and religious studies scholars exist in separate silos within the academy, there is a need for greater interdisciplinary dialogue and pathways between these silos. Educators and scholars in these fields need to work together to develop improved pedagogy and instructional materials to explicitly teach right behavior in the K-12 curriculum. One way of accomplishing this is by integrating religious studies with SEL instruction, based on *The AAR Guidelines for Teaching About Religion in K-12 Public Schools in the United States*, drafted by the American Academy

of Religion's Religion in the Schools Task Force (AAR, 2010) chaired by Diane Moore. The American Academy of Religion (AAR) has been involved in efforts to teach about religion in constitutionally sound ways since the 1970s. Kunzman (2006) also offers explicit guidance about how to prepare teachers to talk about religion and morality to support the kind of ethical dialogue required to deliberate respectfully across differences. The AAR guidelines and Kunzman's approach are very much in line with the kind of SEL-religious studies curriculum being proposed.

Since what is taught in school as right behavior depends on whose values and expectations are taken into consideration, it is essential for educators to acknowledge that there are various expressions of right behavior and ensure that multiple perspectives are presented in the schooling environment. As already discussed, right behavior, in reality, is constantly being redefined through the ongoing contestation, deliberation, and negotiation between the stakeholders (Freire, 1970/2000; Gutmann, 1987/1999). Individual and group identities are constantly being renegotiated based on one's interactions with those who represent new or different affiliations (Putnam et al., 2010).

In helping students to develop self-management and social-competency skills, SEL, like religious studies needs, to be taught in "a climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty [that encourages] students to move away from making generalizations toward more qualified statements . . . [to examine] how their judgments impact others; and [to] explore ideas and ask questions without fear" (AAR, 2010, p. 12). The model of religious studies proposed by the American Academy of Religion reinforces SEL's emphasis on self-actualization and social awareness by helping students to recognize that there is wide variety in the personal qualities held by individuals even when they share a

common worldview. This is accomplished by teaching that “religions are internally diverse, religions are dynamic, and religions are embedded in culture” (p. 12).

However, prior to working with students, there are several challenges the adults involved with schooling must address. These challenges have remained fairly consistent in the 50 years since the Supreme Court issued its decision regarding *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963) in which the Court ruled against reading the Bible for sectarian purposes in public schools. In deciding the *Abington v. Schempp* case, Associate Justice Tom Clark wrote for the Court:

In addition, it might well be said that one’s education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment. (374 U.S. 203 at 225)

In 1971, Richard Dierenfield, a professor of education, wrote that in spite of this “open invitation for instruction about religion as a cultural, social, and literary influence in present and past societies . . . It is the thesis of this writer, however, that it is largely ignored by most teachers” (p. 137). He identified five reasons for this neglect, which include the following: (1) fear of violating the law; (2) controversial nature of the subject; (3) no widespread demand for this instruction; (4) lack of teaching-learning materials; and (5) teachers feel unprepared to deal with the issue (pp. 137-138). The reasons for not teaching about religion that Dierenfield identified remain a challenge to educator’s today, with one exception. While the ongoing controversial nature of the subject has already received considerable attention in this project, the one reason that may be in the process of changing is the demand for teaching about religion.

Joanne Marshall (2006) identifies major trends which may be contributing to this change. She cites the response of educators “to current events such as 9/11 with a desire to learn and teach more about Islam and the U.S.’s role in a moral global context . . . [along with the] recent emphases on spirituality and on social justice call for increased equity and service for all children” (p. 190). She argues, “Teacher preparation programs need to prepare future teachers to handle religion in the classroom as part of their subject areas and also how to treat the religious identities of students and families equitably.” This represents a growing consensus that the increased religious diversity in the nation and calls for greater interreligious understanding amid the growing intolerance of some peoples’ beliefs make it more relevant than ever for educators to finally address the other three challenges that Dierenfield (1971) identified (Eck, 2002; International Humanist and Ethical Union, 2012; Niebuhr, 2009; Nussbaum; 2012). “Although it may be disruptive, it is necessary, even crucial, to follow the route of teaching about religion if we wish to maintain the principle of religious tolerance that undergirds the democratic republic that has evolved for more than two hundred years” (Passe & Willox, 2009, p. 102).

Additionally and somewhat ironically, according to Dierenfield (1971), “Drug addiction and sex education [were] more popular ‘causes’ in the determination of curriculum content” than teaching about religion in public schools during the later part of the twentieth century. As has already been discussed in Chapter One, SEL represents an evolved approach that has developed since then to prevent substance abuse, promiscuity, and other behavioral problems. However, my argument is that without recognizing the moral dimensions of SEL and teaching about the role religion has had and continues to

have in the determination of right behavior, SEL will not have the intended outcomes related to promoting human flourishing and minimizing negative lifestyle choices, including drug abuse and promiscuity. Gilbert Sewall (1998) attributes this to the difficulty public schools have with the notion of the *sacred* and the tendency, therefore to attempt to resolve human and communal issues “in a spirit of reason and hygiene” (p. 5). By avoiding “religion in its statements and objectives about school activities, [educators are] separating from education the aspect of human life that has traditionally provided foundations of ‘moral health’” (p. 14).

Rather than shy away from it, both public and parochial schools should be encouraging student discussions about moral authority and the influence religion has had and continues to have both positively and negatively on one’s behavior. Several studies conducted during the past decade or so have documented a positive relationship between adolescent and family religiosity, reduced risk-taking behavior, and increased schooling (including Afifi, Joseph, & Aldeis, 2008; Antrop-González, Vélez, & Garrett, 2005; Bader & Desmond, 2006; Bahr, Maughan, Marcos, & Li, 1998; Baier & Wright, 2001; Caputo, 2004a; 2004b; 2005; DeHaan & Boljevac, 2009; Dollahite & Thacher, 2008; Dowling, Gestsdottir, Anderson, von Eye, & Lerner, 2003; Hardy & Carlo, 2005; Jang, Bader, & Johnson, 2008; Jeynes, 2003; Longest & Vaisey, 2008; Loury, 2004; Merrill, Folson, & Christopherson, 2005; Schottenbauer, Spernak, & Hellstrom, 2007; Simons, Simons, & Conger, 2004; Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles, 2006). This data should not be ignored. Instead, it can be used to demonstrate the positive role religion has and can have in guiding right behavior. This would be in contrast to the negative face of religious extremism so disproportionately portrayed in popular culture (Carter, 1994).

In order to for this to occur, schools of education can play a major part in better preparing teachers to deal with these issues and in developing appropriate teaching-learning materials, as well as helping school administrators and educators to overcome their fear of violating the law. Dierenfield (1971) concluded, “‘We teach what we know’ is an old but valid dictum. The Supreme Court may have thrown open the door for teaching about religion but without adequate command of the subject it will be difficult for teachers to deal meaningfully with it” (p. 138). Therefore, in this section, I will address the need for:

(1) Interdisciplinary training for pre-service and in-service K-12 educators, administrators, and other school personnel so that they can help students to develop the skills and language required to participate knowledgably and civilly in public discourse about religious and philosophical differences, as well as American ideals regarding individual freedoms and responsibilities related to right behavior;

(2) Development of age appropriate SEL-religious studies interdisciplinary curriculum materials that enable students to talk about the role religion has, or does not have, in their own code of conduct, as well as engage in balanced, critical discussions about religion’s influence throughout history and in our present time on behavior as a means to both positive and negative ends; and

(3) Improved public understanding of the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses of the First Amendment, also known as the Religious Liberty clauses, to reduce fear of violating the law and to provide greater clarification about the difference between teaching religion and teaching about religion.

### **Providing Interdisciplinary Training**

One of the biggest challenges to implementing the type of curriculum that I am proposing is the limited training available for pre-service and in-service K-12 educators, administrators, and other school personnel to do this work (Moore, D., 2007; Noddings, 2006a; Nord, 1995). There is a significant need for interdisciplinary training that addresses the scientific, philosophical, legal, and cultural components of the proposed curriculum so that school personnel can help students to develop the skills and language required to implement the model of SEL informed by religious pluralism described in the prior section.

Without first receiving this type of training, educators cannot be expected to provide this training to their students. According to Warren Nord (1995), “all prospective teachers should be introduced to the major legal and pedagogical issues related to religion and public education in their foundation courses in schools of education” (p. 317). He also advises that pre-service educators have the opportunity to take an “Introduction to Religion for Teachers” taught in the department of religious studies. Without this training, neither teachers nor students will be able to participate knowledgably and civilly in public discourse about religious and philosophical differences, as well as engage in productive deliberations about American ideals regarding individual freedoms and responsibilities.

Kunzman (2006) refers to this kind of deliberation as Ethical Dialogue. He explains, “the actual pedagogical skills necessary for facilitation of Ethical Dialogue share many similarities with those necessary for leading any effective, open-ended discussion and should be an ongoing focus for all teachers seeking to engage their

students in all kinds of active learning” (p. 131). While he cautions about the limited role pre-service education can play in preparing teachers for this work, he stresses that this is the time for “cultivating a commitment and vision of what is possible as teachers grow in their profession.” Kunzman argues that this is necessary:

Because the demands of Ethical Dialogue are substantial – in terms of curricular attention, pedagogical complexity, and emotional weight – it cannot be sustained unless teachers (and the administrators who support them) are convinced of its vital importance. In particular, teachers need to recognize that the health of our increasingly pluralistic society depends on people who can deliberate respectfully across difference.

As we are increasingly aware, the United States is not and has never been a monolithic nation. Individualism and religious freedom have been cornerstones of our national ideals since the nation’s founding, even when not necessarily a part of our national practice (Eck, 2002; Fraser, 1999; Levy, 2000; Mapp, 2006; Marty, 2000; Niebuhr, 2009; Nussbaum, 2012; Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008; 2009; 2010; Putnam et al., 2010; Sewall, 1999; Stark, 2008; U.S. Bureau of International Information Programs, 2008; Whittaker, Salend, & Elhoweris, 2009; Wuthnow, 2005). Schools in pluralistic democratic societies, like the United States, are challenged to balance the value ascribed to self-actualization and autonomy with the need to socialize our youth in a manner which will foster a commitment to shared values and democratic processes that will sustain our national unity.

As intermediaries between the family and the state, no institutions more than our schools have a responsibility to inculcate these ideals in our youth (Gutmann, 1987/1999). Educators must be prepared to help their students experience and participate in life as a member of our very diverse society (Brighthouse, 2006). In order to do this,



teachers must first understand how their own attitudes and beliefs about religion influence their instruction, as well as be taught how to teach about religion in a neutral manner and engage students in the discussion of existential questions and other critical life lessons.

Data from the ongoing Monitoring the Future study housed at the University of Michigan indicates that teachers tend to be more religious than other college graduates. Based on survey responses over a period starting in 1976 to 1995 from more than 26,000 people beginning when they graduated from high school until they turned 35, researchers found that among those who attended college, “Education majors provided the most surprising result: majoring in education appears to increase religiosity. This appears especially true for religious attendance . . . The effects of Education on religious attendance and the importance appear to increase in strength over time” (Kimball, Mitchell, Thornton, & Young-Demarco, 2009, p. 19). Researchers observed that “highly religious people enter Education majors, stay in them and become more religious” (p. 22). They also found “that Postmodernism, rather than Science, is the *bête noir*—the strongest antagonist—of religiosity” (p. 23). Recognizing that they have only viewed the tip of the iceberg, Kimball et al conclude:

It is important to point out that the cultural elites in America and even America’s religious elites are drawn from those who have received higher education. Thus the nature and strength of the religiosity of the college-educated elites can serve as an important propagation mechanism for the evolution of religiosity in the world beyond the ivory tower. (p. 23)

The relevance of this research is recognition of the influence one’s worldview and overall philosophies of life have on career choices. It makes clear the need for educators to better understand their own beliefs and attitudes and how they impact their teaching.

A brief review of the academic literature indicates that this topic has received some limited attention (Biro, 2001; Blanusa, 2009; Blinn-Pike, 2008; Carlson, W., 1973; Conde-Frazier, 2007; Dierenfield, 1971; Glanzer & Talbert, 2005; Huang, 1995; Lin, Davidman, Petersen, & Thomas, 1998; Nehm, Kim, & Sheppard, 2009; Rolle, 2004; Soloff, 2001; Subedi, 2006). However, even less attention has been given to teacher preparation programs for either pre-service or in-service educators regarding teaching about religious practices and controversial topics related to religious beliefs, such as homosexuality and evolution (Ackerman, 2000; Hollander & Saypol, 1976; Moore, D., 2007; Nehm, Kim, & Sheppard, 2009; Noddings, 1993; 2006a; 2008; Soloff, 2001; Subedi, 2006; Warshaw, 1986).

D. Moore (2007) and Noddings (1993; 2006a; 2008) provide guidance that is particularly relevant to this project. D. Moore (2007) argues that almost all American teachers already discuss religion in their classrooms, and that some do it with much frequency. She states, “The question is whether they are doing so consciously and successfully. Given the costs associated with widespread religious illiteracy and the unconscious reproduction of troubling stereotypes and assumptions, it is critical that citizens take the challenge of cultivating religious literacy seriously” (p. 88). It is her opinion that “By virtue of their expertise as educators, teachers are especially well equipped to contribute to and enhance public discourse regarding a variety of topics that concern citizens, including (and perhaps especially) those that are most contentious” (p. 91). She notes that teacher preparation programs “that recognize and value teachers as professionals, scholars, moral agents, and public intellectuals will fashion their teacher training initiatives in ways that support, strengthen, and develop these dimensions of

teacher identity in the methods employed in the training program or initiative itself.”

Modeled on the cultural studies methods used in the Program in Religion and Secondary Education at the Harvard Divinity School, D. Moore (2007) suggests the following approach:

1) instructors will be transparent about what they are teaching and why; 2) educators/ students will be engaged in an ongoing interrogation of their own assumptions and responses to the literature and/or topics under investigation; 3) the classroom or workshop pedagogy employed is learner-centered and focuses on problem-posing methods of inquiry; 4) religion is approached as a dimension of multicultural studies; and 5) the relevance of the literature/ topic/ issue to a broader understanding of the purpose of education itself needs to be articulated by the instructors and affirmed by the educators/ students. (pp. 91-92)

Because of the “complex intersection between religion, public education, and democracy in multicultural America,” D. Moore (2007) recommends a four-five course sequence be provided for both pre-service and in-service educators (p. 95). For in-service educators, she suggests a peer scholar method working with other teachers, along with resource scholars from a participating university. Training is particularly important for in-service teachers serving as mentors to student teachers so that they can better help “preservice teachers learn how to negotiate the complex challenges that arise when religion is employed as a lens in the process of educating students for democratic citizenship in multicultural America” (p. 102). Educators, like their students, must be trained in order to establish a “common language [and] shared foundation of assumptions upon which to build a fruitful discussion” (p. 103). Yet, D. Moore recognizes that this will require opportunities, time, and resources that are not currently readily available.

Another advocate for teaching about religion, Nel Noddings (1993; 2006a; 2008) equates not addressing existential questions in secondary schools to committing

educational malpractice. While admitting to the challenge involved, in *Critical Lessons: What Our Schools Should Teach* (2006a), she argues:

Teachers in public schools should not give specific answers to these questions. The idea is certainly not to proselytize, and any attempts to convert students to a particular religious view are clearly unconstitutional. The idea is to introduce students to a rich and fascinating literature that addresses the great existential questions from a variety of perspectives. (p. 250)

Noddings (2006a) believes that teachers can be prepared to address these and other critical lessons but it will involve changes in both the way we prepare teachers and the way in which the curriculum is organized. One of the major obstacles, according to Noddings, is “the gap between content and pedagogy is often enormous. One great strength of the old teachers’ colleges was their dedication to the integration of content and pedagogy” (p. 283). She points to the movement away from the low status teachers’ colleges to university preparation programs as a paradox in which “we may have traded competence for status.” She argues:

To teach well at the high school level, teachers need a breadth of knowledge that will enable them to connect the various subjects their students are required to study and also connect that material to the issues of everyday life. If, as Whitehead advised, the content of the school curriculum should be Life itself, we are a long way from preparing teachers for this curriculum . . . it may be that teacher educators spend too much time preaching constructivism and teaching specific methods associated with it and far too little encouraging student teachers to use its basic approach: try things out, reflect, hypothesize, test, play with things. Instead, too many teachers do exactly what, as constructivists, they advise their students not to do, they try to remember what they were taught and move directly to a solution or strategy. (p. 284)

In order to respond to controversial questions and topics which are bound to arise in the classroom, Noddings (2006a) maintains, “we do not want teachers to respond with prespecified, memorized answers. We want them to be prepared for exploration and critical analysis” (p. 285). To do this, Noddings suggest the “curricula at both the K-12

and college levels should be revised.” She complains that “almost every academic course is designed to serve as preparation for the next course . . . Courses designed for usefulness in everyday life or simply for their own sake rarely stand high in the academic hierarchy.” Noddings is not suggesting that the sequential courses be eliminated, rather that they be broadened and enriched and that other choices should also be available. She advocates that the courses be designed so that the time devoted to various topics and particular subtopics vary greatly to better suit the student’s planned use for the material.

In many instances, course design may begin by identifying the skills and processes involved, but Noddings (2006a) cautions that “ignoring content is a mistake that was made in several process curricula of the 1960s and 1970s” (p. 286). Instead, she recommends that in addition to the fundamental knowledge of the discipline, all courses should include “connections to other subjects and the great existential questions” (p. 287). Noddings states that this requires teachers who are:

“Renaissance” people – people who have a broad knowledge of many disciplines and perennial questions . . . Teachers also need to know how to teach, of course, but it is not only pedagogical knowledge that marks their competence. Rather, it is an incredibly rich breadth of knowledge that we do not demand of any other specialist . . . Teacher candidates, like those in engineering, should study courses especially designed for them in all of the disciplines. Such courses would emphasize *connections* – to other disciplines, to the common problems of humanity, and to personal exploration of universal questions of meaning . . . When teachers, who should qualify as models of well-educated citizens, cannot discuss matters outside their own narrow discipline, students understandably wonder why they must study all this material that will, in a few short years, be relegated to the trash bin of memory. (pp. 287-288, italics in original)

Noddings (2006a) maintains “that educators should take the advice of Socrates seriously: we should teach for self-knowledge” (p. 289). For her, this means “looking at the self in connection to other selves and to both the physical and social environments.

How and why do we act on the world? How does it act on us?” She advocates that:

Critical lessons should pervade the curriculum. Planning for every course – academic, vocational, general – should include consideration of how the topics and skills to be taught connect to everyday life, personal growth and meaning, other school subjects, and spiritual questions. To do this effectively, much junk will have to be removed from the curriculum. The basic structure of the secondary curriculum – organization around the traditional disciplines – probably will not change in the foreseeable future. However, every discipline can be stretched from the inside to provide richer, more meaningful studies. (p. 290)

The approaches to teacher preparation regarding religion proposed by Noddings (2006a) and D. Moore (2007) are in line with efforts to embed SEL within the existing curriculum. It can be accomplished by offering foundational courses related to SEL and teaching about religion to all pre-service and in-service educators, coupled with guidance and age appropriate materials specific to each discipline. This is consistent with Nodding’s notion that “stretching the disciplines from within suggests that, paradoxically, breadth might well be achieved by specialization. It is rarely achieved through the coerced study of unconnected specialties, however many of them are stuffed into the required curriculum” (p. 290). She concludes, “Students specializing in mathematics or science can, in the process, learn something of history, biography, philosophy, literature, aesthetics, religion, and how to live. A large part of every curriculum should be . . . designed to excite wonder, awe, and appreciation of the world and the place of human beings in it.” Although not speaking directly about SEL, Noddings and D. Moore demonstrate what is lacking in teacher preparation and the importance of providing teachers with the interdisciplinary training required to achieve its goals.

Since most teachers lack the knowledge and skills to address religion within their content areas, as well as lack training regarding SEL, as discussed in Chapter Two, D.

Moore's (2007) recommendation for a four-five course sequence appears necessary. Jeff Passe and Laura Willox (2009) argue that:

A single preservice course in social studies methods is insufficient for teachers to develop instructional techniques that promote tolerance, sensitivity, nonjudgmental expression of beliefs, and an in-depth grasp of the nuances of major world religions. This is especially true for elementary teachers, who are increasingly likely to have gaps in their knowledge of basic social studies, let alone cultural anthropology. (pp. 104-105)

Echoing these concerns, Suzanne Rosenblith (2008) also cautions that without proper training too many teachers will continue to inappropriately address issues related to religion in theological terms based on "particularistic religious beliefs rather than views and ideas that may contribute to the public good" (p. 510). Instead, she favors approaching such topics academically, critically, and pluralistically. Like Noddings (1993), Rosenblith maintains that by "providing students with opportunities to learn about different religious traditions as well as providing them with opportunities to ask questions and critically examine others' beliefs and unbeliefs will help us come closer to realizing a robust pluralism." Due to the complexity of the training required to teach about religion, she advocates that it be done "in such a way that it contributes to the public good so that it helps our young citizens develop knowledge and dispositions to resist religious intolerance and bigotry."

Rosenblith and Beatrice Baily (2007; 2008) favor the training and certification of highly qualified religious studies teachers to do this work. They propose a model in which teacher candidates would receive training regarding First Amendment rights and regulations, world religions and religions in America, and methods of exegetical analysis. This training would draw on expertise that might be found in university political science,

religious studies, educational foundations, and/or philosophy departments. In addition to course work, they advocate for field experience that includes teaching “some religious studies units in other content areas or in elective courses until required courses would become available” (2008, p. 160). Additionally, these teacher candidates “would also need to know about all the current educational resources related to teaching religion, young adult and classic texts that portray religious adherents, materials that enable students to appreciate the many religious expressions within various traditions.”

The curriculum for training teachers proposed by Rosenblith and Baily (2007; 2008) is not an entirely new concept. Approximately forty years ago a similar initiative was beginning to gain acceptance. According to Paul Will (1971), Michigan was one of the first states to develop a certifiable twenty semester-hour minor. “In 1970 the State Board of Education approved the inclusion of the Academic Study of Religions as a minor certification field in elementary and secondary education and established a set of general standards for the approval of programs in this area” (p. 92). Will also reported, that at that time: “Michigan has four collegiate institutions offering certification in religion and there are three approved schools in Wisconsin, two in California and one in Vermont. The certification method is being considered by other states including Maryland, Colorado, Texas, and Iowa” (p. 93). While it is outside of the scope of this project to study the history of this movement, it is interesting to note that the Michigan Department of Education discontinued this endorsement effective January 1, 2009 (Michigan Department of Education, 2011). However, such a study might prove useful to any subsequent implementation efforts resulting from this project.

