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Orienting to the Public Good:
Developing a Moral Self in the Middle Grades

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Abstract

This study takes up the challenge of middle level researchers to investigate the extent to which schools prepare young adolescents to commit themselves to serve the public interest. One way of assessing the orientation of children and adolescents to the public good is through their emerging self-understanding. This study analyzes middle school students' descriptions of the ideal, real, and dreaded selves. Fewer than half the participants describe themselves with at least one moral characteristic and many of them focus narrowly on attaining material and social success. These findings raise questions about the hidden curriculum of individualism in schools as well as in the wider culture.

Introduction

The recent publication of *Success in the Middle: A Policymaker's Guide to Achieving Quality Middle Level Education* (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 2006) invited federal, state, and local government agencies to partner with colleges and universities, school boards, unions, and business leaders in improving the education of young adolescents. It encouraged those of us involved in middle level education research to continue to investigate the various practices of what has become known as the middle school concept. In this study, we ask hard questions about the relationship of student achievement and the development of an awareness of and commitment to the public good. In spite of a growing emphasis on cooperative learning strategies, character education, and the development of classroom community, individual test scores and grades constitute the "bottom line" for teachers and students, especially in the wake of the No Child Left Behind legislation. Within a highly competitive system that almost exclusively rewards individual academic success and aspiration for the private good, middle grades teachers are challenged to find meaningful ways of helping students to dedicate themselves to the public good. The question posed in *A 21st Century Research*

Agenda (NMSA, 1997) remains unanswered, "How does teacher knowledge of the growth and development of young adolescents affect student outcomes in … moral development?" (p. 12).

If educational research is to inform teachers' practice, we must begin by helping teachers to understand how students construct a sense of themselves as other-oriented, moral people. NMSA (2003) offered a succinct summary of characteristics of young adolescents in the area of moral development. In short, young adolescents during the middle school years find themselves at a moral crossroads. Should they focus on getting ahead and satisfying their private wants and needs or should they be concerned about serving others and their community?

Theoretical Framework

Much recent research on moral development focuses on the role that self-understanding plays in influencing the ways in which individuals orient their lives and accept responsibility for themselves and others (Bergman, 2002). In their study of moral exemplars, Colby and Damon (1992) found that individuals' identity plays a decisive role in their commitment to lives of heroic service to others in need. While Colby and Damon (1992) derived their findings from a sample of adults, Hart and Fegley (1995) obtained similar results from a sample of adolescents in a distressed urban environment. Although the youth in the Hart and Fegley study were only at the beginning of consolidating their identities, they were already distinguishing themselves from their peers by defining themselves in unusually strong other-oriented ways. The Hart and Fegley research indicates that children's appropriation of prosocial characteristics to describe themselves begins well before identity issues emerge in adolescence.

Exploring the extent to which children in the elementary school years use moral characteristics in their self descriptions, Power, Khmelkov, and Power (1995) and Power and Khmelkov (1997) found considerable variability among children in all grade groups. They also found that the cognitive level of the self descriptions relates in important ways to how the self influences moral behavior. For example, at the first developmental level, children's self descriptions function as labels of vague and stereotypic qualities, such as being nice. At later levels, moral self descriptions function as orienting goals and values, which can also form the basis for self-criticism.

We base our theoretical approach to the moral self on Blasi's (1993) pioneering research on the development of moral responsibility and identity. Blasi maintained that moral responsibility and motivation is rooted in a sense of self. Drawing on his own research and that of Nunner-Winkler and Sodian (1988), Blasi (1988, 2005) argued that the linkage between moral understanding and the self is forged sometime around age 12 and is absent in children from ages 6 to 8. His evidence for this is that while young children understand that some actions are right and wrong, they do not experience a sense of personal responsibility to act on their understanding. Moreover, their moral transgressions do not evoke a deeply felt sense of guilt and shame. It is precisely in the middle grades that children have the capacity to integrate their sense of self with their moral understanding. In other words, it is during the middle grades that children can develop an efficacious moral self. It is possible, of course, that children may not place moral concerns at the core of their self-concept. Arnold (1993) found that only about half of the adolescents in her sample described themselves as having moral characteristics. Power and Khmelkov (1997) reported a similar result.

