

Close-Up #13

Developing Empathy in Children and Youth

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Moral imagination is the capacity to empathize with others, i.e., not just to feel for oneself, but to feel with and for others. This is something that education ought to cultivate and that citizens ought to bring to politics.

--McCollough 1992

INTRODUCTION

"Do We Really Want to Produce Good People?" asks education professor, Dr. Nel Noddings, in the title of a 1987 article. Do we concur with philosopher Martin Buber's conviction that "education worthy of the name is essentially education of character"? Is it the business of the schools to seek to develop in young people the character traits we associate with goodness-- traits such as kindness, generosity, compassion, and helpfulness?

These are far-reaching questions; and educators, legislators and the public can be expected to continue expressing different--and sometimes heated--points of view about the teaching of "values" and "morals" in the schools.

The present report will not take on the full weight of these numerous and complex issues. Instead, the intent here is to offer some insights from the research about one aspect of "goodness" that is of particular current interest to educators and society--the quality of empathy.

If we ask, "what are the characteristics of a capable, successful learner?" one view that is gaining increasing currency among educators is the notion that successful learners are knowledgeable, self-determined, strategic, and empathetic* (Jones 1990). That is, in addition to having (1) knowledge, including critical and creative faculties; (2) motivation to learn and confidence about themselves as learners; and (3) tools and strategies for acquiring, evaluating, and applying knowledge; successful learners also have (4) insight into the motives, feelings, and behavior of others and the ability to communicate this understanding--in a word, empathy.

Jones (1990) identifies some of the reasons that empathetic understanding is seen as an important trait of the successful learner:

- Researchers and other writers use the word "empathetic" and the word "empathic" to designate a person or response characterized by empathy. Both are correct.

Successful students often recognize that much of their success involves their ability to

communicate with others...they are also able to view themselves and the world through the eyes of others. This means....examining beliefs and circumstances of others, keeping in mind the goal of enhanced understanding and appreciation....Successful students value sharing experiences with persons of different backgrounds as enriching their lives (p. 19).

Regardless of conflicting views about the appropriate place, if any, of "values education" in the schools, people are generally able to agree that developing this capacity to understand, appreciate, and communicate meaningfully with others is an important and desirable goal. This enables us to move away from our differences of opinion about the specific CONTENT of "good character," focusing instead on the PROCESS whereby people come to care about one another and communicate that caring through their behavior.

DEFINITION

"Unfortunately," writes Pecukonis (1990) "the literature has been confounded by definitional controversy. The essence of this disagreement is the extent to which either cognitive processes or affective experiences formulate the empathic response" (p. 60). Readers of the present report will be spared the details of this controversy. Suffice it to say that most of the psychologists and educators whose work was consulted in preparation for this report agree that empathy includes both elements. As Gallo (1989) puts it:

...an empathic response is one which contains both a cognitive and an affective dimension....the term empathy [is] used in at least two ways; to mean a predominantly cognitive response, understanding how another feels, or to mean an affective communion with the other (p. 100).

Carl Rogers (1975) wrote:

...the state of empathy or being empathic is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and means which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the *æa*s if' condition (Quoted in Gallo 1989).

And THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE defines empathy as "understanding so intimate that the feelings, thoughts and motives of one are readily comprehended by another."

In addition to the shared feeling and accurate understanding dimensions of empathy, some writers also focus on the empathetic person's communication of understanding to the person whose "internal frame of reference" he or she has grasped. Thus, some definitions include this element, e.g., Haynes and Avery's characterization of empathy as:

...the ability to recognize and understand another person's perceptions and feelings, and to accurately convey that understanding through an accepting response (p. 527).

Such a response may involve verbal confirmation of understanding and/or supportive looks and body language, and prosocial behavior such as sharing goods or providing help.

Because different writers emphasize different aspects of empathy, the measures of empathy used in the research include assessments of subjects' emotional states, their cognitive perceptions, and/or their behavior.

THE LITERATURE ON EMPATHY

This paper is the result of a review of fifty-eight articles, books, and other publications. Thirty-seven of these are reports of research studies or reviews, while twenty-one are writings of a more general nature. These latter include, for example, discussions of the nature, source, and

development of empathy in people and descriptions of activities designed to enhance empathy.

Of the research documents, thirty-two are studies or evaluations, four are reviews or meta-analyses, and one reports results of both a review and evaluation. Subjects of the research are preschoolers (six studies), elementary students (fourteen), secondary students (four), elementary and secondary students (six), university students and other adults (six), and the age/grade of students in one study was not specified.

Both sexes and various racial/ethnic groups are represented among the research subjects. Of the school-age participants, most are students in regular school programs, but special education students are also represented, as are delinquent and other incarcerated youth. Most subjects are American, although the research base also includes studies involving Finns, Israelis, Australians, and Canadians.

Practices and treatments whose effects were investigated include empathy training (nineteen studies), childrearing practices and other home factors (eight), and classroom strategies and program designs (seven). Three studies identified correlations between empathy and other traits.

