

Character: A Multi-faceted Developmental System

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The National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
Workshop on Approaches to the Development of Character

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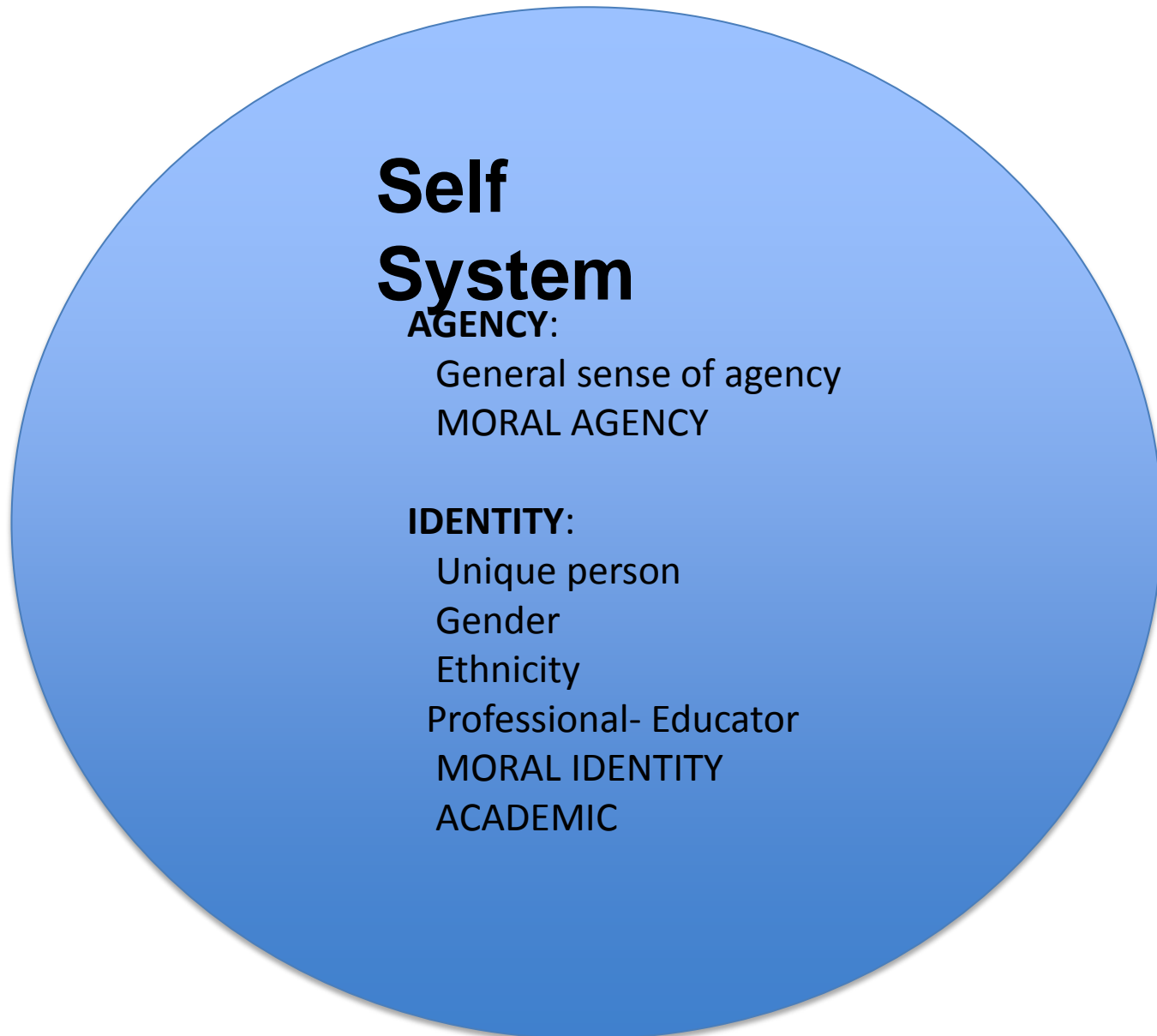


- I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, **but by the content of their character.**