In contrast to Arnold's (1993) and Blasi's (1993) studies that focused solely on descriptions of the real or actual self but following on previous studies by Power, Khmelkov, and Power (1995) and Power and Khmelkov (1997), we explore young adolescents' descriptions of their ideal self (the kind of person they would like to become) and dreaded self (the self they fear becoming). Children's descriptions of their ideal self give us some indication of the values that orient them to their future lives and can give us some insight into their commitment to the public good. For example, research with college students (Power, Power, & LaVoi, 2005) showed that students who include moral values in their descriptions of their ideal selves are significantly more engaged in civic activities than those who do not include moral values in their descriptions. Power and Khmelkov found that children's conceptions of their dreaded selves typically complement their

conceptions of their ideal selves. Children who want to become civically engaged adults dread becoming self-centered and socially isolated. Perhaps ideal and dreaded self-concepts function in tandem to keep the self centered on moral values.

Levels of Self-Understanding

In previous studies (Power, Khmelkov, & Power, 1995; Power & Khmelkov, 1997), with a sample of children and adolescents from grades 1 through 10 (ages 7 through 16), researchers found that the ideal, dreaded, and real selves develop in a sequential pattern of cognitive levels with similarities to the moral judgment stages (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987), ego development stages (Loevinger, 1976), faith stages (Fowler, 1981), and self-understanding levels (Damon & Hart, 1988). The specifically moral characteristics of the first four levels are described below.

Level 1. Individuals describe their ideal, real, and dreaded selves with stereotypic labels, such as "nice," "good," or "bad." Often their descriptions of their ideal and dreaded selves reflect, either explicitly or implicitly, parental commands and admonitions.

Level 2. Individuals describe their ideal and real selves in terms of dispositions for action or as behavioral habits. In describing moral attributes, individuals often mention helpfulness or kindness, understood as meeting the concrete needs or interests of others. Ideals are sometimes justified in terms of their instrumental value for the self, for example, as leading to success or as avoiding failure and punishment. The dreaded self is often described as being unsuccessful or as having bad habits.

Level 3. Individuals describe their ideal and real selves in terms of traits that are based in attitudes as well as actions. These traits typically reflect concerns for being caring and unselfish and for succeeding in peer relationships. At this level there is a sense of a unified and unique self. For example, some individuals at this level emphasize that they are unique by noting that they stand out from their peer group because of some particular attribute or combination of attributes. The dreaded self is often depicted as having failed to meet social expectations or as self-centered.

Level 4. Individuals describe their ideal and real selves as having a unified identity or character. Some individuals express a desire to make a difference to their society or to the world. Descriptions of the dreaded self often focus on a failure to live up to one's ideals or role expectations because of real-world pressures.

In attempting to understand the role of the moral self in orienting students to the public good, it is important to take into account both the characteristics used to describe the self and how children's self-understanding develops cognitively. Previous research suggests that although children may describe themselves using moral language, primitive moral self-conceptions may not influence behavior. One way to probe into the effectiveness of the levels of children's moral self-understanding is to explore at what level self-consistency is used as a reason for resisting self-interested temptations. As is clear from the moral stage scoring manual (Colby et al., 1987), asking why a promise should be kept is a very good way to elicit moral reasoning related to self, such as guilt and shame or self-consistency. In our study, we use a promise-keeping dilemma to examine whether the self-oriented reasons children give for keeping a promise are in fact related to their cognitive level. On the basis of previous moral development research, we hypothesize that references to the self will not appear at Level 1, but will appear thereafter in a sequential pattern related to moral stage development.

Method

Participants
The participants in our study include 48 middle school students (grades 6–8) from different socioeconomic backgrounds, who were recruited from a public school (35 students) and a private school (13 students) in two separate urban communities. Within the two schools participating in this study, 64% of the students in the

public school are economically disadvantaged, while all the students in the private school are middle class. A purposive sampling strategy (Chein, 1981) was employed to select students to be interviewed. There were 16 students interviewed at each grade level. The sample was somewhat evenly divided by race (African American 58%; Caucasian 42%) and gender (female 58%; male 42%).

Procedure
All participants were individually administered the Self-Evaluation Interview (see Appendix). The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for the purpose of analysis. The interview begins with a series of questions about the real self (what are you like? what are you especially proud of about yourself? what are you not proud of?), the ideal self (describe yourself as you would ideally like to be; what kind of a person would you like to be later in your life?), and the dreaded self (what kind of person do you hope that you never become?). Spontaneous self descriptions yielded by these interview probes are more cognitively accessible and thus more likely to influence behavior than non-spontaneous self descriptions (Higgins, King, & Marvin, 1982). The interview then presents the Promise Dilemma, a moral dilemma about keeping a promise to a person one will never see again. This dilemma was chosen because it elicits more self-referenced justifications than any of the other moral dilemmas used in moral judgment research (see *Standard Issue Scoring Manual,* Colby et al., 1987). Follow-up questions were utilized to probe and further elucidate a response (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Scoring
The descriptions of the ideal, real, and dreaded self were coded for content. Ideal, real, and dreaded self descriptions were coded as moral if they contained at least one explicitly moral characteristic (e.g., kind, truthful, fair, not mean, and so on). Further content analysis of the ideal self descriptions was conducted to determine whether the content was oriented to egoistic concerns (e.g., I want to get a good job so that I'll have lots of money) or to other-oriented concerns (e.g., I'd like to be a doctor because I want to help people). Finally, self-criticism was coded from the real self descriptions as follows: 1 = totally critical of self, 2 = mostly critical of self, 3 = some criticism of self, and 4 = no criticism of self.