Looking at outcome areas, twenty-one of the reports were concerned with subjects' scores on measures of cognitive and/or affective empathy. Other outcome areas include:

- Prosocial behavior (e.g., sharing, helping, comforting, making reparations)--nineteen reports
- Cross-racial, -ethnic, or -nationality acceptance and respect--four reports
- Additional indicators, such as school attendance, self-esteem, self-disclosure, self-control, and aggression--five reports.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

CHILDREARING PRACTICES

Researchers have identified relationships between the use of certain parental childrearing practices and the development of empathetic feelings, understanding, and social behavior in children:

- **MOTHERS** whose behavior toward their preschool children is **RESPONSIVE, NONPUNITIVE, AND NONAUTHORITARIAN** have children who have higher levels of affective and cognitive empathy and prosocial behavior (Eisenberg, Lennon, and Roth 1983; Eisenberg and Mussen 1978; Kestenbaum, Farber, and Sroufe 1989; and Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, and King 1979).
- **REASONING WITH CHILDREN**, even quite small ones, about the effects of their behavior on others and the importance of sharing and being kind is effective in promoting empathy and prosocial behavior (Clarke 1984; Kohn 1991; Ladd, Lange, and Stremmel 1983; and Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, and King 1979).
- **PARENTAL MODELING OF EMPATHETIC, CARING BEHAVIOR** toward children--and toward others in the children's presence--is strongly related to children's development of prosocial attitudes and behavior (Eisenberg and Mussen 1978; Kohn 1991; McDevitt, Lennon, and Kopriva 1991; and Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, and King 1979).
- **WHEN CHILDREN HAVE HURT OTHERS** or otherwise caused them distress, research supports the practice of giving explanations as to why the behavior is harmful and suggestions for how to make amends (Kohn 1991; and Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, and King 1979).
- **PARENTS ENCOURAGING SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN TO DISCUSS THEIR FEELINGS AND PROBLEMS** is positively related to the development of empathy in

those children (Clarke 1984).

Researchers have also identified childrearing practices which are **NEGATIVELY** related to the development of empathy:

- **THREATS AND/OR PHYSICAL PUNISHMENTS** meted out in an attempt to improve children's behavior are counterproductive (Clarke 1984; Eisenberg-Berg and Mussen 1978; Kohn 1991; and Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, and King 1979).
- **INCONSISTENT CARE** (e.g., inconsistency in parents' reactions to children's emotional needs) and **PARENTAL REJECTION/WITHDRAWAL** in times of children's emotional needs are both associated with low levels of empathy on the parts of the children (Kestenbaum, Farber, and Sroufe 1989).
- Children from **HOMES IN WHICH THEIR FATHERS PHYSICALLY ABUSE THEIR MOTHERS** have low levels of empathy. For example, they are typically unable to recognize the emotional states of other people and respond appropriately (Hinchey and Gavelek 1982).
- The provision of **EXTRINSIC REWARDS OR "BRIBES"** to improve children's behavior is counterproductive. As with other research on extrinsic rewards, researchers have found that providing payoffs for prosocial behavior focuses attention on the reward rather than the reason for it and that the desired behaviors tend to lessen or disappear when the reward is withdrawn (Kohn 1991).

EMPATHY TRAINING

Research supports the provision of empathy training to enhance empathetic feelings and understanding and increase prosocial behavior. This applies to children of all ages and to adults, and characterizes both fullscale empathy training programs and short-term treatments. The specific components within empathy training approaches that are associated with increases in empathy include:

- **TRAINING IN INTERPERSONAL PERCEPTION AND EMPATHETIC RESPONDING.** A cognitive approach, in which students learn what empathy is, how it develops, how to recognize different emotive states in themselves and others, and how to respond to others positively, enhances their empathetic perceptions and skills (Black and Phillips 1982; Herbek and Yammarino 1990; Kalliopuska 1983; Kremer and Dietzen 1991; Pecukonis 1990; and Perry, Bussey, and Freiberg 1981).
- **INITIAL FOCUS ON ONE'S OWN FEELINGS.** When seeking to increase the ability of children to assume another's perspective, it is most fruitful to have them focus first on their own feelings--the different kinds of feelings they have and what feelings are associated with what kinds of situations (Black and Phillips 1982; and Dixon 1980).
- **FOCUS ON SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ONESELF AND OTHERS.** Activities which focus children's attention on similarities between themselves and another person (or other persons) is effective in increasing affective and cognitive empathy (Black and Phillips 1982; Brehm, Fletcher, and West 1988; Clarke 1984; Dixon 1980; and Hughes, Tingle, and Sawin 1981). Identifying these similarities is the logical next step following the focus on one's own feelings. As Brehm, Fletcher, and West (1988) point out:

Virtually all considerations of the empathic process have noted the close connections between responding empathically to another person and perceiving that person as similar to oneself (p. 8).

By way of example, Hahn (1980) found that crosscultural empathy is enhanced if classroom activities focus first on the similarities between other cultures and one's own society and only later begin calling attention to differences.