Minimally, “due to the widespread illiteracy about religion in the general



population,” the American Academy of Religion (2010, p. 20) urges teacher educators to include at least one religious studies course in their requirements for pre-service teachers and to offer workshops and seminars for in-service teachers. AAR argues “the more exposure teachers have to the academic study of religion, the better equipped they will be to teach about the rich complexities of religion as it manifests itself in human political and cultural life.” While guidelines and other published materials are useful in providing foundational information, AAR maintains that workshops and courses provide a better training environment “to explore the nuances of public policy debates about religion in the schools and how to construct lesson plans that incorporate more accurate representations of religion.” These training opportunities “will provide educators with helpful tools for their own practice while also helping them to serve as a resource for their colleagues in the school and larger district.”

Combining some level of religious studies training described above with SEL instruction could result in the interdisciplinary training school personnel will need to help students to develop the skills and language required to implement the proposed model of SEL informed by religious pluralism described in this project.

### **Developing Age Appropriate SEL-Religious Studies Curriculum Materials**

The development of age appropriate SEL-religious studies interdisciplinary curriculum materials are also needed that will enable students to talk about the role religion and/or other philosophical frameworks may have in guiding their individual code of conduct. Instructional materials are also needed to assist educators in facilitating balanced discussions about religion’s influence on human behavior throughout history, and in our present time, as a means to both positive and negative ends. In order for

American schools to promote the tolerance, sensitivity, and nonjudgmental expression of beliefs required for these discussions, “high-quality curriculum materials, both for teacher training and for use in the pre-K-12 classroom” are urgently needed (Passe & Willox, 2009, p. 105). It is critical that moral assumptions regarding right behavior are clearly articulated and that multiple interpretations of the good life and the good society are reflected in these lesson plans and classroom materials (AAR, 2010; Noddings, 2006a).

Some preliminary work has already been done towards these ends. Since the Supreme Court’s decision in 1963 regarding *Abington v. Schempp*, several individuals and organizations have worked to develop resources aimed at the academic study of religion and how to grapple “with the concept of what it is like to live in a society rich in religious and ethnic diversity” (Austin, 1976, p. 475). As already indicated, the American Academy of Religion has been involved since the 1970s in efforts to assist educators in addressing the challenges and opportunities teachers face regarding religion in the classroom resulting from the religious diversity of the students, as well as content-related issues. Their *Guidelines for Teaching about Religion* (AAR, 2010) and website ([www.aarweb.org](http://www.aarweb.org)) contain many references and resources that would be useful in developing the necessary instructional materials for the proposed SEL-religious studies curriculum.

Another example of one of the early initiatives responding to the Supreme Court opinion regarding the responsibility of schools to teach about religion that is relevant to this project is the Religion in Elementary Social Studies Project in which Florida State University staff developed “elementary level curricula about religion for our multi-religious and multi-ethnic society . . . [which] stresses objectives dealing with sensitivity,

empathy, and tolerance as well as information about religions” (Austin, 1976, p. 475). Another example is the edited volume produced by Nicholas Piediscalzi and William Collie (1977) entitled *Teaching about Religion in Public Schools*. Contributors provide “different approaches to religious studies in the elementary and secondary schools . . . within the disciplinary structures most commonly found, hence the emphasis on language arts in the humanities and fine arts and on social studies” (p. 2). Yet, just as discussed in Chapter Two regarding efforts to incorporate SEL within the existing curriculum, Piediscalzi and Collie recognize difficulties with this kind of categorization and state:

Pragmatically, we have encouraged schools to incorporate religion studies wherever appropriate and under whatever designation is necessary. We have supported the natural inclusion of religion studies, believing that the curricular presence of a consideration of the role of religion in the development and functioning of individuals and societies is far more significant than arguing endlessly about where to pigeonhole it in the curriculum. (p. 3)

Faced with dilemmas such as difficulties about where to place religious studies in the curriculum, limited teacher training, and other demands being made of schools, interest in teaching about religion waned. Until, according to Charles Kniker (1985), “At the urging of conservatives, President Ronald Reagan declared 1983 the ‘Year of the Bible’” (p. 6). However, 1983 also marked the twentieth anniversary of *Abington v. Schempp*. These events came together to renew public rhetoric about the mixing of religion and education. This in turn prompted Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation to ask Kniker to write a guide entitled *Teaching about Religion in the Public Schools*. Among the stated purposes for the publication were “to dispel the notion that teaching about religion in the public schools is illegal” and “the increasing pluralism of the nation will require teachers to know more about other cultures, including their religious

heritages” (p. 7). These arguments for teaching about religion continue to surface, as evidenced nearly 30 years later, when the December 2011/January 2012 issue of the Phi Delta Kappan featured several articles on religion in the public schools. In one of the articles entitled “Getting Religion Right in Public Schools,” Charles Haynes (2011), senior scholar at the First Amendment Center, states, “If we can’t get this right in public schools, we have little hope of getting this right in the public square of what is now the most religiously diverse nation on Earth” (p. 8).

In an earlier effort to “get it right” and celebrate and reaffirm America’s “first liberty” – religious liberty, also referred to as the freedom of conscience, *The Williamsburg Charter: A National Celebration and Reaffirmation of the First Amendment Religious Liberty Clauses* (1988c) was drafted over a two-year period and signed by more than 150 national leaders and representatives of national organizations. The Williamsburg Charter Foundation also issued two other documents that year: *A Study Guide to the Williamsburg Charter* (1988b) and *Chartered Pluralism: Reforging a Public Philosophy for Public Education. A Background Paper on the School Curriculum Project: Living with Our Deepest Differences* (1988a). In *Chartered Pluralism*, The Williamsburg Charter Foundation (1988a) states:

The purpose of the charter is four-fold: to celebrate the uniqueness of the First Amendment; to reaffirm religious liberty – or freedom of conscience – for citizens of all faiths and none; to set out the place of religious liberty within American public life; and to define the guiding principles by which people can contend robustly but civilly in the public arena. (p. 6)

Also in 1988, 16 leading education and religious groups issued a joint statement entitled *Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers* “to assist school boards as they make decisions about the curriculum, and educators as they teach

about religion in ways that are constitutionally permissible, educationally sound, and sensitive to the beliefs of students and parents” (reprinted in the *Journal of Law & Religion*, 1990, vol. 8, p. 309). This document and those published by The Williamsburg Charter Foundation provided the foundation for *Living with our Deepest Differences: Religious Liberty in a Pluralistic Society: Teacher's Resource and Lesson Plans*, which was recently revised and edited by Shaun McFall and Charles Haynes (2009).

*Living with our Deepest Differences* focuses on the place of religious freedom in our society. The lessons are targeted to middle to high school students and are to “be taught in a manner that fosters respect for differences and appreciation for diversity as a source of national strength” (McFall & Haynes, 2009, p. 8). This resource includes ten lessons based on five major themes: coming to America, the Constitution, American pluralism, “for better, for worse,” and our challenge today. These themes not only trace religious liberty throughout America’s history, they are also relevant to SEL desired outcomes related to living by the Golden Rule and treating others in the way we want to be treated. Another resource based on the Williamsburg Charter Principles, *The Constitution and Religion in the Classroom*, produced by the Council for First Freedom Center (2007), includes answers to frequently asked questions and lesson ideas for teaching the First Amendment. This guide and *Living with our Deepest Differences* are more examples of existing resources that could easily be incorporated with SEL instruction.

A number of other publications related to teaching about religion in America’s schools have been written by Charles Haynes and colleagues that could be useful in developing curriculum materials to implement the SEL-religious studies curriculum

being proposed. These works include *Teaching about Religion in American Life: A First Amendment Guide* (1998), which was published by Oxford University Press and the First Amendment Center, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum* (Nord & Haynes, 1998), and *The First Amendment in Schools: A Guide from the First Amendment Center* (Haynes, Chaltain, Ferguson, Hudson, & Thomas, 2003). Both of the later two books were published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the First Amendment Center. Haynes also recently updated *A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools* (2008), which was originally published in 1999, as well as updated *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Schools* (Haynes & Thomas, 2007).

Also relevant to this project is the six-year study conducted by the American Textbook Council which resulted in two reports authored by Gilbert Sewall (1995; 1998). In *Religion in the Classrooms: What the Textbooks Tell Us*, Sewall (1995) presents the findings of the Council's review of history and civics textbooks, as well as a review of character education and "alternative" textbooks and instructional materials used in social studies and health programs at all grade levels. On behalf of the Council, he concludes, "Historical events and episodes with a religious component receive greater coverage in history and civics textbooks than in the recent past . . . [particularly] non-Western subject matter and non-Western religions" even though some sectarian critics remain dissatisfied and continue to demand even more coverage (p. 16).

However, Sewall (1995) also identified several major problems in the textbooks. "Religion is almost always presented as a political or social entity, rarely as an intellectual or moral force with individual and public consequences . . . In an attempt to

help students make connections with the past and their present, comparative exercises abound throughout textbooks. The result is the failure to appreciate vast *differences* regarding time, place, and culture” (p. 17, italics in original). This has frequently resulted in nebulous and inadequate explanations “often trivializing and cheapening the role of religion in the human past.” Additionally, Sewall observed that “coverage of contemporary religion in the United States is uniformly scant, unusually unsympathetic, and sometimes inaccurate.” While acknowledging that there is ample room for improvement, his main concern was with the pressure by curriculum specialist “to introduce *non-historical social studies* lessons [which] actually displace history in the curriculum” (p. 18, italics in original). Many of the *non-historical social studies* lessons Sewall is talking about fall into the category of “prevention” education from which SEL evolved. According to Sewall:

These ‘alternative’ lessons and courses in psychology, family life, personal awareness, and self-esteem training satisfy graduation requirements in social studies. They also cover behavior, personality, attitudes, and ethics through a strictly secular screen. As traditional religious precepts and moral guides have been removed from schools by custom, regulation, or case law, new principles of action – likely to be non-theistic and self-referential – take their place in student life and thought . . . Non-historical social studies textbooks cover – and offer prescriptive guidance on – matters of culture and lifestyle. These topics often have a religious, spiritual, ethical, or moral dimension. (p. 18)

Sewall (1995) is critical of these alternative instructional materials because their secular bias. He warns that educators are making a grave miscalculation by dismissing the relationship between religion, behavior, and moral systems. He maintains, “That religion is not objectively true misses the point. For many – if not most – people it satisfies a fundamental emotional need to feel there is more to life than what physical senses perceive” (p. 22). He argues, “For the faithful, religions provide a compass of

human action, behavior, and outlook. They are the root of soul and cosmos. Not likely will believers quietly relinquish foundations of such power and importance in their lives” (pp. 22-23).

In response to what the Council found in the textbooks, Sewall (1998) wrote *Learning about Religion, Learning from Religion: A Guide to Religion in the Curriculum and Moral Life of Schools with Recommendations for Textbook Publishers, School Boards and Educators*. While recognizing, “The question of whether religion is essential to morality is an unsettled one” (p. 14), Sewall recommends that educational materials express the religious foundations for concepts such as universal human worth and dignity, the Golden Rule, and loving your neighbor. “Learning from religion includes understanding why these ideals and the systems of belief behind them have moved, aroused and inspired great and ordinary people since time immemorial” (p. 16). In addition to recommending basic texts, subjects, and themes, Sewall suggests the following guidelines for doing this:

- (1) *Students should learn that religious people differ in the details of their beliefs and that these differences have exerted a vast influence on the course of world affairs past and present . . . They should know that there are systems of belief and morality with non-religious sources. An educated person may or may not be a believer but should acknowledge, understand and respect religious traditions.* (p. 21, italics in original)
- (2) *Educators should encourage children of all backgrounds to imagine life as something more than material and should help them understand why religion is a living force in many individual lives . . . In examining moral issues, sacred texts and other documents from many cultures lead inevitably toward class considerations of ‘perennial questions’ that each generation must ask anew. Very possibly such thought and study will elicit and stimulate enriched understanding of universal moral ideals* (pp. 21-22, italics in original)
- (3) *Educators can and should make religious-based insights as to being, meaning and purpose more integral to character education . . . Religions affirm human*



altruism, moral responsibility, natural laws and rights, and universal dignity. They help show us how to treat others as we wish to be treated (p. 22, italics in original)

Others working in the area of social studies have produced documents with similar recommendations. Examples include preparation of a set of guiding questions for including religion in curriculum development based on the thematic strands established by the National Council for the Social Studies (Dever, M. T., Whitaker, M. L., & Byrnes, D. A., 2001), guidelines and recommendations developed by the Council on Islamic Education in collaboration with the First Amendment Center based on national and state social studies standards (Douglass, S. L., 2000); a list of references and resources prepared regarding religion in the social studies curriculum for the ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education (Risinger, 1993); and a report prepared by the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction (1989) regarding placement of religion in the social studies curriculum.

Many of the guidelines and lessons plans developed in the later part of the last century have been updated and could prove useful in developing the interdisciplinary SEL curriculum materials called for in this project. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development ([www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)), Council for America's First Freedom ([www.firstfreedom.org](http://www.firstfreedom.org)), First Amendment Center ([www.firstamendmentcenter.org](http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org)), Phi Delta Kappan ([www.kappanmagazine.org](http://www.kappanmagazine.org)), Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding ([www.tanenbaum.org](http://www.tanenbaum.org)), and Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion ([www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu](http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu)) are also among the organizations that have produced documents and also maintain websites to assist educators with teaching about religion in public schools within the parameters of the First

Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The content and instructional methods suggested by these organizations are very much in line with SEL instruction and could be used in both public and parochial schools interested in preparing students to live in our pluralist society.

One of the most sensitive issues in developing instructional materials for the proposed SEL-religious studies curriculum is avoiding bias and stereotyping. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL, 2004), who “has been fighting anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry since 1913,” makes an on-line handbook available to help school officials, lawyers, judges, parents, and students “wrestle” with the proper role of religion in the public schools. The ADL has also established A World of Difference Institute ([www.adl.org/education/edu\\_awod](http://www.adl.org/education/edu_awod)) which offers anti-bias and diversity training and materials for exploring prejudice and bigotry in classroom, campus, workplace, and community settings.

The ADL’s (2004) classroom resources are aimed primarily at public school teachers. However, the ADL’s advice is relevant for teachers in both public and private schools, particularly in those offering the proposed SEL-religious studies curriculum. It is interesting to note the deep concern and caution the ADL expresses in the following suggestions for teaching about religion:

Although it is legal to teach about religion in public schools in a neutral and secular manner, school administrators, teachers and parents should be cognizant of the inherent dangers of bringing religion into the classroom:

***Students are extremely susceptible to peer and public pressure and coercion.*** This concern is heightened, of course, at the elementary school level. Any discussion of religion in the classroom should be sensitive to the beliefs of the different students in the class. No student should be made to feel that his or her personal beliefs or practices are being questioned, infringed upon or

compromised. A student should never feel ostracized on the basis of his or her religious beliefs.

***If religion is discussed, great care must be taken to discuss minority as well as majority religions.*** The inclusion of only the major religions in a classroom discussion does not reflect the actual religious diversity within our society and the world. cursory discussions will subtly denigrate the validity of minority religious beliefs held by some individuals, regardless of whether adherents to minority beliefs are represented in the class. If they are present, these students may feel excluded or coerced.

***Students should not be put on the spot to explain their religious (or cultural) traditions.*** The student may feel uncomfortable and may not have enough information to be accurate. Moreover, by asking a student to be spokesperson for his or her religion, the teacher is sending a signal that the religion is too "exotic" for the teacher to understand. Finally, in certain cases, the teacher may be opening the door for proselytizing activity by the student, which must be avoided.

***Every effort should be made to obtain accurate information about different religions.*** Special training may be required to prepare teachers to discuss religion in an appropriate manner.

***Discussion of religion in the classroom may alienate those students who are being raised with no religious faith.*** While there is an obligation for even these students to learn what is being taught as part of a secular educational program, it is very important that teachers avoid discussions that seem to endorse religious belief over non-religious belief. Otherwise, such students may feel pressure to conform to the majority, or be made to feel inferior about their own upbringing.

***Discussion of religion in the classroom may alienate those who are being raised with orthodox religious faiths.*** It is equally important that teachers not appear to disapprove of faith, thereby alienating those who are raised with faith. (pp. 13-14)

*A Classroom of Difference* is the ADL's anti-bias curriculum that provides teachers with lessons to help pre-K-12 students deal with these issues. Lessons provide students with opportunities to develop the language needed "to define key concepts and terms related to diversity and bias" (ADL, n.d.). Students are also given "opportunities to examine their own identities and belief systems and to explore how their attitudes and behaviors are shaped by their backgrounds including their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual

orientation and other cultural and societal factors.” These lessons allow students “to discuss feelings associated with being a member of a group that is part of the dominant culture in society and feelings associated with identifying oneself as a member of a subordinate or numerical minority group in society.” This curriculum fits very well with SEL’s objectives regarding learning about one’s self and others.

Learning “to see that biased messages and thinking are pervasive and very much a part of the status quo of United States society” (ADL, n.d.) is an important aspect for educators and students to recognize in order to see the privileged position Christianity has in American society. The exclusion long experienced by the Jewish people that prompted the establishment of the ADL continues to be experienced by students who are members of other religious minorities, particularly Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs (Ahmad & Szpara, 2003; Joshi, 2007; Taylor, L. S. & Whittaker, 2003). In response to this situation, Khyati Joshi (2007) suggests that rather than ignore or exclude Christianity in the curriculum educators should consider the following:

- (1) Know your students and start by including the religions of the students in the classroom.
- (2) Learn the ABCDs of the major world religions – **A**rchitecture of houses of worship, **B**ooks that contain the religion’s holy texts, **C**ities considered to be holy sites, and **D**ays of major holidays.
- (3) Recognize religion as part of students’ social identities, even for those who do not necessarily consider themselves to be ‘religious.’
- (4) Avoid the urge to ‘Christianize’ religions and holidays by lumping them all together and using analogies to Christian holidays and practices as the point of reference.
- (5) Make religion matter by including it in the curricula whenever it is appropriate, especially when discussing behavior, literature, art, music, architecture, and forms of government. (p. 48)

There are a number of articles available with information about resources and strategies for implementing approaches similar to Joshi’s (2007) (including Kilman,

2007; Whittaker et al., 2009). Some even offer guidance on specific ways in which Islamic values provide a distinctive framework for moral education (Halstead, 2007; Moore, J. R., 2005; 2009). While all of the resource guides mentioned stress the importance of religious literacy as a matter of helping students to understand the critical role religion has historically had and continues to play in both domestic and international affairs, special emphasis is placed on the importance of preparing teachers to communicate effectively with religious minority students and establish safe and inclusive learning environments for all students. This aspect of teaching about religion is particularly directly related to SEL.

In light of the polarization between adherents of different religions and the ongoing anti-Muslim rhetoric expressed in America post-September 11, 2001, Nelly van Doorn-Harder (2007) advocates a trans-disciplinary approach to teaching about religion that involves human rights studies, interfaith dialogue, and peace studies. She argues that the complexity of our world requires that we go beyond typical interdisciplinary efforts and combine academic knowledge with praxis. van Doorn-Harder envisions the following curriculum:

The insights and methods drawn from the three disciplines evolve into a sequence: human rights studies help students understand why rights such as freedom of religion and belief are fundamental to human existence in an interconnected world; this understanding facilitates inter-religious communications while the two combined impel us to work for peace. All three of these disciplines are fairly young as academic studies and were developed as answers to devastating episodes in human history, especially the Second World War. They develop from the bottom up, trying to theorize about how to approach certain events, ranging from breakdowns in communications between certain faith groups to designing new modes of intervention in violent conflicts. This reality means that the options for interactions and synergy are multiple. (pp. 105-106)

The interactive approaches and curriculum materials that van Doorn-Harder

(2007) and others have suggested are consistent with Freire's (1970/2000) pedagogy of humanism and Gutmann's (1987/1999) notion of democratic education discussed earlier in this chapter that provide a foundation for the SEL-religious studies curriculum proposed. While there remains much work to be done in this area, the major barriers to implementing the proposed curriculum are less an issue of a lack of materials and more of an issue of the lack of teacher training about the treatment of religious expression and how religion can legally be taught in public schools.

### **Improving Public Understanding of the First Amendment**

Defining right behavior has been a highly contested matter with roots back to the beginning of the nation when the Founders could not reach agreement on establishing one national religion (Mapp, 2003/2006; Thayer, 1947/1979). These early debates resulted in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which states:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

However, maintaining the freedom of expression granted in this amendment, particularly with regard to a separation between church and state, continues to challenge educators. The First Amendment is clear in supporting the nondiscrimination and nonrepression of one's personal beliefs. Yet, a lack of understanding about the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses of the First Amendment, also known as the Religious Liberty clauses, along with high visibility legal challenges, have instilled in educators an ongoing fear of violating the law just as Dierenfield (1971) had observed more than 40 years ago, according to Nord (1995). There is wide-spread confusion about

what public schools can do under the First Amendment regarding talking about religion in the classroom (Council for America's First Freedom, 2007). However, based on his experience conducting workshops and seminars for teachers, administrators, and school board members, Nord maintains that, "Once there is some understanding of the First Amendment, American religious pluralism, and fairness to all points of view, virtually everyone finds it proper and important to include religion in public education" (p. 233).

The confusion does not appear to stem from a lack of resources on the subject. There are many guidebooks available to help teachers, administrators, school board members, and parents better understand the Religious Liberty clauses, along with related courts decisions, in an effort to prevent violations of the law. The First Amendment Center offers several publications, some tailored to specific audiences: including *A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools* (Haynes, 2008); *A Parent's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools* prepared with the National PTA (2008); *Public Schools and Religious Communities: A First Amendment Guide* prepared with the American Jewish Congress and Christian Legal Society (1999); *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Schools* (Haynes, & Thomas, 2007); and *The First Amendment in Schools: A Guide from the First Amendment Center* (Haynes et al., 2003), done in collaboration with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; and *Teaching about Religion in American Life: A First Amendment Guide*, (Haynes, 1998).