Bag of Virtues



Figure 1. The Character System in Relationship to the Self System



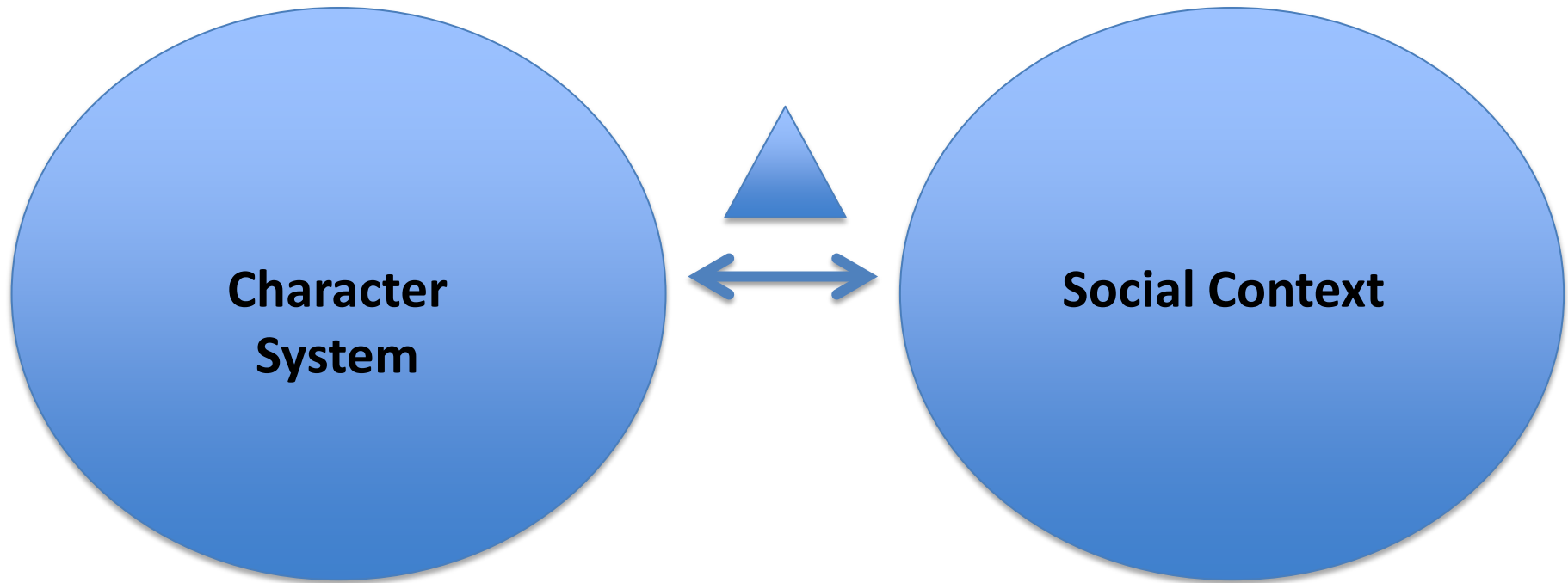
- All people care about morality. Moreover, people care about how they view themselves as moral people.

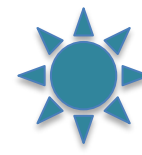
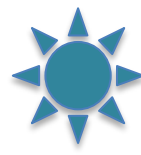
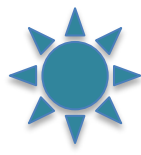


- Agency – sense that one’s actions are grounded in own mental states, goals, beliefs and emotions.



Character and Context as Interpenetrating and in Dynamic Relationship





- What we should be looking for in terms of character is not consistency across contexts, but coherence.
- What is meant by character is never a finished product, but is continuously evolving.
- Over time we will see evidence not just of the impact of the context on the person, but the impact of the person on the context.

Self System

AGENCY:
MORAL AGENCY

IDENTITY:
MORAL IDENTITY
Gender
Ethnicity

ACADEMIC

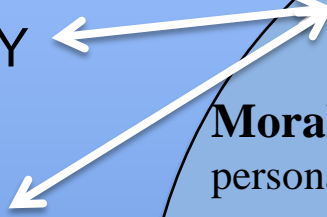
Character System

Moral Cognition-reason (moral, conventional, personal domains)

Moral Mental Health (empathy, emotion recognition)

Performance (executive function, self regulation, grit)

Moral Critical Social Engagement
(responsive engagement, “moral purpose”)



Component 1: Moral Cognition





Morality: Issues of harm, welfare, fairness, rights



Personal: Issues of choice privacy

Convention: Norms established by consensus or authority in the service of social organization functioning of social systems



Moral Issue:

Did you see what happened?

- **Yes. They were playing and John hit him too hard.**

Is that something you are supposed to do or not supposed to do?

- **Not so hard to hurt.**

Is there a rule about that?