- **ROLE-TAKING OR ROLE-PLAYING.** Activities which call for children or adults to

assume the role of a real or fictional person and to imagine or act out that person's feelings and/or behavior are effective in increasing both affective and cognitive empathy (Barak, et al. 1987; Black and Phillips 1982; Herbek and Yammarino 1990; Kremer and Dietzen 1991; Morgan 1983; and Underwood and Moore 1982). Increases in empathy are noted even when children are asked to imagine the point of view of an animal, plant, or inanimate object.

A special case of role-taking and identification of similarities with others is a collection of activities which has been used to increase able-bodied students' UNDERSTANDING OF AND EMPATHY FOR THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED.

Robinson (1979) describes the content and beneficial results of a program in which students hear handicapped speakers, become familiar with prosthetics and other appliances used by the handicapped, and engage in roletaking experiences which approximate handicapping conditions. The outcome of these activities is that participating children:

...began to be able to look beyond the handicaps, realizing that the handicap is not the person (p. 25).

- **ONGOING PRACTICE IN IMAGINING/PERCEIVING ANOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE.** Repeated practice at taking another's perspective is more effective than one-shot or infrequent efforts to do so (Black and Phillips 1982; Haynes and Avery 1979; Kalliopuska 1983; Kremer and Dietzen 1991; and Pecukonis 1990). For many people, including the very young, the ability to imagine and gain insight into another person's point of view does not come easily. Sustained practice at role- or perspective-taking is an effective means to increasing levels of empathy.
- **EXPOSURE TO EMOTIONALLY AROUSING STIMULI.** Exposure to stimuli such as portrayals of misfortune, deprivation, or distress on the part of others tends to increase empathetic feelings and responses (Barnett et al. 1982; Howard and Barnett 1981; Pecukonis 1990; and Perry, Bussey, and Freiberg 1981). Encouragement by trainers or experimenters to think about others and their needs also stimulates these feelings and responses.
- **POSITIVE TRAIT ATTRIBUTION.** Positive trait attribution--or "dispositional praise"--refers to the practice of emphasizing to children that the reason they exhibit prosocial behavior is that it is their nature to do so. Positive trait attribution has been shown to be a powerful means of enhancing empathetic understanding and behavior.

For example, a teacher or experimenter might say to a child, "I'll bet you shared with Susie because you're a nice person who likes to make other children happy." Researchers (e.g., Kohn 1991; Mills and Grusek 1989; and Perry, Bussey, and Freiberg 1981) have found that reinforcing to children that they have a certain positive trait within them increases those children's performance of behaviors congruent with that trait. Kohn (1991) writes:

...the teacher's goal should not be simply to produce a given behavior...but to help that child see himself or herself as the kind of person who is responsible and caring. From this shift in self-concept will come lasting behavior and values that are not contingent on the presence of someone to dispense threats or bribes (p. 501).

- **MODELING EMPATHETIC BEHAVIOR.** Just as the research on childrearing shows that parental modeling of empathetic speech and actions enhances children's empathy and prosocial behavior, the empathy training research shows that when teachers (trainers, experimenters, etc.) model desired values, children are more likely to adopt these than when they are merely exhorted to behave in a certain way (Kohn 1991; and Kremer and Dietzen 1991).
- **STUDYING FAMOUS EMPATHETIC PERSONS.** Learning activities which focus students' attention on the lives and achievements of famous empathetic persons have been

shown to increase children's desire to be like these people and to take on attitudes and behaviors associated with them (Dixon 1980). People who have been the focus of such learning activities include Florence Nightingale, Martin Luther King, Jr., Albert Schweitzer, and Mother Theresa.

In addition to increasing empathetic feelings, understanding, and behavior, empathy training has also been shown to produce other positive outcomes. For example, empathy training has led to increased willingness on the part of older students to be open and self-revealing (Haynes and Avery 1979) and to take everyone's needs into account when dealing with conflict situations (Kohn 1991). Better teamwork and greater job satisfaction have followed empathy training provided to adults (Herbek and Yammarino 1990).

Other and equally significant outcomes have been noted as a result of empathy training. Discussing these requires attention to some general findings from the empathy research, as follows.

EMPATHY AND GENDER. Generally speaking, females of all ages exhibit higher levels of empathy--particularly affective empathy--than do males (Barnett, et al. 1980; Borden, Karr, and Caldwell-Colbert 1988; Eisenberg-Berg and Mussen 1978; McDevitt, Lennon, and Kopriva 1991; Mills and Grusec 1989; Siegal 1985, etc.). While there is not a great deal of research on the differential effects of childrearing behaviors and empathy training on males and females, the work of some researchers (e.g., Eisenberg-Berg and Mussen 1978; Haynes and Avery 1979; and Clarke 1984) indicates that empathetic modeling and training have potential for reducing the gap between the empathy levels of boys/men and girls/women.

EMPATHY AND AGE. Research clearly demonstrates that adults exhibit greater degrees of empathetic feeling, understanding, and responsiveness than children, and that older children are more empathetic and prosocial than very young ones (Ellis 1982; Hughes, Tingle, and Sawin 1981; Kalliopuska 1983; Ladd, Lange, and Stremmel 1983; McDevitt, Lennon, and Kopriva 1991; and Underwood and Moore 1982).