The Self-Evaluation Interview transcripts were blind-coded separately by two trained raters for developmental level by matching the participants' responses to prototypical responses at each level in the Self-Evaluation Coding Guide (Power & Khmelkov, 1997). The Guide was developed from an independent cross-sectional sample of cases, following the bootstrapping method described by Colby and Kohlberg (1987). Inter-rater reliability using the Guide had an 80% exact agreement between two raters and a 95% agreement within a half level. The correlation between the two raters was .80 (Power & Khmelkov, 1997).

The Promise Dilemma was coded for moral stage by trained raters according to the Moral Judgment Scoring Manual (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). The Promise Dilemma was also independently coded for degree of self-involvement according to the following scale: 1 = no reference to self; 2 = reference to a persistent bad feeling about what happened; 3 = reference to feeling shame about how one would appear in another's eyes; 4 = reference to feeling guilty about how one would regard one's self.

Findings

Moral Content
Although the participants used many more non-moral than moral categories to describe themselves, three-quarters of the entire sample used at least one moral category to describe their real selves. Approximately two-thirds (62.5%) used at least one moral category to describe their dreaded selves. Only one-half of the participants used at least one moral category to describe their ideal selves.

Orientation: Egoistic versus Other
Across the three grades, descriptions of the ideal self were the most other-oriented (43% of the sample), followed by real self descriptions (33%), and dreaded self descriptions (26%). The results by grade level are summarized in Figure 1. With the exception of the dreaded self, there was an overall increase in the percentage of other-oriented self descriptions from grade to grade. In grade 6, 27% of the ideal self, 19%

of the real self, and 13% of the dreaded self descriptions had at least one other-oriented characteristic. In grade 7, 56% of the ideal self, 38% of the real self, and 38% of the dreaded self descriptions had at least one other-oriented characteristic. In grade 8, 43% of the ideal self, 44% of the real self, and 25% of the dreaded self descriptions had at least one other-oriented characteristic.
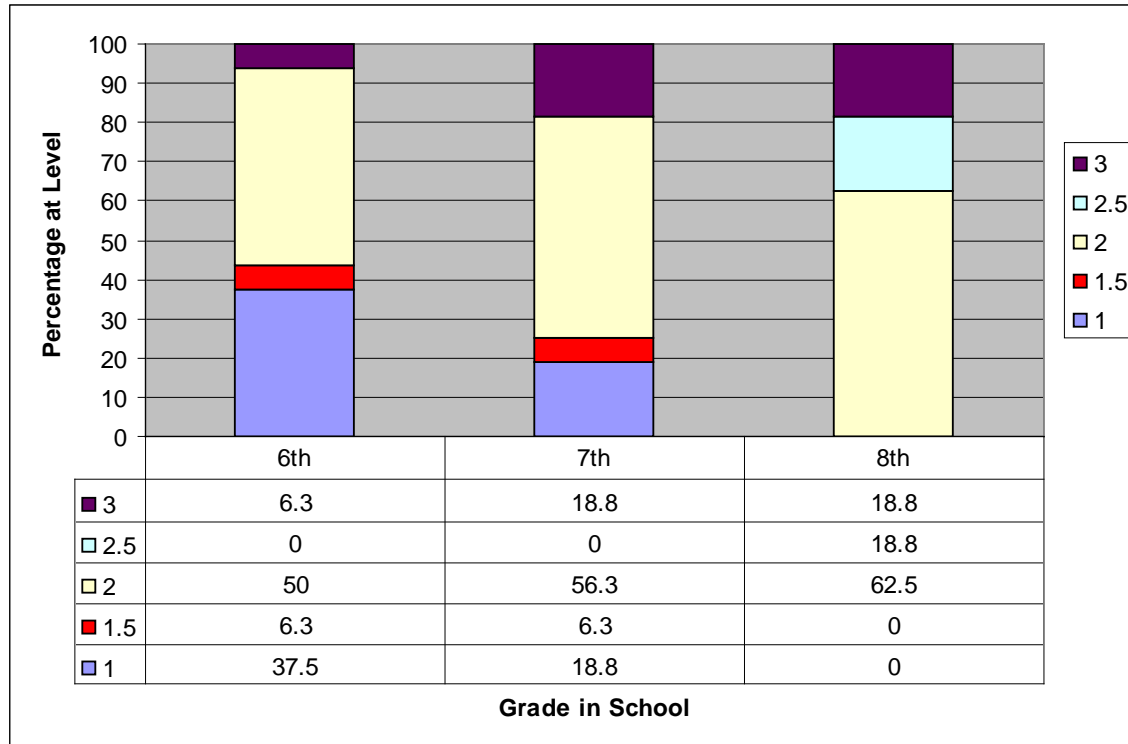
	6th	7th	8th
■ 3	6.3	18.8	18.8
□ 2.5	0	0	18.8
□ 2	50	56.3	62.5
■ 1.5	6.3	6.3	0
□ 1	37.5	18.8	0