- **Yes.**

What is the rule?

- **You're not to hit hard.**

What if there were no rule about hitting hard, would it be all right to do then?

- **No.**

Why not?

- **Because he could get hurt and start to cry.**

Conventional Issue

Did you see what just happened?

- **Yes. They were noisy.**

Is that something you are supposed to or not supposed to do?

- **Not do.**

Is there a rule about that?

- **Yes. We have to be quiet.**

What if there were no rule, would it be all right to do then?

- **Yes.**

Why?

- **Because there is no rule.**

Amish Participants



Percentage of Religious Children Responding “It would be wrong” to Removal of Rule for Moral Issues

Child’s Age

Issue: Moral	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17
Stealing	100%	100%	100%	100%
Hitting	94%	100%	94%	93%
Slander	88%	100%	100%	100%
Damaging Property	88%	93%	100%	100%

Percentage of Religious Children Responding “It would be wrong” to Removal of Rule for Non-Moral Issues

Issue: Non-Moral	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17
Day of Worship	44%	47%	50%	36%
Work on Sunday	100%	93%	94%	82%
Head Covering	75%	50%	75%	82%
Baptism	71%	79%	88%	82%
Interfaith Marriage	53%	40%	44%	27%
Women Preaching	53%	36%	44%	30%
Premarital Sex	--	--	75%	90%

Justifications Provided by Religious Children for “It would be wrong” to Remove Rule for Non-Moral Issues

Justification	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17
God’s Law	93%	86%	83%	89%
Other	7%	14%	17%	11%

Justifications Provided by Religious Children for “It would be wrong” to Remove Rule for Moral Issues

Justification	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17
God’s Law	71%	70%	60%	41%
Welfare	20%	12%	19%	45%
Fairness	2%	10%	6%	9%
Reciprocity	0%	2%	3%	4%
Obligation	0%	0%	6%	0%
Categorical	5%	4%	5%	3%

Percentage of Religious Children Responding “It Would be Wrong To Do” if God Had Said Nothing About Act for Non-Moral Issues

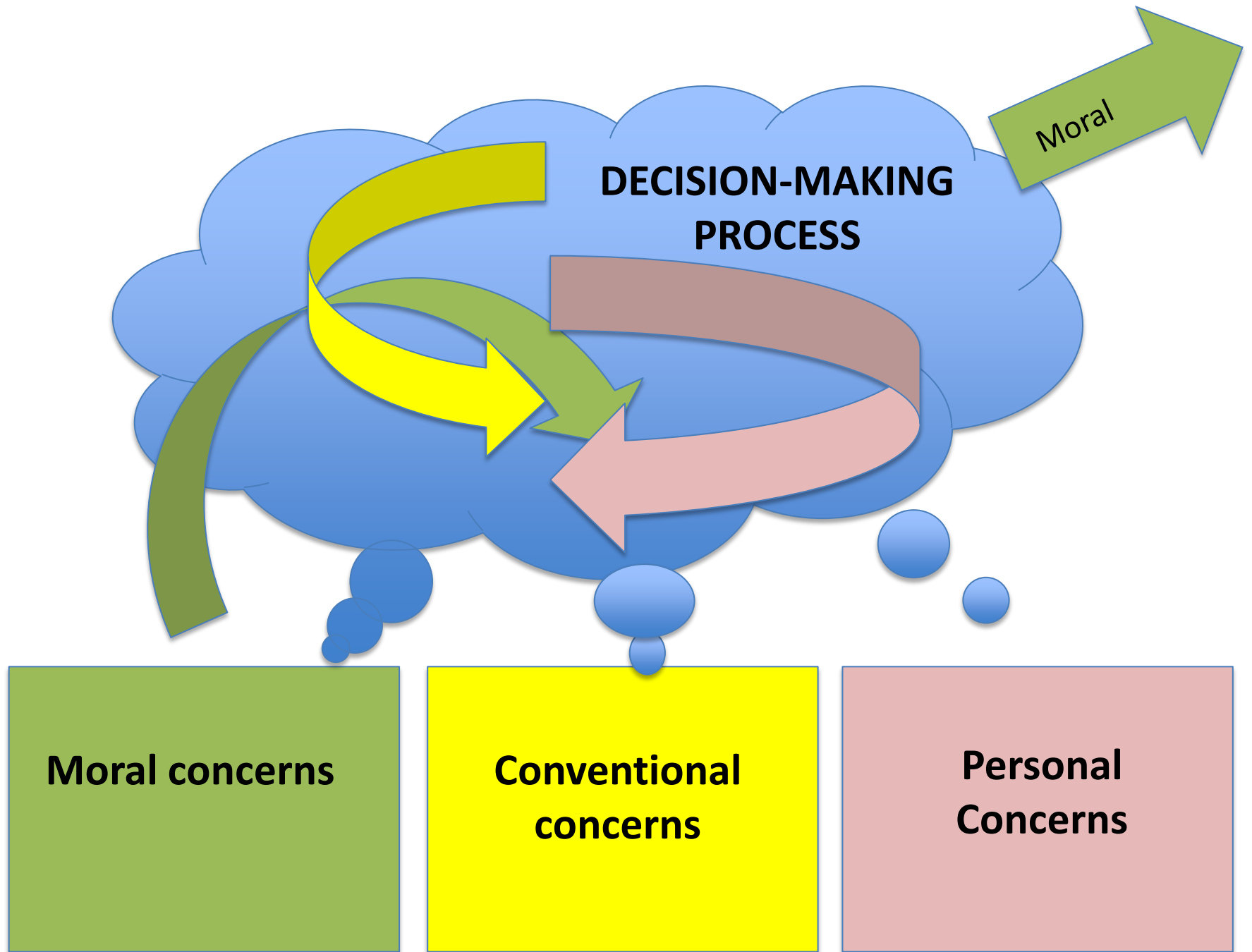
Issue: Non-Moral	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17
Day of Worship	0%	0%	0%	0%
Work on Sunday	0%	0%	0%	0%
Head Covering	0%	0%	0%	0%
Baptism	0%	0%	0%	0%
Interfaith Marriage	6%	0%	0%	0%
Women Preaching	6%	0%	12%	11%
Premarital Sex	--	--	11%	14%