Older youth are better able to recognize emotive states in other people, more capable of relating to and sharing others' feelings, able to feel empathy for more diverse kinds of people, and more willing to express their empathetic response in generosity toward others. The developmental level of very young children, by contrast, is characterized by greater self-involvement, frequent objectification of others, and a tendency to experience and act on empathetic feelings only toward people very much like themselves in age, ethnicity, and gender.

Underwood and Moore (1982) identify role-taking capacity as the basis for the greater levels of empathy/prosocial behavior one sees in older children as compared with younger ones:

The developmental mechanism that is used most frequently to explain age-related increases in altruistic behavior is the increasing ability of the child to take the point of view of the other person (p. 144).

Despite these developmental differences, researchers have found that empathy training--including even very simple things such as calling attention to less fortunate children or pointing out to a child that he/she has the power to make someone else happy by sharing--can increase young children's empathy scores and incidences of prosocial behavior. Analogous to the research finding that empathy training produces greater increases in the empathetic understanding and behavior of males than females is the finding that younger children's empathy levels increase more than those of older youth following activities designed to increase empathy (Iannotti 1978; and Kalliopuska 1983). In both cases, the lower the initial scores on empathy measures, the greater the change following empathy training or instructions.

EMPATHY AND ACADEMIC OUTCOMES. One of the arguments against character-related educational activities is that they take precious time away from the development of basic and

higher-order cognitive skills. The research, however, shows an impressive correlation between students' training and skills in empathetic understanding and their academic performance:

- Researchers (e.g., Bonner and Aspy 1984) have identified significant correlations between students scores on measures of empathetic understanding and their grade point averages.
- Program evaluation results have shown that schools where students are involved in programs designed to increase empathy and create "caring communities" have higher scores than comparison schools on measures of higher-order reading comprehension (Kohn 1991).
- Review of research related to empathy training/instruction indicates that this instruction enhances both critical thinking skills and creative thinking (Gallo 1989). Gallo writes:

...the empirical evidence establishes that it is not just moral reasoning but reasoning generally which benefits from empathic understanding (p. 100).

Gallo goes on to explain that "the attributes which characterize empathy correlate with those of effective critical thinking and imagination" (p. 114). She notes that role-taking, a key feature of empathy training, engenders the kinds of mental habits we associate with astute thinking. Role-taking:

- Fosters insight into different perspectives and promotes genuine open-mindedness
- Discourages hasty and superficial problem examination
- Facilitates construction of more fully elaborated-- and frequently novel--problem models
- Discourages belief rigidity
- Encourages cognitive and personal flexibility
- Practices persistent probing, engaged examination of an issue in alternation with flexible relinquishment and reflective distance (p. 112-113).

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES AND PROGRAM DESIGNS

In addition to programs and activities specifically intended to promote empathy, researchers have also identified several classroom strategies and program designs which tend to foster increases in empathy and prosocial behavior.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING. Over the last decade a great deal has been written about the academic and social benefits of cooperative learning. From a research perspective, the major finding has been that organizing learners into teams whose members differ from one another in race/ethnicity, gender, ability level, and other attributes, results in significantly greater prosocial interaction among these different learners (Johnson, Johnson, and Anderson 1983; Kohn 1991; and Slavin 1985). Following participation in cooperative learning groups, students report and are observed to exhibit:

- More accepting and respectful attitudes toward people whose race/ethnicity, gender, ability level, socioeconomic level, ability-disability status, etc. is different from one's own
- Increased ability to relate to more kinds of people
- A more sophisticated ability to imagine other people's points of view
- Greater understanding and appreciation of the different strengths that diverse people can bring to a learning team
- More and deeper cross-racial and -ethnic friendships.

Kohn (1991) writes:

Cooperation is an essentially humanizing experience that predisposes participants to take a benevolent view of others. It allows them to transcend egocentric and objectifying postures and encourages trust, sensitivity, open communication and prosocial activity (p. 504).

CROSS-AGE AND PEER TUTORING. Students' empathetic feelings, understanding, and behavior have been shown to increase as a result of serving as peer or cross-age tutors (Morgan 1983; and Yogeve and Ronen 1982). Following their study of the effects of secondary-level cross-age tutoring, Yogeve and Ronen conclude that it:

...significantly increases the tutors' empathy, altruism, and self-esteem...To help younger students, the tutors must develop an empathic understanding of the tutees, show a certain extent of self-confidence in their relationships, and appreciate in general the intrinsic benefits of help giving (p. 267).

HUMANISTIC/PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL APPROACHES FOR THE EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED. Finally, the research on different approaches to educating emotionally disturbed children indicates that structures congruent with the empathy-enhancing activities we have been discussing are far preferable to other structures. For example, Morgan (1983) studied the relative effects of a humanistic/psychoeducational model and a behavioral/learning model. The former, characterized by group meetings, a focus on how one's behavior affects others, peer tutoring, and role playing, was related to greater empathy, responsibility, and selfcontrol than the latter, which featured token reinforcement for good work and behavior, behavioral charting, and punishment for poor work habits and behavior.