Grade in School

Figure 1. Percentage of other-oriented self descriptions

Self-Criticism
Only 21% of the respondents at real self-levels 2 and above engaged in self-criticism. None of the respondents coded at levels 1 or 1.5 for their real selves were at all self-critical.

Developmental Level
The data indicate development by grade for all self descriptions (see Figures 2, 3, & 4). Level 1 and 1.5 responses decrease from sixth to eighth grade while Level 2.5 and 3 responses increase. Level 2 responses are fairly consistent from sixth to the seventh grade and then diminish in the eighth grade. Levels are correlated by grade (real self $r = .38$, $p < .01$; ideal self $r = .30$, $p < .05$; dreaded self $r = .33$, $p < .05$).
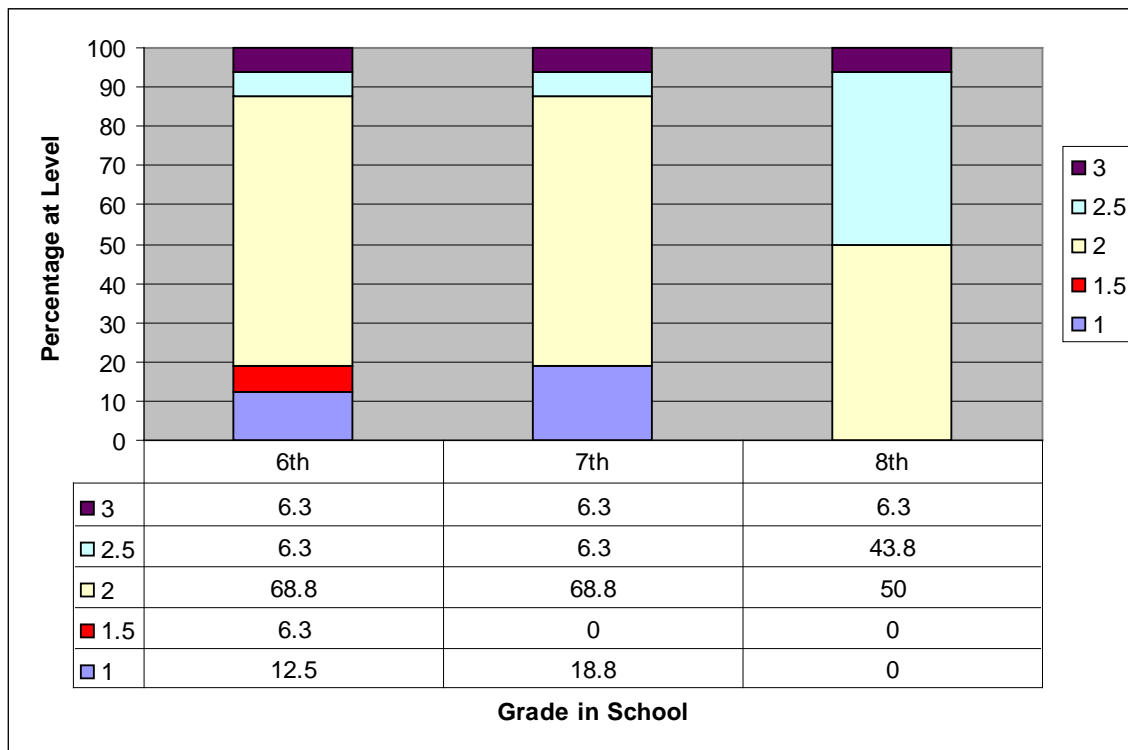
	6th	7th	8th
■ 3	6.3	6.3	6.3
□ 2.5	6.3	6.3	43.8
□ 2	68.8	68.8	50
■ 1.5	6.3	0	0
□ 1	12.5	18.8	0