Percentage of Religious Children Responding “It Would be Wrong To Do” if God Had Said Nothing About Act for Moral Issues

Issue:	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17
Stealing	81%	70%	88%	91%
Hitting	81%	70%	88%	82%
Slander	75%	78%	88%	89%
Damaging Property	88%	83%	94%	100%

Justifications Provided by Religious Children Responding “It Would be Wrong To Do” if God Had Said Nothing About Act for Moral Issues

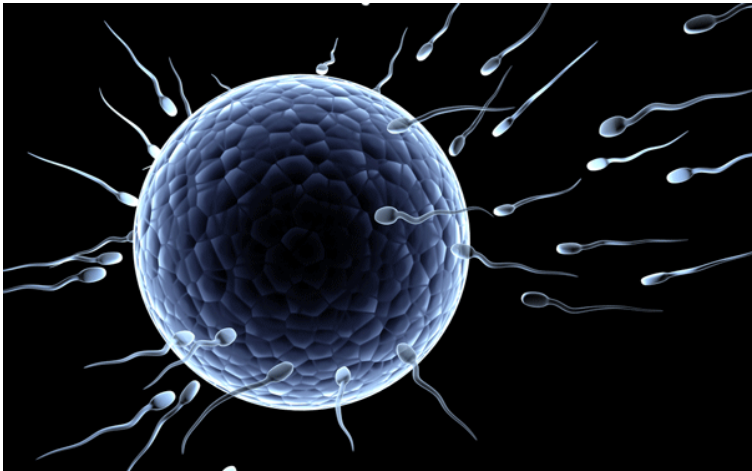
Justification	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17
Welfare	50%	39%	53%	70%
Fairness	26%	23%	22	18%
Reciprocity	3%	23%	9%	6%
Obligation	0%	3%	9%	4%
Categorical	8%	6%	2%	0%