Other special interest organizations have also published guides, including Americans United for Separation of Church and State, *Religion in the public schools: A Road Map for Avoiding Lawsuits and Respecting Parents' Legal Rights* (Lofaso, 2009);

National School Boards Association Council of School Attorneys, *Religion and Public Schools: Striking a Constitutional Balance* (Gittins, 2001); Center for Law and Religious Freedom, Christian Legal Society, and Christian Educators Association International, *Teachers and Religion in Public Schools*, (Turpen, 2006); the Anti-Defamation League, *Religion in the Public Schools* (2004); and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Tennessee, *Know Your Rights: Religion in Public Schools: A Guide for Administrators and Teachers* (2011).

In spite of the resources available, generally speaking, Americans are not very knowledgeable about the First Amendment. This, however, may be changing. Based on its annual survey, the First Amendment Center (2012) reports in the most recent *State of the First Amendment*:

When asked to name the five specific freedoms in the First Amendment, 65% of respondents could name freedom of speech, followed by 28% who could name the freedom of religion, 13% the freedom of the press, 13% the right to assemble, and 4% the right to petition. Twenty-seven percent of respondents could not list any of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment . . . Awareness of freedom of religion dramatically increased this year to 28%, the highest percentage ever recorded for that right. Also, the 65% naming freedom of speech is the highest recorded since 1997 when the survey began. (pp. 1-2)

In an effort to improve public understanding of the religious liberty aspect of the First Amendment, the U.S. Department of Education (1998; 2000; 2003; 2004) has issued several directives regarding religion in public schools during the past 15 years. While there are many related issues to be considered, including state funding for religious schools, use of school facilities by religious groups, and efforts to accommodate minority religious sects, most attention has been given to the school-based controversy surrounding religious expression as a part of school sanctioned activities. In *The Fourth*



*R: Conflicts Over Religion in America's Public Schools*, Joan DelFattore (2004) writes:

Bumper stickers, talk shows, political speeches, and late-night comedy monologues all spread the same message: God has been kicked out of the public schools, and the mere mention of religion will bring the Supreme Court swooping down like the Monty Python version of the Spanish Inquisition. Such assertions, which many Americans accept as common knowledge, are catchy, emotionally compelling, and wildly misleading. (p. 1)

DelFattore (2004) is primarily concerned with the “treatment of religious speech *in* the public school program, not a broader survey of the many links to be found between religion *and* public education in general” (p. 10, italics in original). Therefore, what she has to say is very relevant to the two-pronged challenge the proposed SEL-religious studies curriculum faces: the uncertainty not only about what teachers can say about religious matters, but also what students can say students, as well. She points out that:

The centuries-long debate over religion in the public school goes to the heart of the interplay between two of the most sacred principles on which American culture is based: majority rule and individual rights. . . In religious matters, as in racial and ethnic concerns, the public schools serve as a flashpoint for tensions that inevitably arise when people of widely varied backgrounds and viewpoints try to get along in a free society.

Like it or not, the public-school system is one place where everyone's views have to be considered . . . Despite arguments to the contrary by determined activists on both sides, it seems clear that neither government favoritism toward any religious orientation nor inhibition of the students' rights to free speech and free exercise of religion would be constitutional, politically feasible, or morally justifiable. While it would be highly overoptimistic to claim that these political and legal necessities have induced all participants in the school-prayer debate to seek broadly acceptable solutions that would accommodate others' convictions on the same basis as their own, at least it creates a forum in which this imperative must inescapably be faced. (p. 11)

In the guidebook, *Teachers and Religion in Public Schools: Fourth Edition* (Turpen, 2006) developed by the Center for Law and Religious Freedom, the Christian Legal Society, and the Christian Educators Association International contains ground

rules for addressing these conflicts and finding solutions as DelFattore (2004) suggests.

The book opens with a statement jointly sponsored by the Christian Legal Society, Christian Educators Association International, The Freedom Forum, First Amendment Center and 17 other organizations making the following claim:

Our nation urgently needs a reaffirmation of our shared commitment, as American citizens, to the guiding principles of the Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the Constitution. The rights and responsibilities of the Religious Liberty clauses provide the framework within which we are able to debate our differences to understand one another, and to forge public policies that serve the common good in public education. The time has come for us to work together for academic excellence, fairness and shared civic values in our nation's schools. (p. 1)

Even though the demand for teaching about religion appears to be gaining support (Eck, 2002; Haynes, C., 2011; Henderson, S., 2003; Marshall, 2006; Moore, D., 2007; Kilman, 2007; Rosenblith & Bailey, 2008; van Doorn-Harder, 2007; Whittaker, et al., 2009), “the interplay between religion and public policy has been rather volatile, thanks to both state and federal constitutions mandating an ever shifting degree of separation between church and state, yet permitting free religious expression” (Lugg, 2004, p. 170). While there is a long and contentious history of court challenges surrounding religion and the public schools which is outside of the scope of this project, some of these cases require brief mention.

According to DelFattore (2004), *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962) represents “the first time in American history, the Supreme Court told state officials what they could and could not do with regard to prayer in the public schools, and from that time on the federal government has been a major player in the development of policies regarding religious expression in public education” (p. 67). *Engel v. Vitale* addresses the

prohibition of the State to draft and recommend prayers to be used in public schools. The following year, in deciding *Abington v. Schempp* the Supreme Court went further by banning Bible-reading and the Lord's Prayer as public school-sponsored religious practices.

DelFattore (2004) explains, "The opinion, written by Justice Tom Clark, was based on an early version of a concept that was later expanded into the so-called *Lemon* test . . . [to determine] whether a school prayer law is constitutional" (p. 93, italics in original). Justice Clark wrote:

The test may be stated as follows: what are the purpose and the primary effect of the enactment? If either is the advancement or inhibition of religion then the enactment exceeds the scope of legislative power as circumscribed by the Constitution. That is to say that to withstand the strictures of the Establishment Clause there must be a secular legislative purpose and a primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion. (374 U.S. 203 at 222)

In that decision, prior to making the claim quoted earlier "that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion," Justice Clark also went on to say:

It is insisted that unless these religious exercises are permitted a 'religion of secularism' is established in the schools. We agree of course that the State may not establish a 'religion of secularism' in the sense of affirmatively opposing or showing hostility to religion, thus 'preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe.' (374 U.S. 203 at 225)

However, as ongoing conflicts over not only the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses come into play, additional conflicts related to free speech and the right to free association have also become part of the landscape, adding to the fearfulness of bringing religion into the classroom. According to Turpen (2006), there are seven key legal concepts that teachers should be knowledgeable about:

- (1) **Establishment Clause:** This protection of religious liberty has been interpreted to prohibit not only Congress, but any federal, state, or local government officials (including school administrators and teachers), from making a ‘law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.’ (p. 13)
- (2) **Freedom of Speech:** The Supreme Court increasingly has been restricting freedom of speech in government facilities, including schools. . . the Supreme Court has created three tiers of government facilities:
  - 1) In the **traditional public forum**, such as parks and streets, private persons may express their views without restriction because of content. Schools are *not* considered a traditional public forum.
  - 2) In the **limited public forum**, the government has opened its facility to use by many private individuals or groups. Persons may have access to express their views without restriction due to content. Generally, a school during school hours is *not* a limited public forum. However, at times, a school or a part of the school, such as the activity period, *may be* a limited public forum, if the school district has allowed its facilities to be used by many individuals or groups.
  - 3) In the **nonpublic forum**, the government has restricted use of its facility by private individuals. The government may limit use to certain kinds of speakers (for example, only students) or certain topics of speech (for example, only education-related topics). The government may *not*, however, deny access to a nonpublic forum on the basis of the identity of the speaker, if similar speakers are allowed, or the *viewpoint* of the speaker’s speech. A school cannot pass a policy prohibiting discussion of a topic from a religious viewpoint, if it allows discussion of that topic from a nonreligious viewpoint, as long as the discussion cannot be fairly attributed to the school. Generally, although not always, a school is considered a nonpublic forum during school hours. (pp. 14-15)
- (3) **Freedom from Viewpoint Discrimination:** The government cannot censor private speech because of its viewpoint if other private speech on the topic is allowed. Three landmark Supreme Court decisions have applied this prohibition of viewpoint discrimination to require educational institutions to allow religious expression by students or community groups: *Lamb’s Chapel v. Center Moriches Union Free School District*, 508 U.S. 384 (1993); *Rosenberger v. University of Virginia*, 515 U.S. 819 (1995); and *Good News Club v. Milford Central School*, 533 U.S. 98 (2001). (pp. 15-16)
- (4) **Curricular Control by School Administration:** The Supreme Court increased school administrators’ authority to restrict student speech in curricular settings in a 1988 decision, *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier*, 484 U.S. 260 (1988). School officials may regulate students’ speech for any legitimate pedagogical reason, if the speech is attributable to the school or is an activity

that is part of the school curriculum. (p. 16)

- (5) **Public Employees' Speech Rights:** While the *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969) decision, is most frequently recognized for upholding the rights of individual students and student groups to engage in religious acts, the Supreme Court also stated that students as well as teachers retain First Amendment rights in school. However, essentially, only speech on a topic of 'public concern' is protected; the definition of 'public concern' is often unclear, although some courts have found religious speech to be addressing matters of public concern. Moreover, even if the speech involves a matter of 'public concern,' the public employee's free speech right may be outweighed by the government's interest in the efficiency and harmony of the workplace. Basically, the judge determines whether the employee's free speech interest is stronger than the government's interest in the efficiency of its workplace. (p. 17)
- (6) **Free Exercise of Religion:** Basically, the Free Exercise Clause is violated if the government prohibits conduct done for religious reasons while allowing the same conduct done for secular reasons. (p. 18)
- (7) **State Religious Freedom Restoration Acts:** Congress passed a law, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA), to restore protection of religious liberty by requiring that an individual be exempted from a law that infringes his or her free religious exercise unless the government demonstrates a compelling state interest in forcing the individual to comply with the law. The Supreme Court has ruled that law requires exemption only from federal laws, not from state or local laws. However, several state legislatures have passed Religious Freedom Restoration Acts for their individual states. The states with a state Religious Freedom Restoration Act include: Alabama (state constitutional provision), Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Texas. Utah has a law similar to RFRA regarding students' rights. (p. 18)

While teachers are expected to express neutrality when teaching about religion and discussing religious matters when acting in their official capacity during school-sponsored activities, the courts have fairly consistently upheld the right of students to "present their beliefs about religion in their assignments and artwork and these products be evaluated based on accepted academic standards and pedagogical concerns" (Whittaker et al., 2009, p. 315). Additionally, in response to claims of discrimination

against Arab Muslim, Sikh, and Jewish students after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, as well as allegations of religious discrimination against conservative Christian students, the U.S. Department of Education (2004) issued a letter “to address the right of all students, including students of faith, to be free from discrimination in our schools and colleges under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 (Title IX)” (p.1). The letter points out that while the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) does not extend to religious discrimination, the OCR works closely with the U.S. Department of Justice to “ensure compliance with federal laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion.” The letter in part states:

Although OCR’s jurisdiction does not extend to religious discrimination, OCR does aggressively enforce Title VI, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or national origin, and Title IX, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. In OCR’s experience, some cases of religious discrimination may also involve racial, ethnic or sex discrimination . . . No OCR policy should be construed to permit, much less to require, any form of religious discrimination or any encroachment upon the free exercise of religion. While OCR lacks jurisdiction to prohibit discrimination against students based on religion per se, OCR will aggressively prosecute harassment of religious students who are targeted on the basis of race or gender, as well as racial or gender harassment of students who are targeted on the basis of religion. (pp. 1-2)

In spite of instances of harassment and discrimination, Marshall (2006) states, “There is hope, however, that some schools can work sensitively with their ethnic and religious minorities” (p. 190). She provides examples of schools trying “to meet the needs of Iraqi refugee and Arab American communities, offering bilingual classes and extensive post-war counseling, . . . [making] space for worship and fasting during Ramadan, . . . [providing] diversity workshops, a course on Middle Eastern culture for teachers, and better communication with families” (p. 190). Sarah Isgur (2008) describes

these voluntary attempts as efforts “to accommodate minority-religion students through what the courts have called permissible or permissive accommodation—that is, through policies not required by the Free Exercise Clause but not forbidden by the Establishment Clause” (p. 375). Jonathan Nuechterlein (1990) provides a similar explanation:

The establishment clause principally forbids the state to act with a religious purpose. The free exercise clause requires the state to treat religious people with secular respect. These two commands are not, as popular theory would have it, in conflict. Rather, the free exercise principle defines the limits of the anti-establishment principle. One begins where the other ends. (pp. 1147).

Nuechterlein (1990), Isgur (2008), and Noah Feldman (2005) are advocates of “accommodationist” approaches to religious liberty. Nuechterlein views accommodating the religious practices of various faith communities as reflecting “the government’s secular respect for their right to choose their way of life” (p. 1136). Isgur suggests “it may be useful to analogize religious liberty in the public schools to free speech in the public square. A free society must encourage more protection and practice greater accommodation of religious observances, whether of majority or minority faiths, to maintain a healthy, pluralistic society” (p. 378). Feldman’s solution is to “offer greater latitude for religious speech and symbols in public debate, but also impose a stricter ban on state financing of religious institutions and activities” (p. 32). He offers simple guidelines: “no coercion and no money.”

Isgur (2008) argues that awarding attorney’s fees to those who are successful in winning Establishment clause violation cases in line with 42 USC § 1988, governing proceedings in vindication of civil rights suits, creates a disincentive for schools to accommodate students’ Free Exercise rights. She maintains:

In practice, § 1988 has placed schools in an impossible position. With no

standard to assess the risk that they will lose a § 1983 [civil action for deprivation of rights] claim and face paying plaintiffs' legal fees, schools must either risk losing budgetary funds at a time when school programs are already being cut for lack of funding or give in to the demands of plaintiffs' lawyers. As a result, powerful interest groups are given the green light to intimidate schools into accepting their interpretations of the First Amendment rather than allowing such important constitutional questions to be decided by the courts. (p. 372)

Instead, Isgur (2008) favors passage of legislation like the proposed Veterans' Memorials, Boy Scouts, Public Seals, and Other Public Expressions of Religion Protection Act (PERA) which would prohibit the courts from awarding such attorney's fees. This Act was introduced in 2007, 2009, and 2011 by Indiana Congressman Dan Burton, but has died all three times in the Judiciary Committee (*U. S. H.R. 725 – 110th Congress: Veterans' Memorials, Boy Scouts, Public Seals, and Other Public Expressions of Religion Protection Act, 2007*). Isgur claims this Act “would recalibrate the balance between litigants to the default American rule, thus allowing each party to stand on equal footing when making strategic litigation decisions” (p. 373). She argues that § 1988 no longer serves its original purpose and, in fact, may be preventing the very kind of litigation the Establishment clause was designed to protect. Taking aim at groups like Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Thomas More Law Center, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), she states:

Section 1988 has become a thumb on the scale in favor of anti-accommodationist policies, not because courts are ruling that the Establishment Clause demands that result, but because school boards . . . cannot afford to risk the enormous sums of money that a loss in court would take away from their children's educations. Instead, national interest groups provide school boards with a simple choice: stop doing a certain activity or run the risk of a costly lawsuit. (p. 386)

Isgur (2008) recognizes, “Opponents might argue that PERA advanced religion by making it marginally harder for plaintiffs to bring claims” (p. 390). However, the Act



states that its purpose is: “To amend the Revised Statutes of the United States to prevent the use of the legal system in a manner that extorts money from State and local governments, and the Federal Government, and inhibits such governments’ constitutional actions under the first, tenth, and fourteenth amendments” (*U. S. H.R. 725 – 110th Congress*, 2007). Isgur counters opponents claiming this purpose is entirely secular and that, “Plaintiffs, however, are not being asked to pay a fee to the government to enjoy a fundamental right. They are paying an independent party after vindicating their fundamental right. In such a case, the denial of attorneys’ fees does not rise to the level of a practical denial of a fundamental right” (p. 391).

The special interest groups that in most instances would be the beneficiaries of the attorney’s fees, according to Isgur (2007), have the resources to defend plaintiffs without requiring school boards to pay their fees, noting that the ACLU “has an annual budget of \$150 million” (p. 391, fn. 121). She claims that instead, at the mere threat of a lawsuit, “Individual, one-time actors such as schools may be willing to cut deals with repeat litigants like the ACLU. When aggregated with the deals cut by many other one-time players, these deals hurt society’s interest in religious freedom” (p. 386). Isgur argues that this is particularly true with regard to efforts by schools to accommodate the free exercise rights of religious minority students.

While schools may be reluctant to accommodate the rights of religious minorities for fear of violating the First Amendment, efforts to accommodate majority religions also continues to be a problem. This is particularly true with regard to praying at school-sponsored events and teaching stand-alone Bible courses, especially in parts of the country where Evangelical Protestants are in the majority (Graybill, Bauman, & Parsley,

2012; Price, 2013). Sentiments expressed by the Reverend Billy Graham in 1962 still ring true for many Americans, when he said, “Eighty percent of the American people want Bible readings and prayer in the schools. Why should the majority be so severely penalized by the protests of a handful?” (Price, 2013, p. 37). Evidence of this was found in a report recently published by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Texas, *At the Mercy of the Majority: Attacks on Religious Freedom in Texas Public Schools in the Decade After Santa Fe v. Doe* (Graybill et al., 2012).

The most recent Supreme Court case regarding religion in public schools, *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290, 317 (2000), involved “two families – one Mormon, one Catholic – [who] filed suit against their Texas school district for allowing student-led, student-initiated prayer over the loudspeaker at football games. The high court ruled that the school’s policy was unconstitutional because loudspeaker prayers clearly were not private speech and effectively drowned out the voices of religious minorities,” according to Sean Price (2013, p. 37). Price credits the ongoing popularity of these prayers to the influence of “such groups as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) and Athletes in Action, both of which formed thousands of coach-led clubs – or “huddles,” as the FCA calls them – in public schools. In 2009, the FCA was the largest sports ministry in the world; it now reaches 2 million students.”

Price (2013) claims student athletes are more likely than other religious minority students to feel coerced to participate in religious activities. “In part because the conservative culture of many athletic programs is slow to accept legal changes – or the increasing religious diversity of the United States. Also, some coaches may feel that religion is a good – if not the only – way to bring out the best qualities in young athletes”

(p. 36). Price's article appears in the Spring 2013 issue of *Teaching Tolerance*, along with reference to an on-line toolkit ([tolerance.org/religion-locker-room](http://tolerance.org/religion-locker-room)) to help coaches and other educators "move from 'we're all good Christians people here' to 'we have to protect the rights of conscience for everybody.'"

The ACLU of Texas report documents that "Texas public schools still struggle with religious freedoms" (Graybill et al., 2012, p. 11). Schools were found to be:

- (1) Failing to accommodate minority religious students' free exercise of religious beliefs.
- (2) Leading, sponsoring, or encouraging prayer in the classroom and/or at school events.
- (3) Offering sectarian, proselytizing courses on the Bible as part of the school curriculum.
- (4) Permitting outsiders, particularly Gideons, to distribute Bibles at school.
- (5) Displaying religious imagery, symbols, and messages on school grounds.
- (6) Holding school functions in religious facilities. (pp. 11-12)

Although the extent to which the ACLU findings about Texas schools represents schools across the United States is outside of the scope of this project, the types of the cases described are those which tend to draw publicity. An example of this is the Associated Press coverage in October, 2012, of a district judge's ruling "that cheerleaders at an East Texas high school can display banners emblazoned with Bible verses at football games, saying the school district's ban on the practice appears to violate the students' free speech rights" (Tomlinson, 2012). The judge "granted an injunction requested by the Kountze High School cheerleaders allowing them to continue displaying religious-themed banners pending the outcome of a lawsuit, which is set to go to trial next June 24." This case is also an example of where Feldman (2005) and the other accommodationists might claim that the solution should not be to prohibit students' free speech, provided no public funds were used in making the "free speech" banners. The

optimal outcome might be to ensure that all students have the opportunity to express themselves within the limits prescribed in the *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969) decision, which states, “the prohibition of expression of one particular opinion, at least without evidence that it is necessary to avoid material and substantial interference with schoolwork and discipline, is not constitutionally permissible” (p. 511).

The vast majority of violations identified in the ACLU of Texas report have little to do with the secular teaching about religion in the school curriculum, except in relation to the treatment of Bible courses. Here, the ACLU supports the type of pluralistic SEL-religious studies being proposed:

The Supreme Court has never read the First Amendment to prohibit instruction concerning the Bible and its role in history, literature, and art. To do so would deprive students of important information about the role of religion in human history. Indeed, for the same reasons, teachers can and should include information about all of the world’s various religions, for example, in an art class or a social studies class. (Graybill et al., 2012, p. 33)

However, in the guide prepared for administrators and teachers by the ACLU of Tennessee (2011), *Know Your Rights: Religion in Public Schools*, there is no mention of the desirability to teach “about all of the world’s various religions.” Instead, that document closes with a quote from *Coles ex rel. Coles v. Cleveland Bd. of Educ.*, 171 F.3d 369, 6th Cir. (1999) that states, “The First Amendment's Religion Clauses mean that religious beliefs and religious expression are too precious to be either proscribed or proscribed by the State. The design of the Constitution is that preservation and transmission of religious beliefs and worship is a responsibility and a choice committed to the private sphere, which itself is promised freedom to pursue that mission.” While this quote is accurate in that the Religion Clauses prohibit public schools from the

“preservation and transmission of religious beliefs and worship,” it does not make any mention of the responsibility of educators to teach about religion and in fact indicates religion is best left in the private sphere.