Grade in School

Figure 2. Levels of ideal self by grade in school

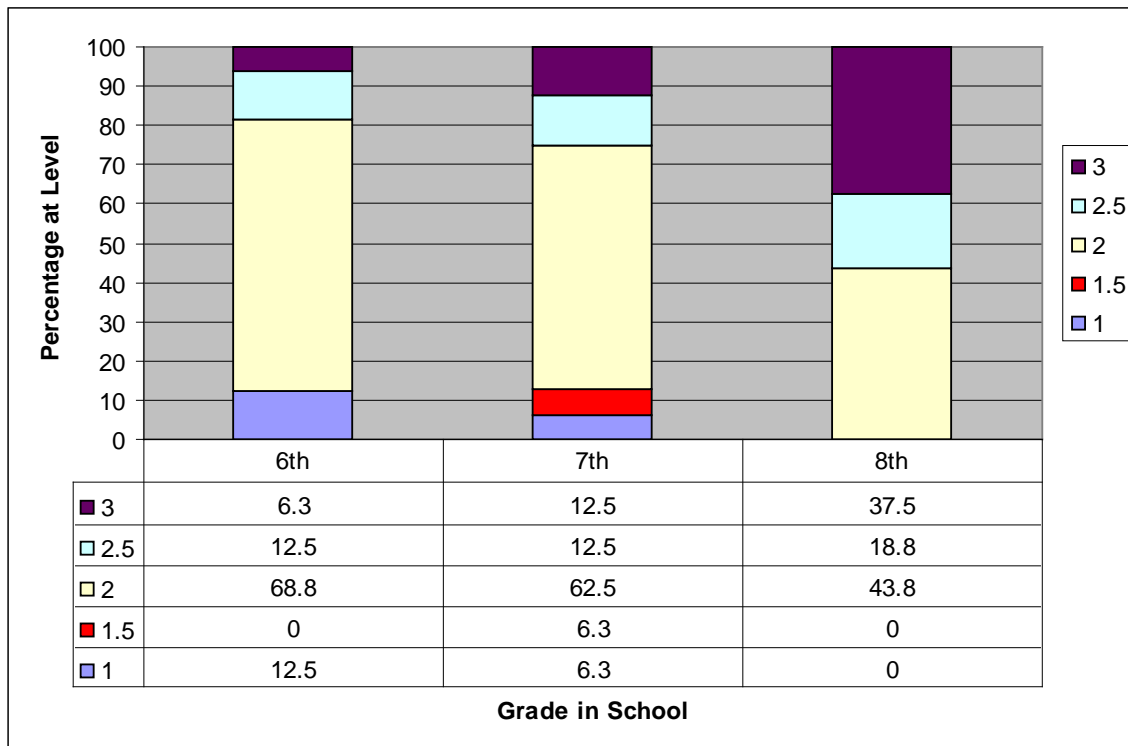|	6th	7th	8th
■ 3	6.3	12.5	37.5
□ 2.5	12.5	12.5	18.8
□ 2	68.8	62.5	43.8
■ 1.5	0	6.3	0
□ 1	12.5	6.3	0

Grade in School
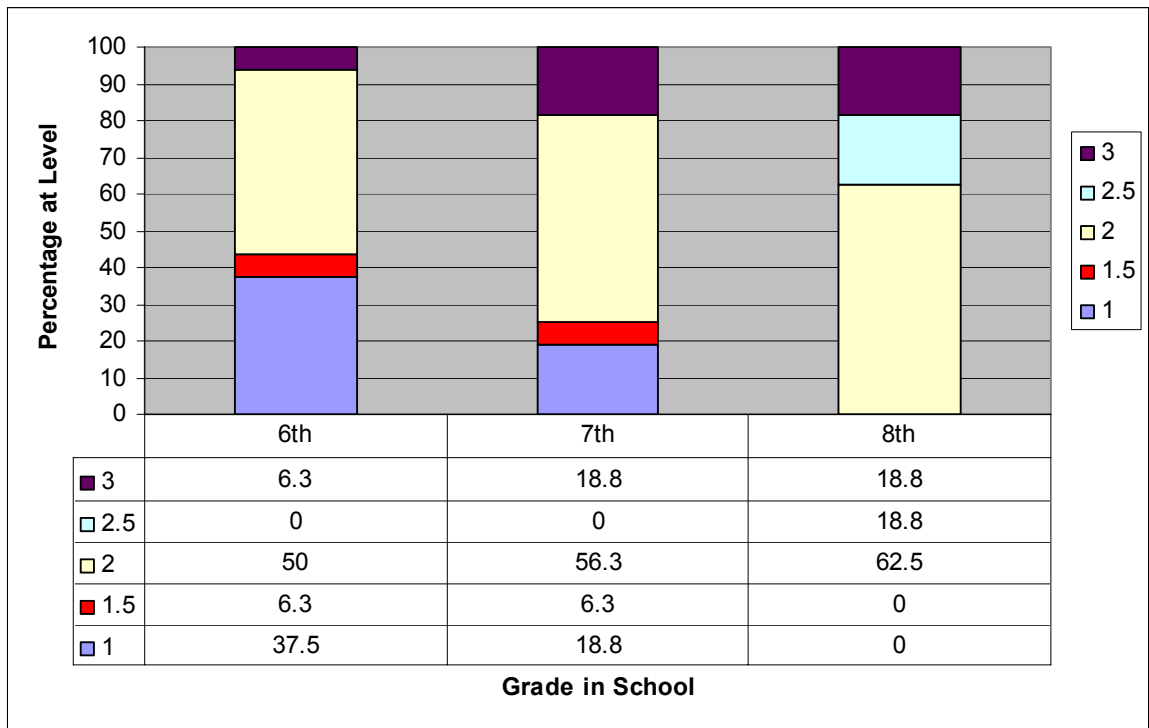
Figure 3. Levels of real self by grade in school