Informational Assumptions

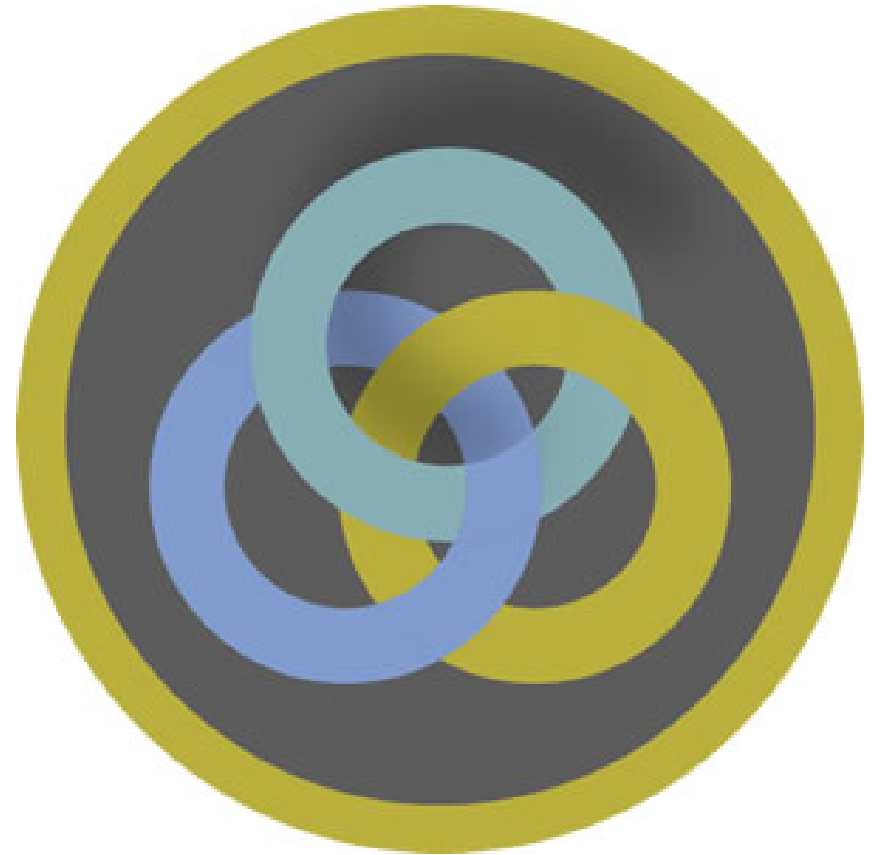
What we believe to be true based upon evidence and information from cultural and religious sources

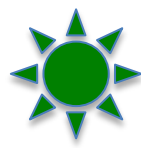
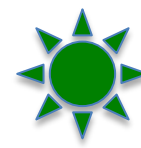
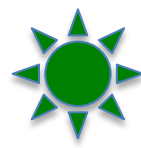
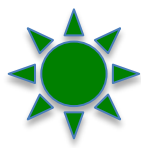
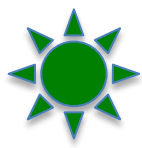
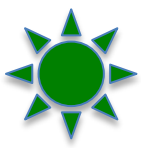
Example: When does a fertilized egg become a person?



Development of Moral Cognition

- Development takes place within each domain
- With age – increased capacity to incorporate and balance considerations across domains in complex social situations
- No fixed stages for cross-domain coordination
- No developmental end point where morality takes priority in all contexts





Component 2: Emotional Development / Moral Mental Health

- Agency
- Empathy
- Emotion recognition
- Theory of mind – Perspective taking



Component 3 - Performance

- Executive function
- Self regulation



Grit



John
Wayne

Don't much like
quitters, son.

GRIT

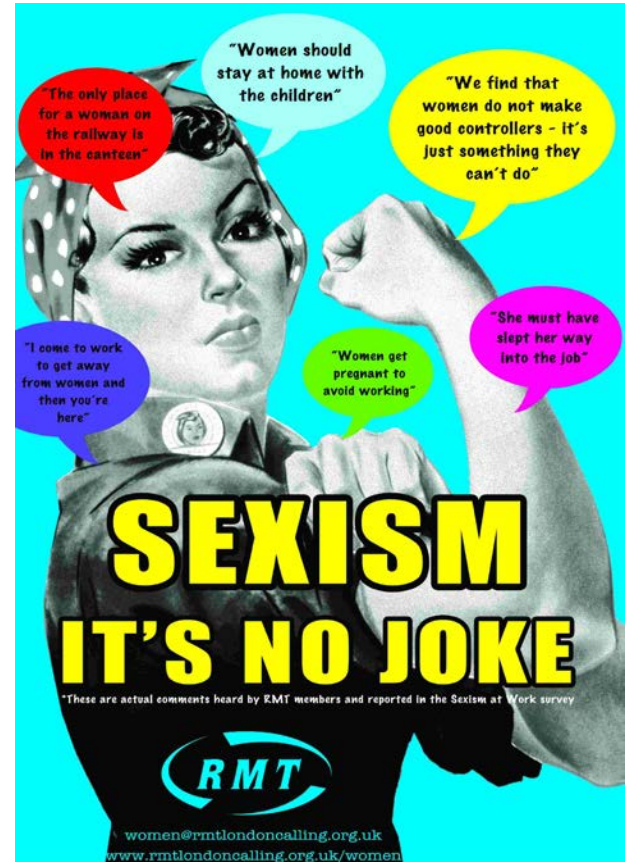
Pass It On.