In a report entitled *Religion in the Public Schools*,” the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2007) also recognizes that “the court has repeatedly stressed that the Constitution prohibits public schools from indoctrinating children in religion. But it is not always easy to determine exactly what constitutes indoctrination or school sponsorship of religious activities” (p. 2). However, the report goes on to say, “recent conflicts show, public schools remain a battlefield where the religious interests of parents, students, administrators and teachers often clash. The conflicts affect classroom curricula, high school football games, student clubs, graduation ceremonies – and the lives of everyone with an interest in public education” (p. 3). With regard to religion in the curriculum, the report states:

The Supreme Court’s decisions about officially sponsored religious expression in schools consistently draw a distinction between religious activities such as worship or Bible reading, which are designed to inculcate religious sentiments and values, and ‘teaching about religion,’ which is both constitutionally permissible and educationally appropriate. On several occasions, members of the court have suggested that public schools may teach ‘the Bible as literature,’ include lessons about the role of religion and religious institutions in history or offer courses on comparative religion. (p. 7)

In addressing disputes over curriculum matters related to the conflict over teaching creationism and evolution, study of the Bible, holiday programs, and issues of cultural pluralism sexual orientation, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2007) points out that the conflict “between the rights of students to engage in religious expression and the rights of other students to be educated in a nonhostile environment”

are likely to recur (p. 11). For this reason, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life suggests the Supreme Court may need to expand upon *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969) and “eventually may clarify school officials’ power to suppress speech as a means of protecting the rights of other students.” Such a decision could impact the proposed integrated SEL and religious studies curriculum if very narrow limits on free speech are imposed.

The proposed SEL-religious studies model advocates an education that enables students to develop the skills and language to express their beliefs and to recognize the variety of beliefs that others bring to public dialogue, along with the opportunity to practice such dialogue. This kind of education requires something like the model suggested by Todd and Säfström (2008) in the prior chapter that allows for a fairly open exchange of ideas, while still not permitting an ‘everything goes’ approach. Todd and Säfström offer a notion of conditional hospitality in which expressions of disagreement, dissent, and conflict are channeled into political projects that promote ongoing democratic struggle.

The demand to provide this type of education is likely to depend on the changing religious make-up of the United States and the desire for greater accommodation by religious people, as well as the particular make-up of the school community. Therefore, educators must also take into account the rights and views of parents and other community members regarding religious liberty and efforts to teach about religion. Yet, these efforts are also further complicated by the current lack of teacher preparation regarding how to effectively engage families in SEL, as indicated in Chapter Two. The challenges to gaining parent and community support to do this work will be discussed in

the next section.

### **Schools Need Structures for Sharing Power and Fostering Collaboration**

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, reversing the current trend regarding the absence of overtly moral language in American schools will require high levels of educator, parent, and community involvement to establish a new paradigm. Conscious effort will need to be made to make moral assumptions clear in order to gain consensus on the appropriateness of the SEL curriculum offered to students. In order to do this, improved structures for sharing power and fostering collaboration between educators, parents, and community members will be needed to support the proposed model of SEL. However, this type of education has not had support from fundamentalist who oppose internal debates and want to maintain some notion of cultural purity, as well as secularists who oppose any instruction involving the discussion of religion and spiritual matters in public schools and the public realm, as will be discussed in this section.

Yet, the time may have arrived for both nonreligious liberals and Christian conservatives to work together to end the silence about religion in the public schools (Lester 2007; Nord, 1995). Walter Feinberg (2006) claims that the need to recognize religious pluralism and the demands of liberalism are equally relevant to students in all school settings – both public and private. Similarly, Emile Lester (2007) maintains that if we truly value tolerance and autonomy as a society, high schools must educate about a variety of religious beliefs in a neutral manner because of the role religious beliefs play in shaping the nucleus of many students' identities and in order for students to be more knowledgeable about international affairs. Lester states:

The silence about religion handicaps the ability of students to develop religious

tolerance when tolerance is perhaps more necessary than ever before in our nation's history. A religious movement threatens our security from without. Tremendous religious pluralism and disagreement between sects exists within. It is particularly important, for instance, that students understand the roots and tenets of Islamic fundamentalism, and the distinction between orthodox, moderate, and fundamentalist branches of Islam. Not only would this enable future citizens to make more informed choices about international affairs but it would also prevent concern over terrorism from turning into an anti-Muslim witch hunt. (p. 180)

With regard to achieving overall autonomy, Lester (2007) argues "if we define autonomy as the ability to choose our beliefs after exposure to and reflection upon alternative beliefs, students cannot be autonomous over their religion unless they receive exposure to religious beliefs different from their parents' beliefs" (p. 181). It is over this point that not only the proposed model of an integrated SEL and religious studies curriculum faces one of its greatest challenges, but it is also the heart of my argument why an SEL curriculum that is silent on religion also faces one of its greatest challenges to achieving its goals.

If SEL is to enable students to "know thyself" and develop the self-awareness it is intended to do, individual students must be free to talk about the role religion has in their lives. Doing this will inevitably expose other students to beliefs that are different than those held by their parents in all but the most homogeneous classrooms. Therefore, in order to overcome these challenges, educators, parents, representatives of the state, and other interested community members must come together to negotiate solutions to this conflict, as well as decide how to best inform students about the diversity of beliefs held by others in the nation and around the world. A brief history of this ongoing struggle and possible strategies for achieving these aims will be discussed below. In this section, I will make the following arguments:



(1) Engaging parents as partners is recognized as an essential element in helping students to develop the desired SEL skills, attitudes, and dispositions, as well as for gaining support for teaching about religion, yet few structures exist to encourage and sustain these critical conversations;

(2) Overcoming objections to teaching about the diversity of beliefs and worldviews voiced by parties on the far left and right of the political and social spectrum will require well articulated voices speaking on behalf of a “Reasonable Center;” and

(3) Resolving differences and accommodating the diverse viewpoints regarding right behavior in America is a responsibility of those involved at every level of government, as well as something that must occur in our informal associations with others, making our school communities the best venue for fostering the collaboration needed to find workable solutions at the local level to the ongoing tension between majority rule and individual and/or minority group rights.

### **Engaging Parents in the Conversation**

There are plenty of examples throughout the SEL literature stressing the importance of school-family-community partnerships for optimal program outcomes, as indicated in Chapter Two. Elias and colleagues (2007) point out the potential for multiple layers of interaction and offer suggestions for shared activities focused on social-emotional issues which serve “to create important dialogues between parents and educators, educators and students, and children and parents” (p. 551). While not as prominent, there is also recognition in the religious studies literature regarding the importance of communicating with and involving parents and other citizens in the curriculum (Jones, R. & Glover, 1991; Kniker, 1985; Passe & Willox, 2009; Simmons,

1988).

One of the main obstacles to the kind of communication and dialogue recommended for achieving optimal SEL outcomes is that many communities lack “a sustainable structure wherein all members share in the research, design, implementation, and evaluation of efforts undertaken collectively to assure the academic success and mental health of school age children and youth” (ICMHP, 2010, p. 3). According to Hoffman (2009), few school or district-wide structures exist to encourage and sustain these critical conversations because of the reluctance of SEL advocates and others to address the issues of power that legitimize certain discourses and delegitimize others in determining what is taught and discussed in the classroom.

Annette Lareau (2000) found that “social class – specifically, education, occupational status, income, and the characteristics of work – provides parents with unequal *resources* and dispositions, differences that critically affect parental involvement in the educational experience of their children” (p. 171, italics in original). She found that the more similar the social class between parents and educators, the more involvement mirrored the teacher’s preferred school-family relationship. However, even in these situations, she maintains that educators have not done a very good job of communicating or supporting the ways in which parents can be involved. Lareau claims:

Information about the way in which parents can be supportive cannot be fully communicated in the current structure of interaction between parents and teachers. In most schools, parents and teachers of young children meet twice a year for twenty minutes in individual conferences. Parents also hear teachers speak at a few other formal events per year. In these brief meetings, teachers cannot, and do not, provide parents with all of the relevant information for involvement; although they may feel they have done so. (p. 175)

Structures are need along the lines of those proposed by Freire (19970/2000) to

facilitate the ongoing process of permanence and change involved in teaching and assessing right behavior. As discussed in Chapter Two, Watson and Emery (2010) propose a collaborative, consensus building model that recognizes the socially embedded and situated nature of SEL that warrants further consideration. It involves key stakeholders who engage in co-constructing a shared understanding of the social-emotional skills and dispositions being taught in the SEL curriculum. At minimum, schools should provide opportunities for sustained “discussion and dialogue, where people from different cultural backgrounds explain to one another why they favour [sic] particular laws or practices, and develop the skills of negotiation and compromise that enable us to live together” (Phillips, 2007, p. 180). This dialogue must involve the two dimensions Freire suggests: reflection and action that becomes praxis, capable of searching for truth and transforming conflicts by creating a new reality that is satisfactory to the parties involved.

Much has already been written throughout this project about the demands of a liberal democracy like the United States, but it is important to revisit why these demands create a potentially contentious relationship between parents and schools and why there must be structures in place to routinely deal with and even prevent these conflicts from escalating into major confrontations. According to Stephen Macedo (2000):

A liberal democratic polity does not rest on diversity, but on shared political commitments weighty enough to override competing values. The mere celebration of diversity and difference is no substitute for a shared public morality: the abstract ideals of liberal justice lay claims of mutual respect on every group in society, whereas the claims of particularity advanced by pluralists create no necessary claim for tolerance or respect. Assimilation is not to be despised; it is rather to be embraced – if we assimilate in nonoppressive ways and toward justifiable values.

Although racism and narrow-mindedness have often characterized anxieties about ‘Americanization,’ we should not ignore the partisanship of our regime and the fact that it depends upon the existence of character traits that cannot be taken for granted. Those traits are the consequences of deliberative educational efforts, as well as of authority patterns of civil society that exist in communities and groups below the level of the state. While tolerance and respect for individual rights must be watchwords in a regime that claims to live according to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, nothing about those ideals bars us from taking responsible measures to promote citizen virtues, both directly through formal educative measures and indirectly by seeking to shape patterns of association life in the ‘private’ sphere. (pp. 134-135)

This is the pluralistic space that Roemer (2007) describes as existing in both schools and society that is defined by the limits of tolerable diversity. This space is similar in function to Todd and Säfström’s (2008) notion of conditional hospitality. It represents the beliefs and practices that are virtually taught by all in a variety of reinforcing ways. It embodies what Eagleton (2009) calls the “liberal paradox that there must be something close-minded about open-mindedness and something inflexible about tolerance” (p. 127). Roemer states, “The presumption is that on this matter there is no diversity: a student’s life in the schools is public, and therefore different from the student’s private life, and in public the student must be able to negotiate pluralism of belief in what is good” (Roemer, 2007, p. 181). Feinberg (2006) argues that faith-based, or religious, schools in the United States have no less responsibility to teach students to how to negotiate this space than do public schools.

The contentious dimension of this space is that it requires the “segmentation” of the religious and political spheres. “The price of assimilation into the American way of life . . . is that religious people must be prepared to regard their religious views as politically irrelevant” (Macedo, 2000, p. 135). This is what Roemer is referring to when he states, “What might be a boundary that cannot be transgressed in private must be

permeable in public” (p. 182). However, this aspect of pluralism does not require individuals to abandon subgroup identities completely. Instead, Appiah (2007) “suggests that one legitimate function of a liberal state is, and has been, to attenuate the strong, *Blut-und-Boden* [ethnicity and homeland] identitarian commitments it encounters: to process the surly sources of alternative authority – whether Catholicism or English nativism – and leave something diluted by broader liberal commitments: call it Identity Lite” (p. 203, italics in original). Those who are unable or unwilling to accept this aspect of a pluralistic society place themselves “outside the boundary of civic life as that is understood in Western culture . . . [making] it impossible to share life together” (Roemer, 2007, pp. 181-182).

It is around the commitment to liberal values over religious values that has been a long-standing source of conflict between parents and school officials. This is reflected in much of the litigation related to the place of religion in compulsory education. Nowhere is the discord greater than around the issue of preparing society’s youth to live as autonomous adults. Appiah (2007) identifies this as “the tension between the present autonomy of parents and the interests (or, we could say, the future autonomy) of the child” (p. 203). He adds, “What is in fact in the best interest of a child may itself be a crucially contested matter. But even if you flatly identified the interests of the child with the project of ‘democratic’ or ‘liberal’ education, you’d still have to address the question of how to take parental desires into account.”

The inability to work out religious differences in the early stages of the development of the common schools resulted in the establishment of parallel religious school systems, as discussed previously. While some parents still complain about

religious practices in public schools, others are just as likely to complain that the secular practices in the public schools infringe upon “their right to direct the religious upbringing of their children. These complaints typically rest on both the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment and the 14th Amendment’s Due Process Clause, which forbids the state to deprive any person of ‘life, liberty or property without due process of law’” (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2007, p. 11). Balancing the extent to which parents have the right to control their children’s education with the aims of the state to produce citizens committed to liberal ideals is bound to be an ongoing challenge (Gutmann, 1987/1999).

The Supreme Court’s first decision on parents’ rights to control their children’s education involved *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925), “which guarantees to parents the right to enroll their children in private rather than public schools, whether the private schools are religious or secular” (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2007, p. 11). Another significant Supreme Court ruling came in *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972), “which upheld the right of members of the Old Order Amish to withdraw their children from formal education at the age of 14” (p. 12). According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life:

The court determined that a state law requiring children to attend school until the age of 16 burdened the free exercise of their families’ religion. The Amish community had a well-established record as hardworking and law-abiding, the court noted, and Amish teens would receive home-based training. The worldly influences present in the school experience of teenagers, the court said, would undercut the continuity of agrarian life in the Amish community.

In deciding *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972), the Court determined that the survival of the entire religious community was in jeopardy, not just the rights of a

single family. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2007) reports that parental challenges to “part or all of a public school curriculum have fared rather poorly . . . in virtually all of the cases decided over the past 25 years, courts have found that the challenged curriculum requirement did not unconstitutionally burden parents’ religious choices” (p. 12). Instead, schools have developed policies that allow parents to object to certain school practices and programs, such as sex education, by giving parents the option to seek permission for their children to opt out of the class or lesson, rather than end the practice or program for all students.

The *opt out* solution provides for the illusion of parental control in situations where there are a limited number of objectors or the objections apply to a relatively small part of the curriculum. However, it is not sufficient for addressing differences between identity groups and belief systems and how these differences play out in the curriculum. Appiah (2007) claims “identity-based clashes can arise even from pedagogic style” (p. 205). He uses the example of requiring every student’s voice to be heard during class discussions as a method for learning about dignity and respect in preparation for participation in a liberal democracy. Appiah then points out, “Not every social group in this country believes children should be encouraged to speak up: some Chinese American families teach children that proper behavior calls for attentive silence in the presence of adults – and the teacher is an adult” (p. 206). While these types of conflict stress the importance of cultural awareness, Appiah concludes, “In all events, an amicable solution would not seem out of reach; neither party is likely to see the other as a looming peril” (p. 207).

When curriculum content is at issue, the aim, according to Appiah (2007) is “to

prepare children with the truth and the capacity to acquire more of it” (p. 207). He maintains that even when there are disagreements between educators, parents, the state, and concerned community members, they are all “aimed at helping children develop toward an autonomy rooted in the best available understanding of the world. The hard cases, of course, are the ones where the controversy is about what the truth is” (p. 308). This is where we are most in need of school or district-wide structures to encourage and sustain these critical conversations confronting the issues of power that Hoffman (2009) claims legitimize certain discourses and delegitimize others in determining what is taught and discussed in the classroom.

As indicated in Chapter Two, this kind of “true collaboration requires a level of trust and commitment that can often be difficult for educators and families to attain. Moreover, a hallmark of effective partnerships is the creation of a trusting relationship and the ability to recognize and respect the diverse styles, skills, and strengths among participants” (Albright & Weissberg, 2010, p. 258). While these are guiding tenets of SEL, some of the most challenging barriers schools and families face in partnering to support the social, emotional, and ethical development of their children are the strong objections voiced by parties on the far left and right of the political and social spectrum to teaching about the diversity of beliefs and worldviews present in our nation and in the world. These objections and strategies for parents and educators to overcome them and build trusting relationships will be discussed below.

### **Overcoming Objections from the Left and Right**

Strong objections to teaching about the diversity of beliefs and worldviews voiced by parties on the far left and right of the political and social spectrum have contributed to



the unwillingness of educators to address issues of morality, as well as teach about religion (Feldman, 2005; Lester, 2007; Nord, 1995). Nord (1995) summarizes the opposing sides as follows:

For most religious conservatives, America is a Christian (or Judeo-Christian) nation, and to further their ends they would dismantle the wall of separation between religion and government. Most liberals, by contrast, believe that America is a secular, religiously neutral nation, and they would keep the wall of separation high and impregnable. (p. xiii)

While Nord's (1995) statement may be a bit exaggerated in painting "most" religious conservatives and liberals with such broad brush strokes, it does reflect the common perception of the opposing sides in America's culture wars. Nord proposes a third alternative that he identifies as the "Reasonable Center" comprised of those who take religion, as well as fairness and neutrality seriously. He argues that "the voice of reason is often hard to hear above the noise of battle" (p. xiv). If justice is to be done, "we must continue to separate church and state – though not so strictly as some would advocate." His strategy for doing this involves teaching about religion for the following reasons:

Because of the massive importance of religion in human affairs, because religions continue to contest secular accounts of the world, because public institutions must take seriously the full range of ideas in our marketplace of ideas, because the Establishment clause requires neutrality between religion and nonreligion, and because the truth has become increasingly elusive even for intellectuals, religion must be taken seriously in public schools and universities. (p. 379)

Incorporating religion in the curriculum, according to Nord (1995), will assist students in fashioning their own worldviews and help them to understand the positive and negative impact that religious and philosophical traditions have had in influencing one's worldview throughout human history. He explains:

A worldview provides people with their most general concepts for making sense of their experience, it defines reality for them. Worldviews may remain relatively implicit or they may become explicit and formally articulated within philosophy, theology, and science. When someone lives within a worldview and is largely unfamiliar with others, that worldview seems natural, a direct encounter with reality rather than one interpretation among others. Worldviews have a coherence that reinforces their plausibility; they are not simply grab bags of abstract beliefs. Their survival requires that they hang together emotionally, institutionally, and intellectually. (pp. 13-14)

Nord (1995) cautions, “Although most claims can be tested within a worldview, it is much less clear how one tests the truth of a worldview itself, or how one adjudicates the conflicting claims of competing worldviews” (p. 14). These are the hard cases that Appiah (2007) identified where the “controversy is about what the truth is.”

Feldman (2005) identifies the two dominant camps in the church-state debate a little differently, but he is also addressing the same tension in American society.

According to Feldman:

You might call those who insist on the direct relevance of religious values to political life ‘values evangelicals.’ Not every values evangelical is, technically speaking, an evangelical or a born-again Christian, although many are. Values evangelicals include Jews, Catholics, Muslims and even people who do not focus on a particular religious tradition but care primarily about identifying traditional moral values that can in theory be shared by everyone . . .

On the other side of the debate are those who see religion as a matter of personal belief and choice largely irrelevant to government and who are concerned that values derived from religion will divide us, not unite us. You might call those who hold this view ‘legal secularists,’ not because they are necessarily strongly secular in their personal worldviews – though many are – but because they argue that government should be secular and that the laws should make it so. (pp. 30)

Both the values evangelicals and legal secularists maintain that their approach will result in greater inclusion, but neither has delivered. Instead, Feldman (2005) argues “the conflict between these two approaches is becoming a political and constitutional crisis all its own” (p. 31). He references the semi-serious talk of secession by red and

blue states and its implicit reference to the Civil War as an indication of “a division that cannot be healed by the victory of either side.” What Linda Skitka and Elizabeth Mullen (2002) have to say about the dark side of moral conviction supports Nord (1995) and Feldman’s cause for concern about the commitment of the two opposing sides to their favored approaches because both sides view their position to be the morally correct one. Skitka and Mullen explain, “Regardless of whether they are arrived at through careful reasoning or a more intuitive ‘gut level’ reaction, moral convictions are nonnegotiable, terminal, and fundamental psychological truths” (p. 36). They caution that moral convictions give way to moral mandates which “appear to lead to the legitimization of any procedure so long as the mandated end is achieved” (p. 36).

Catherine Lugg and Malila Robinson (2009) reached comparable conclusions after applying an advocacy coalition framework to study various groups representing the Protestant Right. They report, “The goal of advocacy coalitions is to transform their shared beliefs and values into public policy. Unlike traditional interest groups, they are not motivated by self-interest (i.e., they are unlikely to seek or accept major compromises) and remain steady in their convictions” (p. 243). Lugg and Robinson found that the Protestant Right mobilized around “politically conservative ideas and policies grounded loosely in theologically fundamentalist Protestant thought” (p. 244). Their concerns have related in large part to schooling issues, such as prayer and Bible reading in schools, school desegregation, textbook selection, tax exempt status for fundamentalist schools, and liberal education (Martin, 1996/2005). They have used electoral politics, as well as legislative and litigation strategies to try to shape legal and policy outcomes so that they are in line with fundamentalist Protestant beliefs.

The unwillingness of these advocates to compromise is reflected in the following reaction of a “journalist who attended one of numerous anti-textbook rallies[. He] told a friend, ‘I looked around at the people there, and I could feel for them and with them. I felt like there was room for them in my America, but I didn’t feel there was room for me in their America’” (Martin, 1996/2005, p. 134). This experience reflects the conditions Roemer (2007) indicated would make it impossible for those who are unwilling to accept a permeable boundary between the religious and political spheres to be able to share life together.

Intolerance is not limited to religious conservatives, though. Nord (1995) concluded that “the governing methods, assumptions, and conclusions of much of modern secular scholarship are not neutral to religion, but hostile” (p. 7). He explains that “most all religion (conservative and liberal) on the one hand and most all secular, scientific scholarship on the other . . . claim contested ground. Yet, the religious claims to the ground are virtually never heard in public schools and universities, and secular, scientific ways of understanding the world pervade the curriculum.” Nord’s assertion is consistent with the argument I made in the prior chapter regarding the exclusive hold science has over the curriculum. Lester (2007) and Feldman (2005) agree that the current silence about religion in the curriculum signals to all students that religion is a trivial matter and sends a message to religious individuals that their values are not recognized by the school.