Figure 4. Levels of dreaded self by grade in school

Participants' stages on the Promise Dilemma are generally higher than the corresponding self description levels. Participants' stage scores are correlated with grade ($r = .273$, $p = .06$) and with real self ($r = .67$, $p < .001$); ideal self ($r = .46$, $p < .001$); and dreaded self ($r = .60$, $p < .001$). Participants' stage scores on the Promise Dilemma are highly correlated with their degree of self-involvement ($r = .53$, $p < .001$). No participants at Stage 1 and only one participant at Stages 1.5 (25% of those coded as Stage 1.5) makes any reference to the self in giving reasons why breaking a promise is wrong (see Table 1). However, 75% of respondents at Stage 2.5 and all the respondents at Stage 3 make reference to the self. References to shame and guilt are made almost exclusively at Stages 2.5 and 3. Degree of self-involvement is significantly correlated with the real self level ($r = .50$, $p < .001$), dreaded self level ($r = .41$, $p < .001$), and ideal self level ($r = .27$, $p = .06$).

Table 1
Self-Involvement by Promise Stage

Degree of Self-Involvement	Proportion of Students Having Some Degree of Self-Involvement at each Promise Stage				
	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0
1.00	100.0%	75.0%	56.5%	25.0%	
2.00		25.0%	30.4%	33.3%	50.0%
3.00			13.0%	33.3%	37.5%
4.00				8.3%	12.5%

Degree of Self-Involvement: 1 = no reference to self; 2 = reference to a persistent bad feeling about what happened; 3 = reference to feeling shame about how one would appear in another's eyes; 4 = reference to feeling guilty about how one would regard one's self.

Discussion

A Sense of Self

In addressing issues related to young adolescents, Lipka (2005) defined self-concept as "the description an individual attaches to himself or herself, as a function of the roles one plays or attributes one possesses" (p. 338). Our study suggests that young adolescents are developing a sense of self with important implications for their later engagement as citizens. In contrast with previous studies (Arnold, 1993; Power & Khmelkov, 1997), which found that only about half of the participants used moral categories to describe their real selves, 75% of the respondents in our sample used moral categories. This difference may be due to the fact that the previous studies sampled a wider age range or due to other variations in the samples. In our view, the difference suggests that middle grades students are especially concerned about their moral competence.

Most of the moral descriptors used by the participants in this study refer to interpersonal moral competence. For example, a sixth grade girl describes herself as a "kind person," who is "nice" to her friends. Another sixth grade girl speaks of being "nice" as a way of meeting "new people" and giving her a better chance of "having friends." An eighth grade girl notes that she is "respectful" and "always smiling." She also confesses that she sometimes has a problem with her attitude: "I don't like the fact that when I have an attitude I sometimes take it out on other people."

A relatively high percentage of students used at least one moral category to describe their dreaded selves. Concerns about the dreaded self include becoming addicted to drugs, becoming overly aggressive, becoming a mean and selfish person, becoming unemployed and homeless, and becoming "stuck up." As students develop to higher levels, they describe their dreaded selves as less stereotypically "bad" and as more indicative of real possibilities. Sometimes students will note that they do not want to end up like a family member—in jail, on drugs, absent, and the like.