SUMMARY

To review, then, findings identified in the research base on empathy development are as follows:

- Along with knowledge, self-determination, and strategy utilization, **EMPATHY** is coming to be regarded by more and more educators as a **KEY ATTRIBUTE OF A SUCCESSFUL LEARNER**.
- **EMPATHY** is typically **DEFINED** as including: (1) the **AFFECTIVE CAPACITY** to share in another's feelings, and (2) the **COGNITIVE ABILITY** to understand another's feelings and perspective. Definitions sometimes also include the **ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE** one's empathetic feelings and understanding to another by verbal and/or nonverbal means.
- **CHILDREARING PRACTICES POSITIVELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING AND BEHAVIOR** include:
 - Responsive, nonpunitive, nonauthoritarian behavior of mothers toward their preschool children
 - Explaining to children the effects of their behavior on others
 - Pointing out to children that they have the power to make others happy by being kind and generous to them
 - Parental modeling of empathetic, caring behavior
 - Explaining to children who have hurt or distressed others why their behavior is harmful and giving them suggestions for making amends to those hurt
 - Encouraging school-age children to discuss their feelings and problems with parents.
- **CHILDREARING PRACTICES WHICH ARE NEGATIVELY RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING AND BEHAVIOR** include:
 - Threats and physical punishments aimed at inducing children to "behave properly"
 - Inconsistent behavior toward children's expression of emotional needs or rejection/withdrawal in response to those needs
 - Home situations in which children's mothers are physically abused by their fathers
 - The provision of extrinsic rewards or bribes aimed at eliciting "good" behavior from children.
- **EMPATHY INSTRUCTIONS AND TRAINING ENHANCE AFFECTIVE AND**

COGNITIVE EMPATHY in both children and adults, as well as leading to MORE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR. Specific instructional/training components shown to be related to these desirable outcomes include:

- Training in interpersonal perception and empathetic responding--what empathy is, how it develops, how to recognize and respond to others' emotive states, etc.
- Activities which focus initially on one's own feelings as a point of departure for relating to the feelings of others
- Activities which focus on similarities between oneself and one's feelings and the selves and feelings of others
- Role-taking/role-playing activities in which one imagines and acts out the role of another
- Sustained practice in imagining/perceiving another's perspective
- Exposure to emotionally arousing stimuli, such as portrayal of misfortune, deprivation, or distress
- Expressions of positive trait attribution/dispositional praise; that is, reinforcing to children that positive, prosocial traits are part of their nature
- Modeling of empathetic behavior by teachers, trainers, experimenters and other adults with whom the child comes in contact
- Activities that focus on the lives of famous empathetic persons (e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Theresa).
- EMPATHY INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING have also been shown to lead to increases in PERSONAL OPENNESS, MINDFULNESS OF OTHERS' NEEDS in conflict situations, IMPROVED TEAMWORK, and GREATER JOB SATISFACTION.
- FEMALES exhibit HIGHER LEVELS OF EMPATHY THAN MALES; however, there is some evidence that empathy training reduces this difference.
- EMPATHY AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR INCREASE WITH AGE; however, empathy training has been shown to reduce the differential in empathy between very young children and older ones.
- In general, the HIGHER PEOPLE'S SCORES ARE ON MEASURES OF EMPATHY AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR, THE HIGHER THEIR SCORES ON MEASURES OF CRITICAL, HIGHER-ORDER THINKING. Role-taking, in particular, enhances openmindedness and reasoning capabilities.
- CLASSROOM STRATEGIES AND PROGRAM DESIGNS WHICH ARE POSITIVELY RELATED TO EMPATHY AND PROSOCIAL INTERACTIONS among people in general and among different racial/ethnic groups, academic ability levels, the sexes, the differently abled, socioeconomic groups, etc., include:
 - Cooperative learning structures involving learning teams made up of representatives of these various groups
 - Cross-age and peer tutoring.
- EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHILDREN EXHIBIT GREATER EMPATHY AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR when taught in learning environments featuring COMPONENTS KNOWN TO PROMOTE THESE QUALITIES--focus on how one's behavior affects others, role-taking, etc.
- Learning environments characterized by EXTRINSIC REWARDS, PUNISHMENTS, AND BEHAVIORAL CHARTING ARE NEGATIVELY RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY/PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHILDREN.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of school-controllable factors related to the development of empathy can help to lay the groundwork for the growth of other positive traits, including skill in reasoning and

communication.

Attending to the development of empathetic capabilities can also respond to this report's opening question with an affirmative answer. One way of expressing this affirmation--and the one with which this investigation will conclude--is Alfie Kohn's comment on Martin Buber's statement regarding "education of character":

He did not mean that schools should develop a unit on values or moral reasoning and glue it onto the existing curriculum. He did not mean that problem children should be taught how to behave. He meant that the very profession of teaching calls on us to try to produce not merely good learners but good people (1991, p. 497).

KEY REFERENCES

Barak, A.; Engle, C.; Katzir, L.; and Fisher, W. A. "Increasing the Level of Empathic Understanding by Means of a Game." *SIMULATION & GAMES* 18/4 (1987): 458-470.