Additionally, Lester (2007) states, “Many religious conservatives claim not only that a liberal education is biased against religion in general, but that it is biased against conservative religions in particular” (p. 189). These conservatives claim the liberal

emphasis on autonomy and tolerance discourages “participation in religious communities stressing absolute commitment to communal norms . . . Encouraging students to recognize the possible legitimacy of other religions and morals is bound to weaken their commitment to their original religion.” However, Lester counters:

Students need not begin a religious education as *tabulae rasae* to realize the full value of autonomy and develop tolerance. Most students will enter this education with a religious or secular perspective that has taken root through their childhood and adolescence due to the vigorous cultivation of their parents and religious communities. Students’ evaluation of other religious perspectives through the prism of their own religious perspective and experience will balance the implicit pluralism and skepticism a religious education is likely to promote. (p. 191)

This perspective is reinforced by data from the National Study of Youth and Religion regarding the phenomenon of religious exclusivism among contemporary American adolescents. Exclusivism is defined as the “belief that only one religion is true and that one should accept church teachings as a whole rather than picking and choosing religious beliefs,” according to researcher Jenny Trinitapoli (2007, p. 453). She reports, “the interview data show that exclusivists have not resisted pluralism but have internalized messages of religious diversity. They modify their beliefs in response to pluralism and articulate them carefully so as not to be perceived as intolerant” (p. 451). Trinitapoli provides the following quote as an example: “‘I think there is one religion. That’s it. Well there’s other religions, of course, but I mean, like, there’s one religion that’s real’ (Sarah, 14-year-old evangelical Protestant).” Trinitapoli found:

In fact, *none* of the adolescents expressing exclusivist beliefs in the in-depth interviews did so *without* amending qualifications about the limitations of their knowledge or the legitimacy of others who hold opposing views. Examining the articulation of beliefs reveals that these adolescents are fluent in the delicate discourse of exclusivism vis-à-vis pluralism. They take a civil and accommodating position toward religious others and practice religious tolerance in an active sense. (p. 475, italics in original)

Even without religious studies in the public schools, according to Lugg and Robinson (2009), “there seems to be a generational divide on some of the most contentious social issues . . . even on issues like abortion and ‘gay marriage,’ younger Evangelicals are somewhat more tolerant than their elders” (p. 261). They suggest this indicates that, “With the exception of the U.S. South, we can expect to see a gradual diminution of efforts to inject state-sponsored religious practices into the regular school day” (p. 262). This trend may cause religious conservatives to recognize that they are not going to be successful in their efforts to promote their own religion in the public schools. Therefore, Lester (2007) suggests that they should adopt a more pragmatic approach by supporting religious studies. Acknowledging their fear that this might “erode the absolute faith that many conservative religions demand,” he argues it would still be more beneficial to them as long as the religious studies curriculum helped to “provide public recognition of conservative religions, and promote tolerance of conservative religions among secular and religious liberal students” (p. 202).

Rather than take this approach, some conservative educators favor an expansion of private schools so that parents have great options in selecting an educational environment that better matches their beliefs and values. E. Vance Randall (1994) argues private schools “have often functioned as a social safety valve by providing a way for those with educational, religious, or cultural views and values different from the majoritarian ideology to find legitimate expression in the education of their children. The ability of parents to do so, however, is determined by the extent of state intervention and regulation” (I. Sec. A, ¶3). Randall maintains “that a more pluralistic approach in public

policy affecting private schools could better reconcile freedom and responsibility than an approach involving extensive state intervention” (I. Sec. B. ¶3). He cautions:

A crucial problem with expanding beyond the basic literacy skills is the entrance into dangerous terrain filled with preferences, opinions, values, personal beliefs, and worldviews. This is a very problematic area because it deals with the content of educational experience upon which there is not much agreement and, yet, it is proposed that what is decided be imposed upon all children by the police power of the state. This rather arbitrary action simply creates an ‘unmanageable conflict over matters of conscience’ in government socialization of all children. (IV. Sec. C.2, ¶3)

Randall (1994) contends that private schools have internal safeguards that public schools do not and, therefore, require less regulation by the state. He claims:

Important internal regulators such as parental interest and investment, economic realities of the educational market place, and a unique educational environment are significant factors which would prevent harm from occurring to a child. These internal, self-regulating features of private education are legitimately supplemented with a minimal amount of external regulation. State regulations mandating a safe and secure learning environment, universal formal education, ethical business practices, and curriculum requirements in basic literacy act as a safety net to insure that children attending private schools will receive an education meeting the essential interests of the state and satisfying the liberty interests of parents and private schools. (VI. ¶4)

It is also Randall’s (1994) argument that this approach “allows various minority groups and subcultures in America with their own sense of truth and reality [to] fit into American society” (I. Sec. A, ¶2). Feinberg (2006), on the other hand cautions, “It is, however, inappropriate to use the instrument of education to inculcate children into the beliefs and practices of one religion in such a way as to deny them the possibility of autonomy as future adults through systematic misinformation about other belief systems” (xxi). Feinberg acknowledges the rights of parents to express their “unadulterated beliefs” in their own home or place of worship, but he contends that even religious schools must recognize “a division of labor between the home and the school, where

partiality is tempered to a greater extent in the latter than in the former.” Feinberg recognizes the difficulty these educators have with respect to teaching religion “while reproducing in each generation the values, attitudes, and dispositions guaranteed by and for a liberal democracy” and, like Randall, to some extent favors minimal state influence in private schools. Feinberg recommends the following approach:

Religious schools cannot be expected to be impartial about the merits of their own faith, but we might expect that ultimately a religiously educated person will be partial in ways that are reasonable and fair-minded, that do not systematically distort the beliefs of other religions, and that are open to the merits of other systems of belief. There are ways to encourage this openness short of a self-defeating ‘state-mandated tolerance order’ – more contact between educators from different traditions, required courses for religious school teachers in child development, and, in the social role of education, required competence in world religious traditions are a few of the ways that might be considered. For the state to exert a reasonable influence on the education of an adult teacher is much less intrusive than insisting on mandates for the child. (p. xxi)

While Feinberg (2006) favors an approach that focuses on preparing teachers in religious schools to navigate this complex terrain, he is also cognizant that this will be more difficult in some denominations than others, and with regard to some issues more than others. He points to the attitudes some religions have regarding women, homosexuals, atheists, and exclusivism which serve to lock children into antiliberal attitudes. This raises questions about the extent to which educators should accommodate intolerance in any school setting in the United States – public or private.

An exchange of ideas between Michael Merry (2005b) and Mark Halstead (2005; Halstead & Lewicka, 1998) provides some insight into just how complex answering these questions can get. They offer contrasting perspectives on how liberal multicultural societies can best “deal justly with minority groups that hold diametrically opposed views” (Halstead, 2005, p. 37). Halstead and Lewicka use the disagreement some



Muslims and some homosexuals might have over sex education for its symbolic value, as well as a pragmatic example of the need “for respectful dialogue between groups that hold diametrically opposed beliefs and values” (Halstead, 2005, p. 37). Halstead and Lewicka hold a very strong parental rights position, based on Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) theory of socialization and learning that occurs in two stages. The primary stage involves the reality learned at home and informally with friends that Berger and Luckmann claim evolves “naturally,” while the teacher is challenged to create a new reality “artificially” in order to “bring home” the secondary socialization required by the individual to embrace the values and norms of the broader society. This theory is also in line with the cultural coherence model that Merry (2005a, 2005a) supports and was discussed earlier.

However, Merry (2005b) criticizes Halstead’s body of work on this topic over the past quarter century for displaying an overly simplified understanding of Islam regarding homosexuality, neglecting to recognize “gay and lesbian Muslims who are particularly vulnerable to the unrepentant hostilities of their own communities,” and delimiting “the range of options available to sex educators in such a way as to discourage genuine encounters between homosexuals and Muslims” (p. 22). Merry accuses Halstead’s approach of doing “little to alleviate the stigmatization and fear that attends Muslim youth who identify as gay or lesbian but are unable to be public about it because that view is presented only as an option *for others*” (p. 25, italics in original). Merry also takes Halstead to task for “suggesting that Muslims could not possibly identify with views in conflict with orthodox theology” and instead suggests that students should be taught to “consider the experiences of gay and lesbian people and consider why it is that

his or her religion would appear to condemn a sexual identity so many people possess, including many within the Muslim world.”

Merry (2005b) does recommend that “one ought to be just as objective concerning religious belief as one would be about homosexuality. Not only is there widespread ignorance about religions among non-religious people, but also it is unsurprising that gay and lesbian groups can be equally intolerant of conservative religious groups” (p. 27). He encourages teachers to teach empathy and mutual respect in addition to sympathy and tolerance. Merry argues:

The goal of mutual respect is tied up with the idea of reciprocity, which entails setting fair terms of cooperation for working out differences between interested parties within a liberal democracy. In seeking to foster mutual respect and not merely tolerance, one hopes to promote social cohesion of a degree necessary to advance the projects of democracy in a spirit of mutual concern and understanding. Reciprocity is an attempt to surmount (not ignore) the fundamental differences that may divide various individuals by calling upon each participant or group to justify its actions in acceptable ways that can be understood by others. Being acceptable does not mean there will be agreement or that individuals will share core convictions. On the contrary, reciprocity implies accepting the burdens of judgment; this means that we can acknowledge the ways that others espouse ‘reasonable truths’ very different from our own, recognizing that each of us is susceptible to a limited understanding. (p. 30)

In response to Merry’s (2005b) criticisms, Halstead (2005) claims Merry shows too little interest in teaching about traditional Muslim perspectives and cultivating an expectation that other students respect them. Halstead is making the same claim conservative Christians have made about pluralists not giving them the same respect they are expected to show to others. He argues that his goal is to foster an environment where one who disapproves of homosexuality is not automatically accused of being ‘homophobic,’ nor is one who criticizes Islamic teaching on homosexuality automatically labeled ‘Islamophobic.’ Halstead maintains that “disapproval is not incompatible with

tolerance; indeed, if we define tolerance as ‘a deliberate choice not to interfere with conduct of which one disapproves,’ this implies that disapproval is a necessary precondition for tolerance” (pp. 39-40). Halstead explains:

Merry and I hold much in common, particularly in terms of the need for respect and understanding between groups. Ultimately, however, he seems to want to change Muslims, whereas I want to find some way of accommodating them in a way that does not require them to go against their own deeply held beliefs. He wants to reinterpret texts, to force Western terms of reference on Muslims, to encourage Muslims to adjust their beliefs and ‘catch up’ with the progressive thinking of some Christians and Jews –and all of these things indicate a claim to moral superiority; some might even call them cultural imperialism. Genuine respect requires understanding, humility and empathy, as well as a willingness to listen and to accept people for what they are. (p. 41)

Both Halstead (2005) and Merry (2005b) are clearly committed to teaching students how to disagree respectfully, but they differ in the degree to which they expect educators to accommodate intolerance. While Merry appears more concerned with confronting “crass prejudices and hatred,” Halstead is more focused on not requiring students to go against their own – or their parent’s – deeply held beliefs. To negotiate differences like this, Merry urges the “participation of Muslim (and other conservative) parents in helping to make decisions about how material will be presented or not presented” regarding sex education and other controversial matters” (p. 31). He points out that since conservative religious parents do not share many liberal beliefs, it is especially important to try to accommodate their wishes so that they will not withdraw their children from the public schools and place them in religious schools. Kent Greenawalt (2005) and Brighouse (2006) makes similar arguments, as these scholars also view alienating parents as detrimental to both those students who will be moved to a less diverse schooling environment and to those in the public schools who will then miss the

opportunity to be exposed to conservative views.

However, the February 2013 issue of Phi Delta Kappan, a publication of PDK International, a professional association of educators, demonstrates the absence of guidance being provided to teachers and school administrators regarding how to deal with such challenges. The content focus for this issue is sex and schools. One of the articles provides suggestions for building an inclusive curriculum that “accommodate[s] the education needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students (LGBT)” (McGarry, 2013, p. 27). It references the *National Sexuality Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12* (2012) developed by the Future of Sex Education Initiative (FSEI, [www.futureofsexeducation.org](http://www.futureofsexeducation.org)) and the *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade* (2004), published by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS).

The only mention of religion in the article is contained in information provided about the FSEI standards that indicate, “by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students should be able to: analyze the influence of peers, media, family, society, religion and culture on the expression of gender, sexual orientation, and identity” (McGarry, 2013, p. 30). The information provided about the SIECUS guidelines states that “the document includes an evaluation tool that can help educators review curriculum in terms of concepts and topics, informational accuracy, messaging, age appropriateness, responsiveness to cultural sensitivity, teaching strategies and parental involvement” (pp. 30-31). While religion is mentioned in relation to one of the resources and parent involvement is mentioned in the other, there is no other guidance provided on these matters in article.

Robert McGarry (2013) also reports that “the Montgomery County (Md.) Public

Schools designed its health education program around the SIECUS guidelines . . . After a three-year controversy that drew national attention, the school board unanimously approved a revised and LGBT-inclusive sex education curriculum for implementation in 2007” (p. 31). He concludes, “Its development demonstrated how district stakeholders worked to address the kind of conflict that often thwarts efforts to do what is best for students.” Nevertheless, he provides no discussion about the nature of the controversy or how it was addressed.

The Montgomery County example indicates that eventually some level of accommodation was reached among the stakeholders, although it is not clear who was included in the stakeholder group and what the fallout has been since implementation of the curriculum. Yet, it does demonstrate that gaining some degree of consensus among parents, educators, the state, and other concerned citizens on what should be taught in schools can be done even if it is a very difficult and lengthy process to do it. I contend that this is because all of the parties involved have so little practice doing this.

As indicated earlier, overcoming objections voiced by parties on the extreme ends of the political and social spectrum to teaching about the diversity of beliefs and worldviews will require well articulated voices speaking on behalf of a “Reasonable Center” that strives to negotiate tolerable accommodations for those involved. As Nord (1995) suggests, these voices need to include those who take religion, as well as fairness and governmental neutrality seriously. For better or worse, it appears that this responsibility falls to educators, particularly teachers, because their classrooms are the frontlines where schools, families, the state, and the broader society come together. Feinberg’s (2006) arguments for preparing teachers in religious schools to navigate this

complex terrain are also quite applicable to all teachers in both public and other private schools.

Implementing the proposed model of SEL will require sharing power between schools, families, the state, and other concerned citizens in order to foster the collaboration necessary to do what is best for students. In the remainder of this chapter, what that sharing might look like will be discussed.

### **Resolving Differences Locally**

Resolving differences and accommodating the diverse viewpoints regarding right behavior in America is a responsibility of those involved at every level of government, as well as something that occurs in our informal associations with others. I contend that this makes school communities the best venue for fostering the collaboration needed to find workable solutions to the ongoing tension between majority rule and individual and/or minority group rights. My position is rooted in a principle of Roman Catholic social teaching known as subsidiarity, which claims that all social bodies exist for the sake of the individual, therefore society should not take over what individuals are able to do for themselves.

In *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*, it states, “The principle of subsidiarity reminds us that larger institutions in society should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local institutions, yet larger institutions have essential responsibilities when the more local institutions cannot adequately protect human dignity, meet human needs, and advance the common good” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011, p. 14). The principle of devolving decisions to the lowest

practical level applies to public bodies, commercial enterprises, and voluntary associations.

Elementary and secondary schools in the United States are somewhat unique hybrids functioning as part of both social and political systems. In one sense, they are voluntary associations, based on parents' rights to enroll their children in either public or private schools "because no single religious or nonreligious worldview is adequate to encompass, to the satisfaction of every reasonable person, everything that is valuable" (Feinberg, 2006, p. xx). This results in educational pluralism, allowing parents who have the resources to access private as well as public options to choose among many different kinds of schools. One of the main arguments for school vouchers is to increase the options available to more students (Brighthouse, 2006).

Schools are also institutions of the state because of the extent to which the state requires children to be educated, regulates the operation of both public and private schools, and expects all schools to play a role in preparing the next generation of citizens. Even the rights of parents with regard to their children's education are determined by the state. Therefore, in a democracy, these matters become political questions, not just educational ones. Feinberg (2006) explains:

In other words it is not a question that requires a lot of deep thinking about what the best form of education or religious education is for the child. It is rather a question of what a political system can or should allow parents with regard to the education of their children, and whether it is wise, all things considered, to place the burden of proof in the parent or the state for determining a child's schooling – and then, given a fairly wide berth to the parent, whether the state should set certain requirements for the teachers and schools the parents do select. (p. 213)

Feinberg (2006) goes on to say, "These questions will take us in quite a different direction – from a philosophy of religious education to a politics of religious education.

And the response to the latter will need to differ . . . depending upon historical traditions and local conditions.” He is not alone in recognizing the particularity involved, as several other scholars have also stressed the importance of attempting to resolve contentious issues at the local level (including Bryk, Sebring, Allenworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Feldman, 2005; Greenawalt, 2005; Noddings, 1984/2003; 2002; Viteritti, 2007).

Anthony Bryk, Penny Sebring, Elaine Allenworth, Stuart Luppescu, and John Easton (2010) found that school governance reform efforts aimed at decentralization “reshaped the power relationships among principals, teachers, parents, and local community leaders” (p. 216). They observed that “these reform elements created a new force field, much more horizontal in its press extending into local communities rather than vertical into a central bureaucracy. The ensuing social processes restructured the interpersonal ties among the adults in school communities.” They conclude “relational trust [was] the one mechanism that makes governance reforms matter by catalyzing a redress of the dysfunctional understandings that may now operate among adults and impede educating all children well.”

Implementing “reform initiatives that seek to localize authority, create conditions more responsive to diversity, and provide resources and incentives for local school community improvement,” according to Bryk et al. (2010), facilitates the politics of educational pluralism in a way that allows local schools to respond to policies which are inherently contestable by redirecting the energy typically expended in resisting “toward actually making one’s ideas work in local communities of practice” (pp. 218-219). They advise that this approach must include “a relationship-building strategy that expands



social resources for individual schools, and builds trust up and down the system as well as out into the larger community. Moreover, this systems thinking must remain rooted in a clear understanding of the desired goals at the classroom and school levels and the means to reach these aims” (p. 220).

While Bryk et al. (2010) are addressing educational reform efforts to improve student learning in large urban school districts, what they have to say can also be applied to the kind of reform efforts that will be necessary to implement the proposed SEL-religious studies curriculum. Kent Greenawalt (2005) similarly recognizes the crucial advantage local authorities can have in addressing contentious school policies related to religion in public schools. He suggests, that when feasible, resolving these matters be assigned to local communities rather than assigned to larger units of government because they can more easily allow for individual exemptions from standard requirements.

Greenawalt (2005) also points out that while, “the religion clauses of the Constitution make educational decisions respecting religion peculiarly susceptible to legal challenges,” there are instances where judges “commonly defer to the authority of officials, here teachers, principals, and school boards, who made initial decisions” (p. 34).

He explains:

Whenever judicial interference emerges as a serious possibility, courts must consider more than ideal standards of constitutional judgment. They have to worry about what facts they are able to determine and what workable remedies they can grant. To take a simple example, a judge can much more easily determine the content of a textbook and specify what needs to be altered than she can determine that a teacher is favoring a particular religion in oral comments and tell him just what he needs to say instead, with what inflection and with what degree of enthusiasm. If what teachers say – and how they say it – matters more than the content of the texts, judges have a decidedly limited capacity to control instruction. (p. 34)

In cases like these, Greenawalt (2005), like Joseph Viteritti (2007), favors an accommodation approach that appreciates the religious sensibilities of families when trying to resolve conflicts related to instruction. However, Viteritti makes an important distinction regarding accommodation in the type of curriculum related situations I am suggesting:

[Efforts] to improve instruction about religion as a historical and cultural phenomenon so that young people can better appreciate the role religion has played in human and moral development . . . are not an accommodation to religion. They are meant to guarantee that schools cover subjects that ought to be taught. They put back lessons that should have never been removed in the days of ardent secularism and incorporate much-needed materials that were omitted from the basic curriculum. (pp. 228-229)

That said, there is still much room for conflict as some parents may still feel their beliefs are being undermined. Noddings (1984/2003; 1993; 2002) is very sensitive to the needs of these parents. She stresses the importance of educators to demonstrate caring and creativity in their encounters with these parents in order to reach amicable solutions to conflicts. Noddings (1984/2003) advises, “In order to engage in true dialogue with our students, we educators will first have to engage in true dialogue with their parents. We will need trust and cooperation in a genuine attempt to educate. We may have to forsake our professionalism and take up our common humanity in extended caring relations” (p. 184). Noddings (1993) further observes and suggests:

It is an odd society that shrugs off the influence of violence, steamy sex, and greed displayed daily on television, and worries, instead, that its children will be corrupted by the free discussion of controversial issues in school. This is not to say that there should be no concern over such discussions. There should be constant concern. Parents should be deeply involved in these discussions, but they should not obstruct or prevent them from occurring.

Both parents and students need to have trust in the teachers who lead such discussions, and trust is cultivated slowly as caring relations are established.

Trust is not automatically conferred on those who present appropriate credentials. As parents, most of us begin to trust when we are convinced that a particular teacher really does have the best interest of our child at heart. As we see our child grow intellectually, socially, and morally our trust deepens. We will allow – even encourage – a teacher we trust to broach highly sensitive subjects. (p. 138)

Where there is mutual respect by all of the parties for broader social values and norms this occurs somewhat naturally. Kim Hays (1994), Anthony Bryk, Valerie Lee, and Peter Holland (1993) and Alan Peshkin (1986) observed this in the faith-based and military schools that they studied. Bryk et al. (1993) found that while the staff in the Catholic schools involved in their research were not culturally isolated, there was still a high level of consistency in beliefs, values, and norms among teachers, students and their families. Similarly, Hays also found this to be the case in the Quaker and military boarding schools that she studied. Peshkin, too, draws the same conclusions about relationships in the Christian school that he observed. These researchers found the commitment to shared beliefs, values, and norms contributed to the kind of relational trust that Bryk et al. (2010) determined to be so important in education reform efforts in the Chicago public schools.