A Good Citizen

In their discussion of the key elements of the morally directed middle school movement, McDaniel, Rios, Necochea, Stowell, and Kritzer (2001) advised, "…students do not need civic lessons, they need opportunities to practice civic behavior" (Democratic, diversity, and equity in middle schooling, ¶5). Our findings that only half the participants describe their ideal selves in moral terms and that only 43% of the participants describe their ideal selves in other-oriented terms raise concerns about their future civic engagement. The participants appear to be far more inclined to use moral and generally other-oriented qualities in reflecting on the present than they do when they project themselves into the future. Participants' responses suggest that students are deeply influenced by a culture that prizes individual gain and private interest over helping others or serving society. Many participants value doing well in school and see a college degree as a way of securing a good job. Some mention finding jobs, such as being a doctor or lawyer, that enable them to help others. None of the participants talk about helping those outside their family and friends as entailed in being a good citizen or a member of society.

The higher the participants' self levels, the more likely they were to use other-oriented descriptors for their real and dreaded selves. No relationship, however, was found between participants' self levels and their moral descriptors. This finding is consistent with previous findings (e.g., Arnold, 1993; Power & Khmelkov, 1997) that identity development does not necessarily take a moral direction. In our view, the fact that self level and moral content may be orthogonal does not necessarily imply that cognitive self development is irrelevant to moral functioning. In fact, as Blasi (1993; 2005) noted, the self does not appear to be a significant factor in moral deliberations until around the age of 12. In other words, children may judge an act to be wrong without making the further judgment that acting wrongly reflects upon themselves as selves. Many participants at Stage 2 and above responded that they would feel badly about breaking a promise because they would remember acting wrongly. Yet simply feeling badly about the way one acted is not the same as feeling badly about oneself. Shame and guilt arise out of the experience of acting in ways that violate a sense of self as moral. Having a functional moral self means that one is compelled for the sake of self-consistency to act in ways that are moral. Half the respondents coded at Stage 3 noted that they would do the right thing because

they cared about their moral identity. For example, a seventh grade boy noted the importance of being "trust-worthy" so that "others could rely on you." An eighth grade girl made the connection between the self and doing the right thing even more explicit: "[Keeping the promise is] just making yourself, if you know that you're trustworthy somebody will be able to trust you."

Implications for Practice

How can middle level education researchers and practitioners nurture students' commitment to serving the public good? Our study is based on a small sample of students in two schools, so we can offer only very preliminary suggestions for developmentally appropriate intervention strategies. Our findings indicate that almost all students see education as a means of upward mobility and economic well-being. We may take comfort in this because many of the participants' parents did not continue their education beyond high school. On the other hand, the students in our sample appear to be almost exclusively preoccupied with their personal well-being. Although they work on their peer relationships, they have little sense that their well-being is related to the well-being of others. In fact, many of the participants noted that peers were one of the greatest threats to their attaining their future goals.

Students may well benefit from structured classroom opportunities to share their aspirations, fears, and concerns about their future. Such discussions are likely to help them to realize that they all have very similar hopes and struggles. Frequently the reform of middle schools has focused on making structural changes (i.e., teaming of teachers, advisory periods, exploratory curricula, and so on) as delineated in *Turning Points* (Carnegie, 1989), *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), and *This We Believe* (NMSA, 2003). We recognize that we need to move beyond structural changes and ask questions such as, does the health of our organization allow for these initiatives and changes (Brown, Anfara & Roney, 2004)? Neverthe-less, we believe that staffing middle grade schools with educators committed to young adolescents, advisory programs, service-learning projects, and the implementation of teaming as the organizational structure are practices advocated in middle level education research that merit consideration within the discussion of assisting young adolescents in developing the moral self in the middle grades.

Middle level educators. Since its inception, advocates of young adolescents have argued for the specialized preparation of teachers for middle grades (McEwin, Smith, & Dickinson, 2003). Included within such preparation is the twofold task of becoming expert in the academic specialty area (usually math, science, language arts, and social studies) and expert in understanding young adolescent development. Research has confirmed that teacher quality, defined as teachers educated through certification programs, is related to positive student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Of import to our study, however, is the critical coherence necessary between the personal self-awareness a middle level teacher possesses and that teacher's capacity to relate to students, parents, administrators, and colleagues (Roney, 2001). In discussing the role of self in teacher development, Borich (1999) emphasized that self-confident teachers foster positive pupil self-concepts: "Effective teachers … appear to share a positive perception of self and others that has a positive effect on pupil self concept" (p. 102).

Advisory programs. One of the key concepts in the developmentally responsive middle grade school is the advisory programs, which "seek to promote students' social, emotional, and moral growth while providing personal and academic guidance" (Manning, 1993, p. 50). Regardless of the particular design a school uses, most advisory programs share the objective to: (a) provide models of effective interpersonal communication, (b) offer an opportunity for social and emotional education, (c) provide immediate and situation-specific guidance, and (d) communicate information about school activities.