Reports the results of a study to determine whether participation in an empathy training game would increase participants' empathic understanding. Participants exhibited more empathic understanding than controls.

Barnett, M. A.; Howard, J. A.; Melton, E. M.; and Dino, G. A. "Effect of Inducing Sadness about Self or Other on Helping Behavior in High- and Low-empathic Children." *CHILD DEVELOPMENT* 53/2 (1982): 920-923.

Compares the altruistic behavior of sixth graders in different experimental conditions. One finding: highly empathic children who were invited to reflect upon a sad incident involving a friend engaged in significantly more helping behavior than children in other cells of the experiment.

Barnett, M. A.; King, L. M.; Howard, J. A.; and Dino, G. A. "Empathy in Young Children: Relation to Parents' Empathy, Affection, and Emphasis on the Feelings of Others." *DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY* 16/3 (1980): 243-244.

Examines relationships between the empathy scores/behaviors of parents and the empathy scores of their 4-6-year-old children. A positive relationship was found between parents' and daughters' empathy scores.

Barnett, M. A.; Matthews, K. A.; and Howard, J. A. "Relationship Between Competitiveness and Empathy in 6- and 7-Year-Olds." *DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY* 15/2 (1979): 221-222.

Tests the hypothesis that preparing first graders to play a game in a competitive manner would result in lower empathy scores than orienting them to play a game in a cooperative or neutral manner. No relationships were observed between kind of orientation and level of empathy.

Black, H., and Phillips, S. "An Intervention Program for the Development of Empathy in Student Teachers." *THE JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY* 112 (1982): 159-168.

Describes a program designed to increase the empathetic behavior of student teachers and compares the scores of program participants on different aspects of empathy with the scores of nonparticipants. Results were mixed.

Bonner, T. D., and Aspy, D. N. "A Study of the Relationship Between Student Empathy and GPA." *HUMANISTIC EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT* 22/4 (1984): 149- 154.

Reports on a study comparing the scores of secondary students on measures of empathy with their grade point averages. A significant and positive relationship was found.

Borden, L. A. ; Karr, S. K.; and Caldwell-Colbert, A. T. "Effects of a University Rape Prevention Program on Attitudes and Empathy Toward Rape." *JOURNAL OF COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT* 29/2 (1988): 132-136.

Studies the relationship between pre- and postparticipation in a rape prevention program on the attitudes toward rape and levels of empathy toward rapists and victims held by male and female students. The only significant correlation was that female students had higher empathy for rape victims than males.

Brehm, S. S.; Fletcher, B. L.; and West, V. "Effects of Empathy Instructions on First-Graders' Liking of Other People." *CHILD STUDY JOURNAL* 11/1 (1981): 1-15.

Examines, in two experiments, the effects of "empathy instructions" on the attitudes of first graders toward characters in a story tape. Results were mixed. One finding: empathy increased when a story character experienced a negative outcome.

Clarke, P. "What Kind of Discipline is Most Likely to Lead to Empathic Behaviour in Classrooms?" *HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHER* 19/4 (1984): 240-241.

Reviews research on home- and school-based disciplinary practices which are associated with greater and lesser expressions of empathy on the parts of children and older youth. Draws implications for classroom practice based on findings about the efficacy of empathy training.

Dixon, D. A. "The Caring Curriculum." *SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY* 67/4 (1980): 13-15.

Describes the purpose, activities, and outcomes of The Caring Curriculum, a program intended to foster the development of empathy in elementary students, following its implementation in schools in St. Louis and in the province of Quebec. Several beneficial effects were noted.

Eisenberg, N.; Lennon, R.; and Roth, K. "Prosocial Development: A Longitudinal Study." *DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY* 19/6 (1983): 846-855.

Looks at relationships among prosocial moral judgment, prohibition-oriented moral judgment, and maternal child rearing practices with children of different ages. One finding: supportive, nonpunitive, nonauthoritarian child rearing practices were positively related to mature moral judgment.

Eisenberg-Berg, N., and Mussen, P. "Empathy and Moral Development in Adolescence." *DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY* 14/2 (1978): 185-186.

Compares the empathy ratings of 72 senior high school students with their ratings on two moral development measures (moral reasoning and helping) and with parental socialization practices. A positive relationship between empathy and moral reasoning were noted for both sexes; and warm, supportive, nonauthoritarian maternal behaviors were positively related with high empathy in boys.

Hahn, S. L. "Let's Try a Positive Approach." *FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANNALS* 13/5 (1980): 415-417.

Cites research indicating that students' attitudes toward foreign cultures are more

positive if classroom activities begin by stressing similarities between the native and foreign culture rather than focusing on differences. Identifies and describes classroom activities that can foster cross-cultural empathy.

Haynes, L. A., and Avery, A. W. "Training Adolescents in Self-Disclosure and Empathy Skills." *JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY* 26/6 (1979): 526-530.

Compares scores on measures of self-disclosure and empathic understanding of high school juniors who participated in a training program in these areas with the scores of those who did not. Experimental students significantly outperformed controls.