In the absence of commonalities like shared religious beliefs or upbringing, Bryk and his colleagues (2010) found that relational trust is grounded in social respect based on genuine listening, so that “even when people disagree, individuals feel that the value of their opinions has been recognized. Such social exchanges foster a sense of connectedness among participants and promote affiliation with the larger institutional context” (p. 138). They maintain that these exchanges allow people to make trust discernments. Bryk et al. (2010) claim “we seek to discern whether a moral-ethical perspective guides the activity of others: Do I see their behavior as really being about the

children, their education and welfare?" They posit:

In short, relational trust is forged in day-to-day social exchanges. Through their actions, school participants articulate their sense of obligation toward others, and others in turn come to discern the intentionality enacted here. Trust grows over time through exchanges in which the expectations held for others are validated by actions. Even simple interactions, if successful, can enhance capacities for more complex subsequent actions. In this regard, increasing trust and productive organizational changes reciprocate each other. (p. 139)

Intentionality related to the best interest of the child appears to be the critical element in establishing the caring and trusting relationships that Noddings (1984/2003; 1993; 2002) , Bryk et al. (1993; 2010) and the others advocate. Therefore, opportunities for trust-building and allowing this intentionally to become visible will need to be an essential component of plans to implement the SEL-religious studies curriculum being proposed. This is particularly important when educators and families of their students have had limited prior positive contact, do not share important commonalities such as race, ethnicity, and/or religion, and/or have diverse moral-ethical perspectives (Bryk et al., 2010). As argued in the prior chapter, to avoid being hegemonic like prior moral education initiatives in American schools, SEL must provide for the expression of different conceptions of the good and how it is achieved.

However, in recognizing that there are multiple conceptions of the good life, all worldviews must be open to examination and their legitimacy judged within the limits of tolerance allowed by law. Relational trust will be critically important in working out local accommodations for those whose worldviews are challenged. The brute fact of religious pluralism has created what Nussbaum (2012) identifies as a time of anxiety and suspicion in the United States and Europe as old beliefs and traditions are forced to make room for new and/or different conceptions of the good life. Nussbaum warns that the

history of religious prejudice and fear persistent in American society not only threatens our self-image that “we are a welcoming and diversity-friendly society that has outgrown the prejudices of the past,” but the very ideals upon which this assessment stands are in jeopardy (p. 2). She says this warrants “an approach inspired by ethical philosophy in the spirit of Socrates” to uncover the roots of these fears and suspicions in order to foster religious tolerance and overcome the politics of fear (p. 2).

Recognizing fear as a necessary emotion, yet often “implicated in most bad behavior in the area of religion,” Nussbaum (2012) suggests we use an approach that involves three ingredients that will help us to understand fear and overcome its narcissistic tendencies (p. 21). She argues that in order to get a handle on our fears we need the following:

- (1) Political principles expressing equal respect for all citizens, and an understanding of what these principles entail for today’s confrontations with religious differences. (These principles already inhere in the political traditions of both Europe and, especially, the United States.)
- (2) Rigorous critical thinking that ferrets out and criticizes inconsistencies, particularly those that take the form of making an exception for oneself, noting the ‘mote’ in someone else’s eye while failing to note the large plank in one’s own eye.
- (3) A systematic cultivation of the ‘inner eyes,’ the imaginative capacity that makes it possible for us to see how the world looks from the point of view of a person different in religion or ethnicity. (pp. 2-3)

Nussbaum (2012) contends, “Our current climate of fear shows that people are all too easily turned away from good values and laws, in time a time of genuine insecurity and threat” (p. 244), referring to the dark side of moral commitments also identified earlier by Skitka and Mullen (2002). Nussbaum urges that we make “a Socratic (and Christian-Kantian) commitment to examine our choices to see whether they are selfish, whether they make a privileged case of ourselves, ignoring the equal claims of others.

And, we need, equally, the inner spirit that must animate the search for consistency, if it is not to remain a hollow shell: we need, the spirit of curiosity and friendship” (p. 245).

The qualities that Nussbaum is suggesting are consistent with what Noddings (1984/2003; 1993; 2002) insists is required for educators to establish caring and compassionate relationships with students and their families in the form of recognition and neighborly affection.

Noddings (2002) argues for an adequate social policy that allows for local dialogue and compromise in response “to the needs of people who disagree at the local level” (p. 77). She acknowledges, “Unmodified, an education aimed at autonomy, critical thinking, and individual liberty clearly represents a threat to fundamentalist groups and others who hold these aims to be sinful” (p. 83). Instead, she advocates policies that accept ambiguity and mystery, allowing individuals inconsistencies in their belief systems, particularly with regard to the high value placed on autonomy. Noddings makes the case that self-knowledge and self-appraisal involve sensitivity to and consultation with others, as well “a norm or ideal against which [one’s] desires are measured . . . There is no clear, complete way to separate my orientation to self and to other” (p. 115). She rejects the notion of an autonomous self, and favors the notion of a relational self that is co-constructed in one’s “encounters with other selves and with objects and events in the world” (p. 116).

Noddings (2002) maintains that this understanding of self allows one to build bridges between what is experienced and learned at home and the vast differences one encounters in the wider social world. She “would like to transform the school curriculum into one that treats home and interpersonal relations as equal in importance to the subjects

traditionally associated with success in the public world” (p. 83). She argues that schools can then be places for “an honest and generous sharing, a recognition of interdependence and the possibility of learning from one another” (p. 299). According to Noddings, “Schools must supplement and reinforce the educational efforts of homes” (p. 300).

Gutmann (1987/1999) also recognizes the unique, but complementary roles parents and educators (acting on behalf of other citizens) have in the moral education of future citizens. She contends:

Our parental interests are to some extent independent of our role as democratic citizens, and hence the emphasis of moral education within the family is likely to be quite different from that within schools. Most parents want to create a family life that satisfies their emotional and spiritual needs, and allows them to share their particular values with their children. However deep this concern for sharing particular values, it need not imply equal concern for spreading these values more generally among children. Parents can recognize the advantages of living in a society in which a variety of values are deeply held and they are therefore free to teach their values to their children.

This freedom depends on children being taught widespread and enduring tolerance for different ways of life. Parents acting individually and citizens acting collectively [through schools] both have valuable and largely complementary roles to play in the moral education of children: [parents] in teaching children what it means to be committed to particular people and one way of life among many; and [schools] in teaching responsibilities and rights within a larger and more diverse community. Moral education in a democracy is best viewed as a shared trust of the family and the polity, mutually beneficial to everyone who appreciates the values of both family life and democratic citizenship. (p. 54)

For Gutmann (1987/1999), the precise terms of this shared trust between parents, teachers, citizens, and public officials must “be democratically decided within the bounds of the principles of nondiscrimination and nonrepression” (p. 288). As discussed in the prior chapter, these principles simultaneously support individual and communal self-determination and deliberative freedom, which Gutmann views as essential to a democratic way of life. The importance of these principles also serves as the bases for

Feinberg's (2006) argument that religious schools share a responsibility in teaching students the attitudes, skills, and dispositions required to reproduce a liberal, democratic society. However, Feinberg (2006) concludes:

Religious schools serve democracy best where there is a strong and viable public school system that serves to provide the religious contact and diversity that is lacking in most religious schools. Religious schools can teach their students to cherish their own specific conception of the good, but they must be able to count on the public schools to reproduce the understandings and dispositions needed to secure the political climate where all deeply held religious ideals can be expressed. Public schools, when working as they should, can provide the trust and understanding that can allow single-tradition religious schools to flourish at the educational margins. (p. 214)

Absent the religious diversity – among both teachers and students – generally found in public schools, it is difficult for religious schools “to assure a climate in which openness and diversity are cherished,” according to Feinberg (2006, p. 214). That is why his suggestion for the state to focus on the training requirements for religious school teachers to do this work versus a ‘state-mandated tolerance order’ has much merit. As argued previously, the training requirements Feinberg (2006) suggests are essential for all classroom teachers in both public and private schools involved with the proposed SEL curriculum and should be a component of all teacher preparation and ongoing professional development programs.

According to David Purpel (1989), “we cannot in good educational conscience avoid the serious and volatile disputes on religious and moral matters because they are controversial, complex, and outrageously perplexing. Quite the contrary: *because* they are so important and *since* they beg for awareness, understanding, clarification, and insight, they are central to significant educational inquiry” (p. 68, italics in original).

Noddings (1993) shares this assessment and reasons, “With such an understanding of our



pedagogical obligation, we can at least supply student teachers with knowledge of ‘how to do it.’ Unfortunately, they will have to acquire much of the content on their own” (p. 137). She opines for the kind of teacher preparation “that would enable them to make connections across subject fields and to discuss deep human questions with some satisfaction.”

This requires significant changes at the pre-service level, together with continuing professional development for in-service educators, to develop the knowledge and sensitivity needed. Teachers, and the administrators who support them, are the ones responsible for helping students to build bridges between home, the curriculum, and the broader society. They also determine the terms for sharing power and fostering collaboration at the local level. It is also up to them to address parental concerns and try to negotiate amicable resolutions to conflicts so that they do not escalate into unnecessary legal battles. With the diverse composition of families represented in America’s classrooms this is no easy task.

However, in the final chapter, the merits of doing this work will be considered, even in the face of the challenges presented here. I will present a snapshot of what an integrated SEL-religious studies curriculum might look like. I will also examine the potential benefits to students that could result from the proposed curriculum and the opportunities it provides for human flourishing. I will also suggest benefits to society that are likely to result from its implementation, including an increased capacity for schools to respond to the public’s desire for moral education and better prepared citizens. I will conclude with recommendations for further study and action.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this project, I have argued that while the science of SEL provides the technology for students to develop the skills for right behavior, a philosophy of SEL is necessary to provide the foundation and content to develop a moral self and the disposition for right behavior. I maintain that only when students are provided with the opportunities to develop both the skills and the dispositions will SEL be more likely to result in competencies that are capable of guiding ethical decision-making and preparing students for their adult roles in a deliberative democracy. I have argued that a number of justice-based philosophies, including those developed by Aristotle (1958, 1999), Gutmann (1987/1999), and Nussbaum (1997; 2010), could provide the necessary foundation. However, all of these philosophies, as well as a concern for SEL not to be another hegemonic moral education effort, require that religious pluralism be an essential element of the SEL curriculum in order to accomplish the desired student outcomes.

In this chapter, I will present a snapshot of what I envision an integrated SEL-religious studies curriculum to look like in order to meet the SEL goals for self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, healthy relationships, and responsible decision-making. I will also review the growing empirical evidence regarding the relationship between morality, religion, right behavior, and well-being. As indicated in Chapter One, the SEL movement took shape to not only prevent forms of

psychopathology, but more importantly to intentionally promote wellness in children and adolescents. I will also examine some of the potential benefits to students that could result from the proposed curriculum and the opportunities it provides for human flourishing. I maintain that these opportunities will provide students with the vocabulary to foster development of a moral self and the tools for meaning making, resulting in greater self-actualization. I will also suggest benefits to society that are likely to result from its implementation, including an increased capacity for schools to respond to the public's desire for moral education and better prepared citizens. I surmise that this could also result in the likelihood of increased civic participation and the capacity to diffuse the culture wars. I will conclude with recommendations for further study and action.

### **Snapshot of an Integrated SEL-Religious Studies Curriculum**

My model for an integrated SEL-religious studies curriculum is rooted in Aristotle's (1999) justice-centered philosophy based on the notion of a deeply moral personhood that synthesizes and balances an intellectual and emotional understanding of the self and others. It also incorporates Gutmann's (1987/1999) notion of democratic education with Gilligan et al. (1988) and Nodding's (1984/2003; 2002) ethic of care. This hybrid foundation takes into account the SEL promise to reestablish the connection between the head and the heart severed by Descartes and the other Enlightenment thinkers (Cohen. J., 1999; Elias, 2002; Goleman, 1995/2005), as well as the importance of the innate psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It also embraces a deep commitment to building the relational trust required for true school-family-community collaboration aimed at achieving the intended SEL outcomes for students (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Bryk et al., 2010).

In addition to a focus on self-control, my model also takes into account the importance of self-respect that is derived from the cultivation of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and moral practice (*praxis*), as suggested by Aristotle (1999) and Freire (1970/2000). It also reflects less of an emphasis on traditionally masculine notions of individualism, autonomy, and detachment prevalent in Western thought, favoring a more traditionally feminine openness to learning from and with others (Gilligan et al., 1988). This mutual engagement is intended to allow for the transformation of the self to seek inclusive solutions (Noddings, 1984/2003; 1993; 2002; 2006a). In an effort to overcome the gender and anti-religion bias introduced by the Enlightenment thinkers, this model also takes into account the importance of receptivity, relatedness, and respect to form an ethical ideal based on love and caring (Gilligan et al., 1988; Noddings, 1984/2003; 2002). It additionally recognizes the democratic ideals of equality, liberty, civility, and justice (Taylor, 2011). In doing so, it acknowledges the social basis of morality (Appiah, 2007) and encourages transcendence of the self (Cox, 2009; Postman, 1996; Taylor, C., 1989; 1991; Taylor, C. & Gutmann, 1994), along with connection to a wider whole (Nussbaum, 1997; 2010), or in other terms, an expanded “we” (Putnam et al., 2010). This orientation is intended to help ensure that SEL instruction does more than train clever criminals who use their skills and knowledge of others toward unethical ends.

Situated in education policies which demonstrate mutual respect and foster an environment for caring relations to flourish, my model allows for flexibility and accommodation to resolve conflicts. This model requires true dialogue to take place between teachers and parents, teachers and students, and parents and students (Noddings, 1983/2003; 2002). It relies on local deliberation and judgment, using Aristotle’s (1999)

notion of *phronesis* to respond to the needs of the people involved. It embodies an ethic that encourages the use of legal means only when logistics make it impossible to exercise “caring-for” (Noddings, 1983/2003). When resorting to legal challenges over interpretations of universal rules of justice, it stresses that “caring-about” those who will be impacted by the decision be the primary consideration.

The hidden curriculum is not taken for granted, in my model, as values and moral assumptions are explicit, examined, and negotiated in order to reach amicable solutions to conflicts and avoid unintentional pressure for conformity (Levinson, 1999; Macedo, 2000; Sen, 2007). This approach is grounded in the belief that a liberal education must acknowledge the fact of pluralism and that different conceptions of the good are present in society. By embracing a flexible understanding of autonomy, it empowers individuals to say no to self-enslavement while still providing for deep commitments and cultural coherence (Levinson, 1999; Merry, 2005a). This stance takes into account the deep structure religious and philosophical worldviews provide in shaping one’s moral values and attitudes. It also acknowledges that this moral pluralism requires notions of complex equality and shared understanding (Levy, 2000).

To facilitate this reality, my model incorporates C. Taylor’s (2011) three-principled model of secularization which argues that government has a secular, neutral role in affirming religious liberty, equality, and fraternity. However, instead of fraternity, I will use the more inclusive term, “neighborly affection.” C. Taylor’s model provides general first principles for working out differences due to all of the diversity present in society, not just to those differences related to religious perspectives. His model supports the ideal of pluralism by providing a framework for the ongoing process of defining the

limits of tolerance and inclusion, or in his words, “the exact regime of rights and privileges” (p. 309), within a structure that allows for dissent while still emphasizing unity and mutual respect.

Instead of ignoring the deep moral differences and inherent conflicts that result from the fact of moral and religious pluralism, my model of SEL with its energetic engagement of religious pluralism, as defined by Eboo (2008), and expanded by Epstein (2010) to include Humanism, secularism, and atheism when teaching about other religious traditions, provides a public space where future citizens together with their teachers and parents are able to recognize similarities, as well as engage in debate over our deepest differences in a caring and open environment.

This approach provides legitimate channels for dissent which are essential for preventing oppression and avoiding other forms of violence when people who have such different deeply felt convictions come into contact with each other (Hunter, 1994; Keith, 2010; Mouffe, 2005; Skitka & Mullen, 2002). I maintain that accommodations worked out within school settings will provide training for constructive, nonviolent responses to differences encountered in other areas of public life. This will be discussed latter in this chapter.

By fostering an environment that acknowledges that all moral codes depend on faith, where faith is understood as an attitude of hope in that which cannot or has not been proved, centered around the belief that all moral human beings have the desire to know and do what is right and good, provides a baseline upon which people – religious and nonreligious – can come together and fashion a common morality (Diener, 1997; Epstein, 2010; Macedo, 2000). While this consensus about right behavior may only be achievable

on a narrow set of “moral basics” (Kristjánsson, 2002), such as a commitment to C. Taylor’s (2011) principles of religious liberty, equality, and neighborly affection, I maintain that this model of SEL will enable students as adult members of society to construct community-in-difference (Peña, Guest, & Matsuda, 2005) which embraces the challenges of diversity and allows for the nonrepression and nondiscrimination of individual beliefs in the consideration of different views of the good life and the good society (Gutmann, 1987/1999).

In taking this philosophy of SEL from theory to practice, my model emphasizes the essential need to present both the fundamental similarities of all religions in expressing love, compassion, and concern for self and others, as well as the fundamental differences in both beliefs and practices in how these values are lived in relation to what criteria is used to determine who is included and excluded when defining others deserving of one’s love, compassion, and concern (Prothero, 2010). This approach will also recognize that “religions are internally diverse; religions are dynamic; and religions are embedded in culture” (AAR, 2010, p. i). It will follow *The AAR Guidelines for Teaching About Religion in K-12 Public Schools in the United States*, which state:

These Guidelines support [a] constitutionally sound approach for teaching about religion in public schools—encouraging student *awareness* of religions, but *not acceptance* of a particular religion; *studying* about religion, but *not practicing* religion; *exposing* students to a diversity of religious views, but *not imposing* any particular view; and *educating* students about all religions, but *not promoting or denigrating* religion. (italics in original)

Instruction will be designed to present this information in a way that is age appropriate and sensitive to the maintenance of cultural coherence (Merry, 2005a). D. Moore’s (2007) cultural studies approach will be used to ensure that a range of

perspectives about the religions studied are included in the curriculum. Todd and Säfström's (2008) notion of conditional hospitality in which expressions of disagreement, dissent, and conflict are channeled into political projects that promote the ongoing democratic struggle to distinguish the difference between political and moral disputes will also be utilized to create a safe public, pluralistic space. In addition to improving religious literacy and an inclusive notion of religious pluralism, this approach also has the promise of learning from and with centuries of life lessons embedded in religious texts and traditions (Nord, 1999; Nord & Haynes, 1998), as well as advancing interfaith cooperation (Epstein, 2010, Niebuhr, 2009).

My model takes advantage of the evidence that dispositional traits present at birth are subject to change over time in response to social interactions (Macedo, 2000; Matsumoto, 2007). I will structure exercises that will allow students to experience the ways in which identities are formed as the result of both positive and negative recognition in an effort to sensitize them to the impact their treatment of others has both on themselves and the recipient (Appiah, 2007; Freire, 1970/2000; Sen, 2007; Taylor, C., 1991). These exercises will provide students with the vocabulary to express the emotions felt as public events open to common experience (Radford, 2002) while acknowledging the influence of one's culture in determining appropriate responses (Ellsworth, 1994). Effort will be made to ensure that students are able to distinguish the impact positive and negative emotions and their associated behaviors have on their attitudes, so that they can learn to broaden their thought-action repertoires to build upon positive emotions and reduce the impact of lingering negative emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), especially with regard to responding to misrepresentations of their identity.



These exercises will help to demonstrate the extent to which one's identity is dialogically constructed and the role each of us has in countering negative stereotypes and discrimination based on the misrepresentation of people's beliefs and traditions. This strategy is particularly significant when educating for cultural coherence in pluralistic societies like the United States where persons must frequently adopt hybrid identities (Merry, 2005a). This feature of the curriculum will also stress the importance of respect and tolerance of each other, no matter what differences exist. It is also intended to provide an environment that acknowledges the significance of sacred beliefs and traditions, encouraging members of minority cultures and religious groups to express themselves more authentically (Langman, 2003; Postman, 1996).

The importance of cultural coherence will be emphasized in the elementary grades in order to reinforce beliefs taught at home and not to confuse students before they have a foundation upon which to judge the standards of other worldviews (Lester, 2007; Merry, 2005a). The elementary curriculum will introduce basic moral terms into the students' vocabulary and concepts such as those suggested by Joshi (2007) to teach "the ABCDs of the major world religions – **A**rchitecture of houses of worship, **B**ooks that contain the religion's holy texts, **C**ities considered to be holy sites, and **D**ays of major holidays" (p. 48). Beginning to introduce the notion of moral and religious pluralism early will help to establish that while there are different interpretations of right behavior and that moral people look to different sources of moral authority, there are some foundational principles upon which we agree. Prior to introducing this curriculum to young students, educators will have met with the students' parents and gained consensus and a commitment to reinforcing the values to be taught (Noddings, 1983/2003; 2002).

As students get older, they will be encouraged to engage in both internal and external cultural debates regarding issues related to human rights and responsibilities in a liberal democracy. It will be the responsibility of the teacher to expand the diversity of perspectives by introducing different points of view through a variety of venues, including guest speakers, sacred texts, literature, and various forms of media. It is also the responsibility of the teacher to provide opportunities for involving parents in these debates and for addressing fears the parents may have about the curriculum. Teachers will be encouraged to use the Socratic method for these debates as a means for helping students (and parents) to understand their fears and overcome narcissistic tendencies, as well as prepare them for political participation (Nussbaum, 1997; 2010; 2012).

By focusing debate around moral principles and citizen virtues laid out in the U.S. Constitution, as C. Taylor (2011) has done in identifying religious liberty, equality, and neighborly affection, together with competing beliefs about how these principles and virtues are to be lived, provides an approach that is in part very settled while being open to debate and discussion (Gutierrez, 2005). This strategy is very consistent with Freire's (1970/2000) pedagogy of humanization and use of a permanence-change dialectic to resolve conflicts through cultural synthesis.

Essential to this process is the reintroduction of philosophical and moral language into the curriculum that will enable students to better understand their emotions, articulate their beliefs, and acknowledge how these resources come together to guide right behavior (Epstein, 2010; Freire, 1970/2000; Hunter, 1994; MacIntyre, 2008; Nussbaum, 1997; Radford, 2002; Smith et al., 2011; White, 1994). Examples for doing this will be drawn from Kunzman's (2006) Ethical Dialogue model and Noddings'

suggestions in *Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief* (1993) and *Critical Lessons: What Our Schools Should Teach* (2006a).

Interdisciplinary curriculum materials will be used that employ a wide range of teaching and learning strategies in addition to the Socratic method, including narrative inquiry, hermeneutics and heuristic inquiry, and other methods of exegetical analysis and meaning making (Bruner, 1996; Rosenblith & Baily, 2007; 2008). The interpretation and translation of texts and storytelling incorporating lessons from one's own experiences, as well as from a wide range of sacred texts and philosophic traditions will be integral components of my SEL-religious studies curriculum. The purpose of these exercises will be to enable students to develop the skills and language needed to express their beliefs and to recognize the variety of beliefs that others bring to public dialogue, along with the opportunity to practice such dialogue.