Agreement on the value of advisory programs abounds (Elias et al., 1986; George & Alexander, 1993; Gill & Read, 1990; Manning, 1993). George, Stevenson, Thomason, and Beane (1992) highlighted two benefits of advisories. First, advisories "constitute the student's first line of belonging… thus meeting the child's need for a strong affiliation with a group of peers within the school" (p. 55). Second, "teachers become well informed about each of the students in their group and can share their knowledge with colleagues to support students' well-being" (p. 56).

Service learning. Middle level schools can also challenge students to take responsibility for their classroom community as well as themselves and to derive a sense of satisfaction for their contributions to those outside their family and friendship groups. That the majority of the students in this sample described athletic success and good grades as sources of self-worth and that so many of them viewed getting a good education as an integral part of this process is good news. The road to solid citizenship indeed begins with concern for one's own ability to get a good job in the future in order to take care of one's self and provide for one's family. However, good citizenship also entails concern for the public good.

For the middle grades, Jackson and Davis (2000) suggested a "place-based" curriculum whereby work, embedded in the community enables middle grade students to connect to "other related contexts" (p. 37). Defined as "the engagement of students in activities designed to address or meet a community need, where students learn how their service makes a difference in themselves and in the lives of the service recipients, and where learning is intentionally linked to academics" (Pate, 2005, p. 341), service-learning is a methodology often employed by middle grades schools. Service-learning projects have been identified as improving student achievement (Melchior, 1997) and enhancing adolescents' self-concepts (Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Hamilton & Fenzel, 1988).

Team organization. Middle level schools can help to prepare young adolescents for responsible citizenship by building on their expressed concern for good grades and for academically supportive peers. This involves attending to the hidden curriculum where there is a need to balance the emphasis on individual success with a healthy amount of concern for the public good. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) claimed that there is a better way to approach young adolescents than through the fragmented doors of academic departments where the opportunity to understand students as individuals is rarely encouraged. They advised middle level educators "to create teams of teachers and students who work together to achieve academic and personal goals for students" (p. 38). Brown's (1999) study confirmed the work of Arnold and Stevenson (1998) in their claim that "organizing by teams enables a few teachers to create an educational community in which students are known and understood, taught in ways that complement their abilities and enable them to be successful, and support in multiple ways as they grow through the challenges of contemporary adolescence" (p. ix). Likewise, teaming has been associated with positive student achievement (Flowers, Mertens, Mulhall, 1999).

Conclusion

We recognize that the 14 characteristics of effective middle level schools outlined by NMSA (2003) are meant to work in concert. Through the findings of this study we focused on four specifically—educators, advisory programs, curriculum, and interdisciplinary teaming—that offer direction for helping young adolescents develop the moral self during the middle grades. As stated by NMSA (2003), the interdisciplinary team organization "is the signature component of high-performing schools, literally the heart of the school from which other desirable programs and experiences evolve" (p. 29). By staffing middle level schools with educators committed to young adolescents, and by encouraging group solidarity and service to others, middle level schools will help students to develop as stronger individuals and as committed members of their communities.

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APPENDIX

Self-Evaluation Interview
Directions to Interviewer: Some of the questions contain instructions to you, the interviewer, in brackets, […]. They are for you and are NOT to be read to the interviewee.

I. Ideal Self

    A. *What are you like?* What kind of a person are you? How would you describe your self to yourself? *What are you especially proud of about yourself?* What do you like most about yourself? *What about yourself are you not proud of?* What do you like least about yourself? [In this question, we are looking to hear about the actual self and the categories the interviewee uses to describe it.]

    B. *Describe your self as you would ideally like to be.* [Ask why are the attributes of the self that are described important.] What kind of person would you like to be like later in your life? What can you do about becoming the person you want to be? What stands in the way?

    C. *What kind of person do you hope you never become?* Why don't you want to be that kind of person? Do you think that there is a chance or possibility that you might become like that? Why or why not?

II. Moral Motivation
    A.   Is it important to keep a promise? Why or why not?

    B.   Suppose you made a promise to deliver advertisements to the houses in your neighborhood. You get paid ahead of time to do this. When you are half finished, you are hot and tired. You say to yourself, "The person who paid me this money will never know whether I finished this job or not and besides, I will never see that person again." Would it be wrong not to finish the job? Why or why not? Why should a promise be kept to someone (like the person in the story) whom you don't know or won't see again? How would you feel inside if you broke a promise? Why would you have that feeling? [Probe on reasons why a person *should* keep a promise.]

    C.   Why in general is it important to do the right thing or not do a bad thing if no one would ever find out about it?