Herbek, T. A., and Yammarino, F. J. "Empathy Training for Hospital Staff Nurses." *GROUP & ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES* 15/3 (1990): 279-295.

Compares the empathy-scale scores of nurses who participated in an empathy training course with a control group and with their own pre-course scores. Results show that the training enhanced empathy.

Hinchey, F. S., and Gavelek, J. R. "Empathic Responding in Children of Battered Mothers." *CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT* 6/4 (1982): 395-401.

Compares the empathic responses of preschoolers whose fathers physically abused their mothers with the responses of children from nonabusive homes. Children of nonabusive fathers exhibited greater empathy on three of four measures.

Howard, J. A., and Barnett, M. A. "Arousal of Empathy and Subsequent Generosity in Young Children." *JOURNAL OF GENETIC PSYCHOLOGY* 138/2 (1981): 307-308.

Compares the altruistic behavior of children in preschool through second grade in two experimental groups--those who were encouraged to think about the feelings of other, needy children and those to whom the other children's feelings were not mentioned. Children who were encouraged to think about feelings were significantly more generous.

Hughes, R., Jr.; Tingle, B. A.; and Sawin, D. B. "Development of Empathic Understanding in Children." *CHILD DEVELOPMENT* 52/1 (1981): 122-128.

Compared kindergarten children with second graders in terms of their responses to slide stories of children in emotion-provoking situations. One finding: younger children's understanding of the story-children's emotions was improved if they were first encouraged to focus on their own emotional responses.

Iannotti, R. J. "Effect of Role-Taking Experiences on Role Taking, Empathy, Altruism, and Aggression." *DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY* 14/2 (1978): 119-124.

Examines the effects of role-taking experiences on future role taking, empathy, altruism, and aggression among boys 6 and 9 years of age. The experiences improved the role-taking ability of boys in both age groups. Altruism was increased with the 6-year-olds. Neither aggressive nor empathic behaviors was affected for any of the subjects.

Johnson, D. S.; Johnson, R.; and Anderson, D. "Social Interdependence and Classroom Climate." *THE JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY* 114 (1983): 135-142.

Compares (1) amounts of student participation in cooperative learning activities and (2) their attitudes toward these activities with their ratings on measures of

classroom climate, including perceptions about support and caring from teachers and fellow students.

Kalliopuska, M. EMPATHY IN SCHOOL STUDENTS. Helsinki, Finland: Department of Psychology, University of Helsinki, 1983. (ED 240 423)

Compares outcomes on measures of empathy of three experimental groups and a control group of Finnish students, ages 11-18. The students exhibiting the greatest empathy were those who participated in the most intensive of three kinds of "empathy campaigns."

Kaplan, P. J., and Arbuthnot, J. "Affective Empathy and Cognitive Role-Taking in Delinquent and Nondelinquent Youth." *ADOLESCENCE* 20/78 (1985): 323- 333.

Compared adolescent, delinquent boys and girls with nondelinquent boys and girls in terms of their scores on three empathy measures. Nondelinquents outscored delinquents on one of the measures; no differences were noted on the other two.

Kestenbaum, R.; Farber, E. A.; and Sroufe, L. A. "Individual Differences in Empathy Among Preschoolers: Relation to Attachment History." In *EMPATHY AND RELATED EMOTIONAL RESPONSES*. No. 44 in New Directions for Child Development series, edited by N. Eisenberg. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1989.

Looks at the responses of preschool children to classmates in distress in relation to "attachment" profiles of those children when they were infants. Children who were most securely attached to their mothers as infants later exhibited the greatest amounts of empathy toward peers.

Kohn, A. "Caring Kids: The Role of the Schools." *PHI DELTA KAPPAN* 72/7 (1991): 496-506.

Draws upon psychological and classroom research to support the contention that prosocial traits are as basic to human nature as are selfish or antisocial traits, and that prosocial classroom management and learning activities are beneficial to individuals and to society.

Kremer, J. F., and Dietzen, L. L. "Two Approaches to Teaching Accurate Empathy to Undergraduates: Teacher-Intensive and Self-Directed." *JOURNAL OF COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT* 32 (1991): 69- 75.

Compares the "appropriate empathy" ratings of students receiving training in empathy with the ratings of controls; also compared self-directed training using programmed materials with teacher-directed training. Experimentals outperformed controls on both immediate and long-term assessments; training methods were equally effective.

Ladd, G. W.; Lange, G.; and Stremmel, A. "Personal and Situational Influences on Children's Helping Behavior: Factors That Mediate Compliant Helping." *CHILD DEVELOPMENT* 54/2 (1983): 488-501.

Explores, in three experiments, relationships among several variables--age and sex of subjects, different kinds of need for help, recognition of need for help, knowledge of how to help, adult exhortations to help, etc. One finding: adult encouragement to help increased helping behavior.

McDevitt, T. M.; Lennon, R.; and Kopriva, R. J. "Adolescents' Perceptions of Mothers' and Fathers' Prosocial Actions and Empathic Responses." *YOUTH AND SOCIETY* 22/3 (1991):

Looks at adolescents' views regarding their parents' encouragement of prosocial and empathic behavior in relation to those adolescents' scores on measures of prosocial behavior and empathy. Children of highly prosocial/empathic parents were themselves more prosocial/empathic than other adolescents.