Central to my model is teacher preparation. Training will be provided to classroom teachers to help them to recognize and manage their own emotions and beliefs, in order to constructively address the defensiveness, fears, and other negative emotions that are certain to surface when confronting differences (Keith, 2010). Additionally, these educators will receive training on how to foster collaboration with parents and other community members to reach consensus on the first principles and citizen virtues to be taught in the SEL-religious studies curriculum. They will also be provided with guidance on how to find workable solutions to resolving conflicts that are likely to arise when parents and other community members express fear, anxiety, and outright opposition to the content of the SEL-religious studies curriculum. Educators will also be given the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to facilitate the ongoing trust

and participation of parents and other partners in reinforcing the lessons taught in the school (Albright & Weissberg, 2010).

Brief examples are provided below regarding how religious studies might be integrated with the SEL curriculum in relation to CASEL's core competencies. The five competencies will be treated as three content areas, as both Illinois and Kansas combine self-awareness and self-management in the same goal and social awareness and relationship skills in another. Responsible decision-making is addressed on its own in Illinois and with character development in Kansas.

**Self-awareness** is “the ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism” (CASEL, 2012, p. 9). **Self-management** is “the ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.” These competencies focus on taking responsibility for one’s self and knowing when and how to seek help.

In order to avoid confusing those who are just beginning their moral formation, the religious studies component in the elementary SEL curriculum would be primarily descriptive, providing students with a basic vocabulary so that they could share information about their own moral upbringing. This would not involve any critical analysis of different beliefs and practices (Lester, 2007; Joshi, 2007; Merry, 2005a). Lessons would focus on recognizing personal qualities and external supports that encourage values and habits that have been agreed upon with the students’ parents.

These would generally be traits traditionally related to right behavior, such as respect, empathy, honesty, fairness, and compassion.

Students would be encouraged to express how they are learning these traits from their families and others in the community. Those children who are receiving religious instruction would have the opportunity to talk about what they are learning about these traits from their faith communities. This would also be a time to build a common vocabulary that includes references to religion when discussing external SEL supports.

In middle and high schools, students would explore religion's historical role as the source of moral authority in societies and how it has shaped right behavior across time and cultures. Students would then relate this historical perspective to the role various moral authorities have in helping them to develop their personal qualities and set short- and long-term goals, as well as provide support for dealing with stress, problems, and negative influences.

**Social awareness** is “the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports” (CASEL, 2012, p. 9). **Relationship or interpersonal skills** reflect “the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.” While the first two competencies focus on the self, these two competencies recognizes that we do not live in isolation.

In teaching social-awareness and interpersonal skills, students would be taught the

Golden Rule and the laws of reciprocity which are essential to religious liberty and in achieving nondiscrimination. In the elementary grades, as suggested above, students would begin to learn this by listening respectfully to how other families and faith communities instruct their children in right behavior. Even students who attend faith-based schools would be made aware of the terms used by other faith traditions to describe various aspects of their religion that believers draw upon for personal guidance, e.g., the generic names of spiritual leaders, sacred texts, prayer practices and rituals, and so on.

The religious studies component would also inform students about the ways various religious traditions instruct believers to resolve conflicts within their membership and encourage peaceful coexistence with those outside of their faith community. This instruction would provide the basis for a commitment to the foundational principles articulated by C. Taylor (2011) to religious liberty, equality, and neighborly affection, as well as an introduction to the kind of complex equality and shared understandings that Levy (2000) argues are required for resolving moral conflicts that define the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, as they relate to acceptable and unacceptable behavior in a morally pluralistic society.

As students get older, the religious studies component would give students the opportunity to analyze the differences between the major world religions and philosophical perspectives, as well as address the ways in which religion has been, and continues to be, a source of both good and bad in the world. Students would examine current conflicts around the world and in local communities involving religion, as well as efforts to bridge differences. Students would also explore the ways in which improving religious literacy offers the potential for increasing tolerance for different points of view

and practices, thereby reducing prejudices and conflicts that arise from ignorance and misunderstandings. Teaching students that “religions are dynamic and changing as opposed to static and fixed . . . constantly interpreted and reinterpreted by believers” would create room for dialogue and an openness to new possibilities (AAR, 2010, p.13).

**Responsible decision making** is “the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others” (CASEL, 2012, p. 9). This competency goes beyond self- and social-awareness and interpersonal relationships, drawing attention to the ongoing choices one must make regarding right behavior. The religious studies component related to this competency would focus on ethical reasoning through the use of narratives representing perspectives from a variety of religious and philosophical traditions related to the qualities identified earlier as desirable traits to be developed. Students would be taught that one of the hallmarks of ethical reasoning is consideration of alternatives and that the most responsible action chosen is likely to depend not only on the particulars of the situations, but also on the beliefs and culture of the parties involved. Students would learn that even if one does not accept the moral authority of a particular faith tradition, all religions offer guidance which could be useful to them in discerning right from wrong behavior. Beginning in the elementary grades and continuing through high school, the religious studies component would draw examples of moral exemplars from various traditions as they have been portrayed in literature, art, and sacred text.

Older students would receive instruction based on Kunzman’s (2006) and

Noddings' (1993; 2006a) suggestions for ethical dialogue aimed at negotiating the limits of inclusion and tolerance regarding moral issues. Students would have the opportunity to consider why certain values, principles, laws, norms, and other behavior expectations must be agreed to as absolute among all citizens (such as the prohibition of discrimination on the bases of race) versus why some are relative choices (such as which religious tradition, if any, you will follow).

The religious studies component would also provide students with a historical perspective on how religion and politics have become increasingly intertwined in the United States, as well as give students some understanding of the positions taken by those within various faith traditions related to topics such as same-sex marriage, abortion, stem cell research, and the death penalty. Coupling these classroom discussions with knowledge about the emotions associated with deeply held views (Radford, 2002) and the importance to democracy of legitimate channels for dissent would enable students to recognize that those with different viewpoints are adversaries to be treated with care and respect, not enemies to be destroyed (Mouffe, 2005; Noddings, 1993; 2006a). They would learn that the aim of classroom and public debate should be to persuade others to your viewpoint and when that is not possible, to seek accommodations that all parties can tolerate, not to silence dissenting voices or exclude them from the conversation.

I maintain that the SEL-religious studies curriculum described above has the potential which a standalone SEL curriculum does not have to allow students to experience positive interactions in the process of confronting differences in seeking the common good and expanding the collective allegiances upon which individual identity is shaped and national unity is built. In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore why



this approach offers increased benefits for students and society, as well as make recommendations for future study and action.

### **Potential Benefit to Students – Improved Opportunity for Flourishing**

It is my contention that students will have improved opportunities for flourishing if the proposed SEL curriculum is implemented. This conclusion is based on the growing evidence that there is a positive relationship between religion and well-being. By breaking their silence, public schools will actually become more neutral in relation to religion and cease to marginalize its significance. Acknowledging religion as a resource expands the opportunities students have for fostering the development of a moral self and it also provides them with additional tools for meaning making and maintaining healthy relationships, as will be demonstrated below.

In Chapter One, I recounted how SEL emerged in a somewhat parallel and simultaneous fashion in the later part of the twentieth century along with the community health and positive psychology schools of thought. As indicated, positive psychology is the study of human thriving that began to take shape in the late 1990s, as “the *antithesis* of the medical model, which continues . . . to focus on the study, diagnosis and treatment of psychopathology” (Bar-on, 2010, p. 54, italics in original). It is also an outgrowth of the humanistic psychology movement founded in the 1960s by Abraham Maslow along with Charlotte Bühler and others.

Maslow (1950) began his study of self-actualizing people with what started as a project to help him find “the solution to various personal moral, ethical, and scientific problems” (p. 11). He defined self-actualization, a term that Kurt Goldstein had coined in 1939, as “the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc. Such

people seem to be fulfilling themselves and tend to be doing the best that they are capable of doing.” These individuals had met their basic emotional and cognitive needs and “had worked out their philosophical, religious, or axiological bearings” (p. 12). Maslow concluded self-actualizing people “are more completely ‘individual’ than any group that has ever been described and yet are also more completely socialized, more identified with humanity than any other group yet described” (p. 33). In many ways, Maslow is also describing the kind of development SEL is intended to help individuals accomplish.

Rather than focusing on remediating pathologies and deficits, SEL aims to support mental wellness and human flourishing. Therefore, a partial examination of the literature in positive psychology related to the relationship between religion and individual wellness and flourishing is in order. Roy Baumeister (2002), serving as the guest editor of a special edition of *Psychological Inquiry* on religion and psychology, concluded, “What matters in terms of psychological and health outcomes is whether a person is religious – period. It does not make much difference which religion a person believes . . . the scientific evidence, at least, does not provide any basis for thinking that one religion is superior to others” (p. 166). While many questions remain unanswered about the unique role religion plays in the sphere of individual human behavior, he adds, “From the point of view of society as a whole, however, religion does seem to occupy a relatively special, privileged place as one of the only institutional supports for values, morals, shared assumptions, and the like.” This conclusion is consistent with the arguments made in Chapter Three regarding the importance of religion to our system of government.

Barbara Fredrickson (2001; 2002) suggests that positive emotions may be the

“active ingredients” in the religion-health connection. She has presented empirical evidence supporting what she calls the broaden-and-build theory, which “posits that experiences of positive emotions broaden people’s momentary thought-action repertoires, which in turn serves to build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources” (2001, p. 218). She views positive emotions as vehicles for individual growth and social connections, as they widen “the array of thoughts and actions that come to mind . . . by creating recurring cycles of urges . . . to play, to explore, to savor and integrate, or to envision future achievement” (p. 220). In essence, these emotions make one more open to new and creative experiences.

According to Fredrickson (2001), as indicated in the prior chapter, positive emotions, such as joy, contentment, interest, pride, and love, serve to signal behavior to approach or continue an experience, while negative emotions, such as fear, sadness, anger, anxiety, and despair, generally signal specific action tendencies to escape or avoid an experience. Her research shows that in addition to broadening people’s thought-action repertoires, positive emotions, also “undo lingering negative emotions, fuel psychological resilience, and build psychological resilience and trigger upward spirals toward enhanced emotional well-being” (p. 224). Rather than just being helpful in the moment, positive emotions have a lasting impact and have been shown to even shorten the duration of negative emotion arousal.

With regard to religion, Fredrickson (2002) acknowledges, “Any close and realistic look at religious practices reveals that they can readily foster negative emotions and unhealthy ways of coping” (p. 211). However, she also concludes:

To the extent that religions offer their believers worldviews that help them to find positive meaning both in ordinary daily events (e.g., a chance encounter with an acquaintance's child), and in major life challenges (e.g., a diagnosis of cancer), they also cultivate positive emotions such as joy, serenity, awe, gratitude, and hope. According to the broaden-and-build theory, these positive emotions should in turn broaden people's mindsets, making them more creative and integrative in their thinking, and build and replenish critical personal and social resources, such as resilience, optimism, and social support. These resources, a wide range of studies have shown, enhance health and well-being. (p. 211)

Recognizing that much more research is needed to establish causal relationships between religious practices and well-being, Fredrickson (2001) claims positive emotions are likely to play an essential role because they are intrinsically motivated, providing the fuel for a self-sustaining system of healthy development and continued growth. In summation, she asserts:

Perhaps what is distinctively human about our emotional lives then is our ability to open our minds far enough to fathom or create a connection to God, or another Higher Power. This broadened mindset can in turn provide a wellspring of profoundly experienced emotions, many of them positive. Thus, religious practices may be distinctive human ways of proactively cultivating positive emotions with their attendant adaptive benefits. (p. 212)

Peter Salovey, identified earlier as one of the first psychologists to develop a concept of emotional intelligence, takes Freud to task for being mistaken about there being only a negative relationship between religion and well-being. Along with David Pizarro (Pizarro & Salovey, 2002), they claim that “some religious institutions are structured to be ‘emotionally intelligent’ organizations,” and thereby may assist with “the ability to regulate one’s emotional states” (p. 220). Also recognizing that this area of research is fairly young, they suggest two approaches for better understanding the impact of religion on health.

The first is to focus on individuals' specific beliefs about the nature of God and reality. Attempting to answer the question at the level of belief makes sense, as

metaphysical beliefs may inoculate the believer by structuring schemas through which individuals can organize and bring meaning to their lives in the face of adverse events (e.g., by making them more hopeful or optimistic). (p. 220)

The second approach, which Pizarro & Salovey (2002) favor, looks to more general psychological mechanisms that are not tied to a set of metaphysical beliefs and, therefore, are more universally available to believers and nonbelievers alike. These include generic mediators, such as social support, coping, and emotional competence.

Addressing their area of interest, they claim:

There are at least three ways in which being a believer may increase one's ability to engage in effective emotional regulation. First, a believer may have increased access to venues for emotional disclosure. Second, religions often promote exercises (prayer, rituals, meditation) that allow the believer to regulate their own emotions through time-tested procedures. Finally, religious believers may have greater access to 'regulation experts' or individuals who are in their position partly because of the skills they have to regulate emotions in others. (p. 221)

It seems clear that religion provides an effective vessel for the social transmission of emotional abilities, which in turn may positively affect the health and well-being of practitioners. One advantage to being a participant in religious activities is that religion is an efficient, culturally validated source for the transmission of these abilities. The effects of religion on health outcomes, then, may be at least partially mediated by the incidental emphasis that religions place on emotional regulation. (p. 222)

Pizarro and Salovey (2002) point out that religious organizations are not the only sources for learning emotional skills, citing support groups and social clubs as alternatives. "However, given the nature and consistency of the findings, any organization attempting to shape the emotional abilities of its members may find it useful to turn to religious institutions as a powerful example" (p. 222). The long-standing relationship between emotions, moral development, and religion is no less relevant today than in past times. Pizarro & Salovey's recommendation should serve as a wake-up call to school personnel regarding the content of the SEL curriculum.

Closely related to emotional regulation is self-control, another SEL aim that empirical studies have shown to be positively influenced by religion. “Arguably, every major religious tradition advocates forsaking pleasure in the moment to realize greater, deferred rewards” (Duckworth, 2011, p. 2639). Self-control is important because it has been found not only to be highly predictive of future success, it is also malleable. In a 30-year longitudinal study, researchers found that positive childhood indicators of self-control predicted better adult health, wealth, and crime outcomes, including mental health, secondary school completion, and the avoidance of substance abuse problems, teen pregnancy, and criminal convictions (Moffitt et al, 2011). Although the study did not include an experimental intervention, “those children who became more self-controlled from childhood to young adulthood had better outcomes by the age of 32 y [sic], even after controlling for their initial levels of childhood self-control” (p. 2696). Factoring out intelligence, social class, and family life, the researchers concluded that making self-control a clear target for intervention policies would be likely to save citizens and governments the heavy costs associated with poor behavior. One such policy would be to acknowledge the relationship between religion and individual well-being as a component of SEL.

While almost all religious traditions expect their followers “to uphold sacred laws, ideals, and related standards for appropriate behavior . . . Religious individuals generally display fewer ruminative thoughts, lower levels of inner conflict, and higher levels of positive emotion compared to nonreligious individuals . . . The psychological profile of religious individuals is thus something of a paradox” (Koole, McCullough, Kuhl & Roelofsma, 2010, p. 95). Koole and associates maintain that religiosity serves a two-fold

purpose of both forming the contents of people's motives, as well, as providing the mechanisms to engage in motivated action. They make the following claim:

Various religious practices and beliefs may lead people to adopt a self-regulatory mode that is flexible, efficient, and governed by largely unconscious processes. In this implicit mode of self-regulation, religious individuals may strive for high religious standards in a way that is congruent with their emotional needs. As such, implicit self-regulation processes may allow religious individuals to simultaneously maintain high emotional well-being and high religious standards. (p. 95)

Sander Koole, Michael McCullough, Julius Kuhl, and Peter Roelofsma (2010) assert that this form of self-regulation functions as "an 'inner democracy' by regulating people's actions in harmony with the totality of people's inner needs, motives, and autobiographical experiences. This implicit mode of self-regulation is not mediated by explicit intentions but rather by integrated feelings or intuitions about appropriate courses of action" (p. 96). They contrast this with the notion of an "inner dictatorship" which represents conscious, effortful, and repressive actions aimed at automatic tendencies. Research has demonstrated that implicit and explicit self-regulation function independently and can mutually interfere with each other resulting in motivational conflict and an overall reduction in psychological well-being when explicit goals disrupt implicit needs. On the other hand, implicit self-regulation can redirect one's attention to higher goals when explicit efforts repeatedly fail to accomplish their goal. Koole et al. further explain that these forms of self-regulation are also related to different cognitive styles:

The single-minded focus of explicit self-regulation is presumably hard to combine with the more holistic, person-oriented focus of implicit self-regulation. Indeed, implicit and explicit self-regulation are associated with antagonistic cognitive styles. Explicit self-regulation is closely associated with analytic processing, a cognitive style that is dependent on linguistic encoding, precise, sequential, rigid,

and dissociated from emotional and sensorimotor systems. By contrast, implicit self-regulation is closely associated with integrative processing, a cognitive style that is largely independent of linguistic encoding, impressionistic, parallel, flexibly attuned to multiple meanings, and closely coupled with emotional and sensorimotor systems. (p. 97)

Other research also corroborates a relationship between cognitive style and one's spiritual development and belief in God. Amitai Shenhav, David Rand, and Joshua Greene (2012) report on three studies which demonstrate that one's cognitive style influences belief in God, saying:

One potentially relevant aspect of cognitive style is the extent to which individuals form their judgments intuitively, as opposed to through reflection. By *intuitive* judgments we mean judgments made with little effort based on automatic processes, and by *reflective* judgments we mean judgments in which the judge pauses to critically examine the dictates of her intuition(s), thus allowing for the possibility of a less-intuitive or counterintuitive conclusion. Reflection is typically assumed to be more effortful than intuition, and the two processes have been studied as competing components in a number of conceptually similar dual-process models. Under this general framework, constructs related to intuitive thinking include thinking that is reflexive, heuristic, associative, holistic or experiential in nature, whereas reflective thinking has been related to processes such as controlled, systematic, analytic, rule-based, or "rational" thinking. (pp. 423-424, italics in original)

What Shenhav et al. (2011) found in their studies was that those participants who gave more intuitive responses were also more confident in their belief in God. They did not view this finding as "simply a reflection of a cultural pattern whereby childhood environments favoring religion also happen to favor intuition. Rather, these data suggest that cognitive style predicts how one's religious beliefs change over time, independent of one's childhood religious influences or lack thereof" (p. 425). They note that reliance on intuition is not always irrational or unjustified and provide two possible explanations for the observed relationship between belief in God and a reliance on intuition:

Belief in God may be intuitive for reasons related to more general features of



human cognition that give rise to tendencies toward dualism, anthropomorphism, and promiscuous teleology. From a dual-process perspective, these processes are hypothesized to produce automatic judgments that can be overridden through the engagement of controlled or reflective processes, with reflective processes enabling or supporting judgments based on less intuitive explanations.

A belief in God may enable a general class of easily accessible explanations that make sense of otherwise mysterious phenomena by appeal to God's varied and extensive causal powers, explanations that thus have a heuristic quality. Research suggests that individuals with more intuitive cognitive styles are more likely to rely on heuristics. Thus, individuals who are drawn to intuitive explanations may come to believe in God or strengthen their existing beliefs in God, because believing in God supports intuitive explanations of diverse phenomena. What's more, the belief in God may give rise to a feedback cycle whereby satisfying explanatory appeals to God reinforce the intuitive cognitive style that originally favored the belief in God.

The notion of a feedback cycle is consistent with the understanding Koole et al. (2010) suggest regarding implicit self-regulation and the religiosity paradox, in that it "suggests that cognitive style is not only predictive of one's beliefs but also a critical factor in the evolution of one's beliefs over time" (Shenhav et al., 2011, p. 427). "With the degree to which belief in God was reported to have changed since childhood," Shenhav et al. observed "more intuitive participants reporting becoming more confident believers and more reflective participants reporting becoming more confident atheists (p. 425).

Kelly Cartwright (2001) also offers insights about the evolution of one's beliefs over time and the manner in which cognitive development interacts with one's spiritual development. She distinguishes spirituality, as individual, inner experiences, from religiosity, the "observance of outward dictates or customs that may be tied to a particular faith tradition" (p. 215). Her focus is on the relation of humanity to an External Power (or Powers) and the variations in spiritual understanding, particularly among adults.

Cartwright states “mature spirituality involves a kind of self-transcendence where individuals develop the ability to go beyond themselves in truthful knowledge, free commitment, and loving relationship to others, both human and Divine” (p. 216).

Beginning with Jean Piaget’s original four stages of cognitive development, she describes how individuals develop spiritually in a somewhat parallel, yet intersecting manner:

According to cognitive developmental theory, individuals progress through stages characterized by qualitatively different modes of thought. At each successive stage, individuals build upon and transcend their previous thought processes by incorporating additional, more sophisticated ways of understanding the world. The transcendence of prior modes of thought characteristic of cognitive development provides a formal mechanism by which spiritual development may also occur. It is asserted that individuals’ understanding of their relation to a Higher Power progresses through stages that are parallel in nature to the original Piagetian stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. Additionally, as suggested elsewhere, individuals’ understanding of their relatedness to an External Power can develop beyond formal operational modes of reasoning to include a new subjectivity characteristic of postformal thought. At each stage, an individual’s understanding of their relation to an External Power transcends their prior understanding by incorporating additional cognitive skills; however, their understanding is also constrained by their current level of cognitive development. It is further argued that these different modes of spiritual understanding do not emerge at the ages originally proposed in Piagetian theory, nor are they restricted to particular age ranges in development. Rather, passage through these stages may occur at any point in a person’s lifetime, depending upon individual experiences, awareness, and motivation. (p. 217)

With regard to the fifth stage regarding a new subjectivity characteristic of postformal thought, Cartwright (2001) explains:

Once individuals can step away from and out of the culturally transmitted views that have constrained them, they are able to consider those views as potential alternatives rather than absolute truth. The ability to consider multiple alternate versions of reality and select one as appropriate for self is typical of postformal modes of thinking and has been characterized as a new kind of objectivity that incorporates the subjective. An individual at this level would no longer be embedded in the culturally transmitted framework that guided her understanding at prior levels. For example, individuals at the postformal level might still focus on abstract notions of love, mercy, and justice in relationships. However, because the cultural norm of reciprocity no longer constrains their understanding,

behavioral demonstrations of these principles may no longer be seen as necessary to maintain and insure relatedness to a Higher Power. As suggested by [other scholars], the many, varied relationships between self, others, and an external Power are all vital components of spirituality. Rather than focusing on how they can maintain a relationship with God through the behavioral administration of love or mercy to others (a unidirectional and limited conception), individuals at the postformal level see that these abstract principles are unifying forces in the vast connectedness between self, others, and a Higher Power. (p. 218)

This understanding of spiritual development is consistent with the holistic focus of implicit self-regulation that Koole et al. (2010) describe, as well as with the way in which intuitive judgment aligns with belief in God according to Shenhav et al. (2012). These scholars demonstrate how religion may help in maintaining the global integrity of the personality system of an individual. “By transcending logic, religion may lead people toward truths that are never fully understood yet deeply felt and experienced” (Koole et al., 2010, p. 103). Koole et al. further explain why this understanding applies universally. They “conceive of religion as a broad cultural syndrome that is characterized by deeply held beliefs in supernatural agents such as gods or spirits, along with ritualized and socially shared practices that sustain these beliefs” (p. 97). Yet, they also recognize that “there are considerable individual and cultural differences in religious commitments, beliefs, and practices. Nevertheless, core aspects of religion can be found across virtually all human cultures and among the majority of individuals around the world today.”