Mills, R. S., and Grusec, J. E. "Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Consequences of Praising Altruism." *MERRILL-PALMER QUARTERLY* 35/3 (1989): 299-326.

Investigates the effects of dispositional praise (attributing behavior to a positive trait), nondispositional praise, and no praise on the sharing and self-perceptions of 8- and 9-year-olds. Dispositional praise positively affected cognitive, affective and behavioral outcomes; other conditions did not. Girls were more generous than boys.

Morgan, S. R. "Development of Empathy in Emotionally Disturbed Children." *HUMANISTIC EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT* 22/2 (1983): 70-79.

Compares the behavior of elementary-level emotionally disturbed children in classrooms utilizing a humanistic/psychoeducational model with the behavior of those in classrooms utilizing a behavioral/learning model. Children in the former exhibited significantly greater empathy, responsibility, and self-control.

Pecukonis, E. V. "A Cognitive/Affective Empathy Training Program as a Function of Ego Development in Aggressive Adolescent Females." *ADOLESCENCE* 25/97 (1990): 59-76.

Examines the relationship between the ego development and empathy in aggressive adolescent girls, then reports the effects of an empathy training program on these girls' levels of empathy.

Perry, D. G.; Bussey, K.; and Freiberg, K. "Impact of Adults' Appeals for Sharing on the Development of Altruistic Dispositions in Children." *JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL CHILD PSYCHOLOGY* 32/1 (1981): 127-138.

Compares the sharing behavior of second and third graders after three different kinds of appeal: a "power-assertive" appeal emphasizing punitive consequences, an "inductive" appeal emphasizing the good feelings one gets from sharing, and a neutral appeal to share with no further commentary. The inductive appeal produced the greatest amount of sharing.

Siegal, M. "Mother-Child Relations and the Development of Empathy: A Short-Term Longitudinal Study." *CHILD PSYCHIATRY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* 16/2 (1985): 77-86.

Examines relationships among gender constancy (awareness that one's gender is unchanging throughout life), gender identification, and empathy among children in first grade at two points in time. A positive correlation was noted between identification with one's mother at Time 1 and empathy score at Time 2 for both boys and girls.

Slavin, R. E. "Cooperative Learning: Applying Contact Theory in Desegregated Schools." *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ISSUES* 41/3 (1985): 45-62.

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friendships.

Steibe, S. C.; Bolet, D. B.; and Lee, D. C. "Trainee Trait Empathy, Age, Trainer Functioning, Client Age and Training Time as Discriminators of Successful Empathy Training." CANADIAN COUNSELLOR 14/1 (1979): 41-45.

Examines relationships among "trait" empathy, age, and other variables in a study involving Roman Catholic nuns taking part in empathy training. Younger trainees exhibited greater empathy than older ones, and trainees with greater natural empathy achieved higher scores than those with less.

Underwood, B., and Moore, B. "Perspective-Taking and Altruism." PSYCHOLOGICAL BULLETIN 91/1 (1982): 143- 173.

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Zahn-Waxler, C.; Radke-Yarrow, M.; and King, R. A. "Child Rearing and Children's Prosocial Initiations toward Victims of Distress." CHILD DEVELOPMENT 50/2 (1979): 319-330.

Investigates the behavior of small children in circumstances where they were either an observer or the cause of others' distress in relation the behaviors of their mothers in similar circumstances. Empathic parenting was positively related to altruistic and conciliatory behavior by children.

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intercultural communications. Promotes instead the concept of "relational empathy," which allows cross-cultural communicators to develop meaning and significance together rather than seeking to understand one another's feelings and point of view.

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Ellis, P. L. "Empathy: A Factor in Antisocial Behavior." *JOURNAL OF ABNORMAL CHILD PSYCHOLOGY* 10/1 (1982): 123-134.

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Argues that discussions of school reform and restructuring need to include attention to the moral and ethical dimensions of schooling and of life in general, in order to educate young people to be caring, contributing citizens.

Noddings, N. "Do We Really Want to Produce Good People?" **JOURNAL OF MORAL EDUCATION** 16/3 (1987): 177- 188.

Discusses differences between traditional male and female beliefs about goodness, arguing that feminine viewpoints have been underrepresented in our cultural understanding of moral issues. Calls for increased attention to these viewpoints and identifies implications for education.

Noddings, N. **THE CHALLENGE TO CARE IN SCHOOLS: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO EDUCATION.** *Advances in Contemporary Educational Thought, Volume 8.* New York: Teachers College Press, 1992.

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Robinson, M. G. "Awareness Program Helps Children Understand Special Needs." **EDUCATION UNLIMITED** 1/2 (1979): 25-27.

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Presents results of two experiments conducted to test a model of the relationship among several cognitive and affective qualities related to empathy and prosocial behavior. Results indicated that concern for others-- rather than for oneself-- motivates empathic concern and prosocial behavior.

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