In addition to an orientation toward the whole person, the core aspects of most religions also “emphasize ideals that transcend the individual person, such as ‘living according to the will of God.’ However, not explicitly stating the person-oriented function of religion may paradoxically facilitate the operation of implicit self-regulation processes” (Koole et al., 2010, p. 97). This self-transcendent quality of fulfilling a larger

purpose beyond the self is what Maslow (1950) found as essential in his study of self-actualizing people. Koole et al. also point out that religious practices and beliefs additionally make use of metaphors, symbols, and latent meanings that call on integrative cognitive capabilities that help to facilitate self-actualization. Equally important, most religions not only open individuals up to the basic needs and desires of other persons, religious practices are also closely attuned to one's bodily functions. Attention to physical well-being and state of mind, of the self or others, is seen as assisting one in achieving higher goals.

While the evidence of a positive relationship between religion and individual well-being continues to grow, religion does not serve the same function for all people.

Koole et al. (2010) caution, that while:

Orientation toward the whole person, integrative processing, and embodiment characterize most religions to some degree. Nevertheless, religious individuals may vary in the degree to which they incorporate these aspects. An intrinsic religious orientation, in which religious values are fully internalized, is highly compatible with implicit self-regulation. By contrast, an extrinsic religious orientation is oriented toward obtaining specific material or social rewards. Such instrumental forms of religiosity are more compatible with explicit rather than implicit self-regulation. Similarly, religiosity may take the form of fundamentalism, which advocates moral absolutism, literal interpretation of sacred texts, and repression of evil forces within and outside the self. Fundamentalism is more compatible with an analytic cognitive style and hence antithetical to implicit self-regulation. More compatible with implicit self-regulation is a quest orientation toward religion, which involves honestly facing existential questions in their complexity and is characterized by a more integrative cognitive style. (p. 98)

Another way of looking at how intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations impact essential psychological processes can be found in the work of Deci and Ryan (2000). Their self-determination theory (SDT), that was discussed in the prior chapter, addresses the “what” (i.e., content) and “why” (i.e., process) of goal pursuits in relation to

meeting human needs and motivating behavior. They hypothesize:

Different regulatory processes underlying goal pursuits are differentially associated with effective functioning and well-being and also that different goal contents have different relations to the quality of behavior and mental health, specifically because different regulatory processes and different goal contents are associated with differing degrees of need satisfaction. Social contexts and individual differences that support satisfaction of the basic needs facilitate natural growth processes including intrinsically motivated behavior and integration of extrinsic motivations, whereas those that forestall autonomy, competence, or relatedness are associated with poorer motivation, performance, and well-being. (p. 227)

For Deci and Ryan (2000), “Intrinsically motivated behaviors are those that are freely engaged out of interest without the necessity of separable consequences, and, to be maintained, they require satisfaction of the needs for autonomy and competence” (p. 233). Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, involves the extent to which one has internalized external regulation, making it a part of the identification aspects of the self.

Deci and Ryan explain that:

Like intrinsic motivation, *internalization* is an active, natural process in which individuals attempt to transform socially sanctioned mores or requests into personally endorsed values and self-regulations. It is the means through which individuals assimilate and reconstitute formerly external regulations so the individuals can be self-determined while enacting them. When the internalization process functions optimally, people will identify with the importance of social regulations, assimilate them into their integrated sense of self, and thus fully accept them as their own. In doing so, they will become more integrated not only intrapsychically, but also socially. (p. 236, italics in original)

Deci and Ryan (2000) have classified different types of regulation based on the degree of internalization. *External* regulation is where no internalization has taken place. *Introjected* regulation “represents a partial internalization in which regulations are in the person but have not really become part of the integrated set of motivations, cognitions, and affects that constitute the *self*” (p. 236, italics in original). *Identified* is where the

regulation has more fully been internalized and accepted as a part of the person's identity due to the underlying value of the behavior. "The resulting behavior would be more autonomous, although it would still be extrinsically motivated because the behavior would still be instrumental . . . rather than being done solely as a source of spontaneous enjoyment and satisfaction." *Integration* "is the fullest, most complete form of internalization of extrinsic motivation, for it not only involves identifying with the importance of behaviors but also integrating those identifications with other aspects of the self . . . the result is self-determined extrinsic motivation." This occurs when regulations have been fully accepted and brought into harmony or coherence with other aspects of one's values and identity.

With regard to religious behavior, Deci and Ryan (2000) draw upon research which examined various measures of psychological health and well-being, as well as assessed reasons why people engage in behaviors such as praying regularly or going to church. Results revealed that "religious behaviors themselves did not relate to well-being but the reasons people engaged in those religious behaviors did. Being more autonomous in their religious behaviors was associated with better mental health, but being more controlled was associated with poorer mental health" (p. 240). In another study, "religious parents who used a more autonomy-supportive as opposed to authoritarian style were more likely to engender identified rather than introjected beliefs." While SDT encompasses much more than religious behavior, its inclusion in Deci and Ryan's analysis is an indication of the significance of this domain with regard to human behavior.

While this area of study is still in its early stages and much more research is

needed to better understand what is going on, there is already ample evidence that it would be a serious omission to continue to ignore the relationship between religion and well-being as a component of SEL. If for no other reason, this approach also provides students with the vocabulary which is currently absent from the curriculum to foster development of a moral self and the tools for meaning making, resulting in the likelihood of greater self-actualization. Since for many people, religion already is an essential identity marker, recognizing the ways in which religion influences the underlying psychological processes that shape right behavior and human flourishing should be of utmost concern to both educators and parents.

#### **Potential Benefit to Society – Better Prepared Citizens**

Researchers have observed a consistent decrease in empathic concern and perspective-taking among American college students since 1979 (Konrath, O'Brien & Hsing, 2011). Similarly, based on interviews conducted in 2010, Gallup's annual Values and Beliefs survey found that "Americans are three times more likely to describe the current state of moral values in the United States as 'poor' than as 'excellent' or 'good.' Americans' assessment of U.S. morality has never been positive, but the current ratings rank among the worst Gallup has measured over the past nine years" (Jones, J., 2010, ¶ 1). After showing slight improvement in the 2011 survey, negativity moved back up in 2012 to levels which are similar to those reported in 2006. Today, "Americans are more than twice as likely to rate the state of moral values as 'poor' rather than as 'excellent' or 'good'" (Brown, A., 2012, ¶ 1). Only 20% of the Gallup survey respondents gave a rating of "excellent" or "good." Additionally, 73% of the respondents think the moral values in the country are getting worse. Findings such as these over the past couple

decades have given rise to renewed calls for schools to teach students how to act in a morally appropriate manner.

President Bill Clinton stated in his 1997 State of the Union Address: “Character education must be taught in our schools. We must teach children to be good citizens” (Bebeau, Rest, & Narvaez, 1999, p. 18). President George W. Bush campaigned on the promise of tripling the funding for character education that promoted values, such as “respect, responsibility, self-restraint, family commitment, civic duty, fairness, and compassion” (Prencipe & Helwig, 2002, p. 841). While funding did increase, it is doubtful that the promised level of funding was achieved during Bush’s presidency.

Yet, support for character education in the public schools remains high. In a study done in 2008, 36 states were identified as having laws which require or encourage character education and seven more indicate support but do not have legislation mandating it (Character Education Partnership, 2009). The actions taken by state legislatures may be more symbolic than substantive, particularly if little is done to prepare teachers for this work. Although, society wants schools to provide moral education, it provides ambiguous guidance for many of the reasons already discussed in this project.

Because the proposed SEL-religious studies curriculum addresses many of the short-comings of prior moral education efforts, as I argued in Chapter Three, I conclude that it will increase the capacity of schools to respond to the public’s desire for moral education and better prepared citizens. As indicated in Chapter Two, preparing students to be responsible citizens is one of the most common themes in the SEL literature (e.g. Cohen, 2006; Devaney, et al., 2005; Elias & Arnold, 2006; Fredericks, 2003; Zins &



Elias, 2007). Also discussed have been the calls for greater understanding and linkages between SEL and character education, as well as the potential for a convergence between SEL, character education, moral education, and citizenship education (Cohen, J., 2006; Elias, 2009; 2010; Elias et al., 2008; Novick et al., 2002; Walberg et al., 2004). The proposed curriculum reflects this convergence.

Additionally, the proposed curriculum also directly or indirectly addresses the top four areas identified in the 2012 Gallup Values and Beliefs survey as contributing to the state of moral values in the country. A lack of consideration, compassion, caring, tolerance, and respect of others was the most frequently cited category, followed by lack of faith or religion, lack of family structure, divorce, and kid's upbringing, and lack of morals (Brown, A., 20102). It should not come as any surprise to us that these qualities are lacking in our society, since the public schools have played little to no role in explicitly fostering them since the 1980s (McClellan, 1999).

As Macedo (2000) pointed out earlier, "we should not ignore the partisanship of our regime and the fact that it depends upon the existence of character traits that cannot be taken for granted" (p. 134). If the nation's youth are to learn to be considerate, compassionate, caring, and tolerant, as well as have respect for others and embrace a moral code of conduct, our schools must partner with parents to help inculcate these traits through deliberative educational efforts. Changes in family structure, particularly due to geographic mobility and the high rate of divorce (Brighthouse, 2006), all the more demand that schools resume their role in assisting with their student's upbringing. Additionally, as I have claimed throughout this project, the marginalization of faith and religion in the name of secular neutrality, and at times even open hostility to religion in modern secular

scholarship, have not helped matters either (Nord, 1995).

Recognizing parent support for implementation and ongoing involvement in the proposed SEL-religious studies curriculum as critical components provides the foundation upon which moral first principles can be established. In order to help ensure that these experiences are positive, it is essential that they emanate from the kind of neighborly love or affection described by various scholars throughout this project (including Epstein, 2010; Fredrickson, 2001; Freire, 1970/2000; Gilligan et al., 1988; Leiner, 2006; Levinson, 1999; Noddings, 1984/2003; Nussbaum, 2010; Taylor, C., 1989).

This will require that educators leading these efforts demonstrate a commitment to sharing power aimed at inclusive solutions regarding the best interest of the students, as articulated in the ethic of care advocated by Gilligan et al. (1988) and Noddings (1984/2003; 1993; 2002; 2006a), instead of ignoring the politics of power as has been a criticism of SEL implementation efforts to date (Hoffman, 2009). If the educators do this, I contend that these first principles over time will then extended to other areas of community life building upon the relationships and shared experiences first encountered in the schools.

Epstein (2010) articulates a similar approach to potentially confrontational interaction. He points out that “political negotiations, when they are that and that alone, don’t work” (p. 156). Instead, he argues that “love in the sense of caring” is required to counter “the hate, or indifference, or bitterness” that frequently accompanies political conflicts. In acknowledging that we are both emotional and rational beings, he maintains that we have the ability to choose love over hate. Epstein states:

Caring: I think it’s as good a definition as any for love. And that’s what I want to

offer to those who would be prejudiced and discriminate against me, that I care about you and indeed even love you anyway, and I too would rather die than hate you, though thank goodness many religious and secular martyrs alike have already come along and lived and worked and died so that I can hope not to have to chose [sic] between hatred and death. I want to find loving respect for you and live to tell the tale – and see, as Dr. King proclaimed, that you too will be transformed and we will have a double victory. (pp. 156-157)

While Epstein’s statement may seem a bit exaggerated, he is merely describing the experience of those who are frequently viewed as Other in our society, including homosexuals and those who do not believe in God(s). The desire for mutual respect and transformation that Epstein talks about are themes that have received considerable attention in this project (Brown, W., 2006; Freire, 1970/2000; Hunter, 1994; Keith, 2010; Kamat & Mathew, 2010; Mouffe, 2005; Todd, 2010). Commitment to these ideals are intertwined with the notion of reciprocity, another concept that has been discussed extensively (Brighouse, 2006; Diener, 1997; Gutmann, 1987/1999; Merry, 2005b; Nussbaum, 2010). These ideals are central elements of the proposed curriculum.

By providing both students and their parents the opportunity interact in ways that support these ideals will help to better prepare them to assume their role as citizens in a deliberative democracy. It will give them the chance to engage in “the give-and-take of critical argument about ethical and political choices” that Nussbaum (1997, p. 62) views as essential to world citizenship, and that Hunter (1994) sees as vital to the dialectic in transforming conflict from power politics aimed at winning artificially polarized legal and political contests to solutions that take into account people’s different points of view. As stated earlier, this approach provides legitimate channels for dissent that are necessary to prevent oppression and avoid other forms of violence when people who have such different deeply felt convictions come into contact with each other (Hunter, 1994; Keith,

2010; Mouffe, 2005; Skitka & Mullen, 2002).

The proposed model takes into consideration that sometimes differences will be so great that consensus will not be possible. In those situations, the established first principles will play a key role in redirecting the conflict to solutions that stress the shared horizon of significance based on the commonalities of value that have been agreed to (Taylor, C., 1991). This is consistent with Deiner's (1997) notion of a common morality based on unity with diversity. For example, by agreeing to value religious liberty, equality, and neighborly affection, all parties make a commitment to the dialogue, negotiation, and compromise central to living together (Noddings, 2002; Phillips, 2007). Schools are the perfect place for citizens to learn and practice this form of conflict resolution.

Helping students and other community members recognize the difference between political and moral conflicts could be useful in sorting out resolutions to the culture wars. Knowing that political conflicts arise over issues of power regarding who has the force to impose their will, that these conflicts generally involve majority rule over minority groups, and that the issues tend to be of an "us versus them" nature that often ends with the use of oppression and/or force to silence the other side may make those with opposing views more likely to seek other ways of framing their differences with people they see on a regular basis. It is important for students to learn that moral conflicts focus on the distinction between good and evil and the tension between liberty and unity regarding the rights of the individual and the common good, and that resolution of these issues over what is right versus wrong behavior cannot always be settled by majority rule.

Students also need to know that moral conflicts can also be about competing

conceptions of the good, as well as the primacy of incommensurable goods held by an individual or an entire group. As we have experienced, sorting out political from moral conflicts may be one of the greatest challenges to democracy. Armed with the vocabulary that the proposed curriculum can help to furnish will prepare students and other community members to engage in these discussions and discern the most constructive strategies for resolving these conflicts (Hunter, 1994; Smith et al., 2011; Taylor, C., 1989).

Several sources have acknowledged the benefits of attempting to resolve contentious issues at the local level because the parties can more easily allow for individual accommodations and/or exemptions from standard requirements or universal principles (including Bruner, 1996; Bryk et al., 2010; Fabelo et al., 2011; Feldman, 2005; Feinberg, 2006; Grant, 1988; Greenawalt, 2005; Gutmann, 1987/1999; Isgur, 2008; Marshall, 2006; Noddings, 1984/2003; 2002; USCCB, 2011; Viteritti, 2007). I maintain that the deliberation and judgment skills acquired in school settings will increase the likelihood that individuals will demonstrate increased civic participation in other areas, as this has been the result in similar situations (Bryk et al., 2010; Putnam et al., 2010). Accommodations worked out within caring school settings then have the potential to set in motion a community culture for constructive, nonviolent responses to differences encountered in other areas of public life. I assert that this process therefore may be the best avenue available to us for defusing the culture wars.

Acknowledging that religion, faith, and spiritual matters have both private and public dimensions, coupled with increased dispositions and skills to distinguish between moral and political conflicts will better enable educators, students, their parents, and

other community members to live together while still openly confronting their deepest differences regarding right behavior. As stated earlier in this chapter, by fostering an environment that acknowledges that all moral codes depend on faith, where faith is understood as an attitude of hope in that which cannot or has not been proved, centered around the belief that all moral human beings have the desire to know and do what is right and good, provides a baseline upon which people – religious and nonreligious – can come together and fashion a common morality (Diener, 1997; Epstein, 2010; Macedo, 2000).

Increasing the religious literacy of individuals has been demonstrated to reduce religious intolerance and bigotry (Lester, 2007; Moore, D. 2007; Rosenblith, 2008; Putnam et al., 2010). Given the current climate of fear that Nussbaum (2012) describes and the tendencies of people to all too easily turn “away from good values and laws, in time a time of genuine insecurity and threat” (p. 244), as well the potential dark side of moral commitments when too closely aligned with political conflicts (Eagleton, 2009; Skitka & Mullen, 2002), educators have a choice to continue to follow the path of controversy avoidance and watch the moral fabric of the nation continue to disintegrate or to confront that which is difficult but paramount to sustaining our nation and its ideals.

If modern societies are to “feed the forces that lead to cultures of equality and respect,” rather than continue to “feed the forces that lead to violence and dehumanization,” as Nussbaum (2010, p. 143) warns, then we must provide our children with an education that enables them to interpret and debate the impact the moral dimensions of capitalism, technology, and a consumer-driven global economy have on all of humanity. “If the real clash of civilizations is,” as Nussbaum believes, “a clash within

the individual soul, as greed and narcissism contend against respect and love,” and if we hope to change the trajectory of this rapidly losing battle, then we must implement a model of SEL that incorporates religious pluralism as an essential element.

I am confident that this approach is necessary if we are truly committed to reversing Descartes’ error and reconnecting the head with the heart and producing citizens who demonstrate morally appropriate actions and ethical decisions. If we are to equip twenty-first century students with the background knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving, and ethical judgment skills required for full participation in the social, political, and economic spheres of society, then they must understand that right behavior involves acknowledgement of moral and religious pluralism united with a commitment to a common morality that has faith in the ideals of religious liberty, equality, and neighborly affection.

### **Recommendations for Further Study and Action**

In commenting on the current trends in SEL, Noddings (2006b) states, “We need to turn a diagnostic eye on ourselves as educators. Perhaps we have become too dependent on rules, strategies, and recipes” (p. 241). While philosophy, psychology, moral education, citizenship, religion, and SEL scholars exist in separate silos within the academy, the arguments I have made demonstrate the need for greater interdisciplinary dialogue and pathways between silos to study and design training and curriculum materials to support the proposed SEL-religious studies model. Educators and scholars in these fields must work together to:

- (1) Improve public understanding of the First Amendment, the religious make-up of the United States, and the U.S. Department of Education directives regarding religion

in public schools.

(2) Learn more about public attitudes regarding moral and religious pluralism in order to determine if the brute fact of this situation has resulted in a sufficient shift in thinking to make the proposed curriculum possible to implement without insurmountable objections.

(3) Implement demonstration projects to test the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed SEL-religious studies model.

(4) Design structures and train facilitators, based on the findings from the demonstration project, to work in local communities with educators, parents, and community members to launch and sustain the proposed SEL-religious studies curriculum, giving particular attention to processes for establishing and maintaining agreement on the moral principles to serve as the foundation for this curriculum, along with the channels for dissent and processes for resolving conflicts that are likely to arise.

(5) Develop and provide interdisciplinary training for pre-service and ongoing professional development workshops and seminars for in-service K-12 educators so that they can become the “Renaissance” people we need to do this work (Noddings, 2006a) In order to do this, educators must learn how to: (a) identify and understand their own feelings, attitudes, and beliefs, particularly related to morality, spirituality, and religion; (b) understand the legal and pedagogical issues related to teaching about American ideals regarding religious liberty, equality, and neighborly affection; (c) recognize the role religion has played in the past and continues to play within their major subject areas and across fields; (d) effectively engage families and community members in SEL in ways that are culturally sensitive and inclusive of traditionally marginalized groups, including



religious minorities, atheists, agnostics, Humanists, and homosexuals; (e) support the moral development of their students in a pluralist society; (f) help students and their parents develop the dispositions, language, and skills required to speak knowledgably and civilly in public discourse about moral and religious similarities and differences; and (g) provide opportunities for students and their parents to learn how to distinguish between moral and political conflicts and to transform these conflicts into sustainable, peaceful accommodations between parties with differing viewpoints.

(6) Assemble and disseminate SEL-religious studies interdisciplinary curriculum materials to support ongoing teacher and facilitator training, as well as age appropriate materials that enable K-12 students to talk about the role religion has, or does not have, in their own code of conduct, as well as engage in balanced discussions about religion's influence throughout history and in our present time on the behavior of others as a means to both positive and negative ends. Effort must be made to make moral assumptions clear and that multiple interpretations of the good life and the good society are incorporated in lesson plans and classroom materials.

(7) Continue to explore and develop various methods for assessing instructional strategies and student progress in order to determine which instructional strategies and materials work best to produce the desired student outcomes.

(8) Study differences in the pedagogy and materials used to teach about moral and religious pluralism in both religious and public schools, as well as their impact on student outcomes.

These are but a few examples of the steps that might lead us closer to achieving the results promised by the SEL advocates and the benefits to students and society

described in this project. Before these steps can be taken, educators must decide if they are willing to take on this challenge voluntarily or if they will wait until they are state mandated to do so. Our kids and our society are depending on us to demonstrate right behavior on this most important question.

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## VITA

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