VALUES.COM THE FOUNDATION
FOR A BETTER LIFE

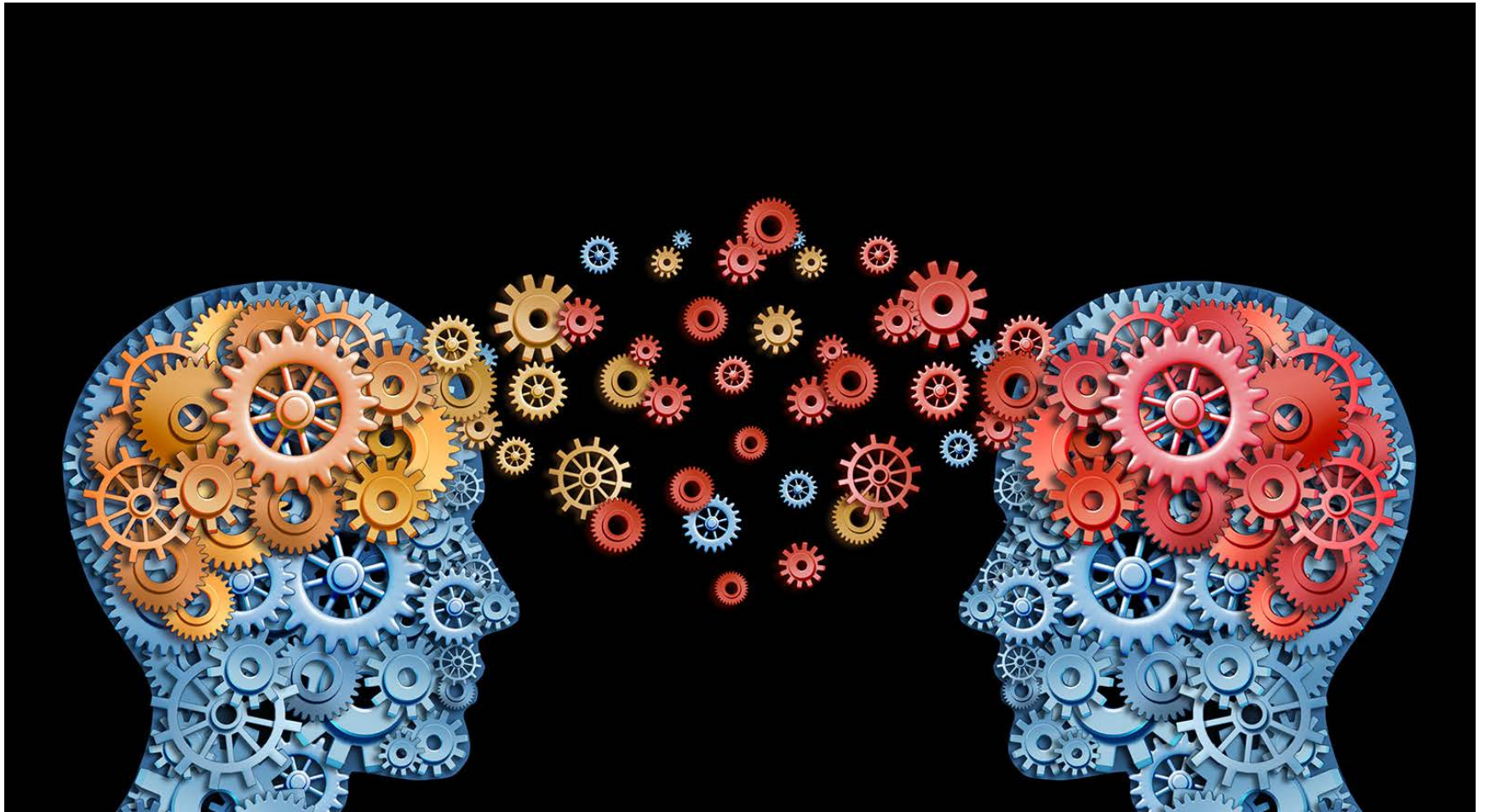
Nice is Not Enough

Component 4 – Moral (critical)

Social Engagement

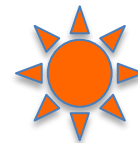
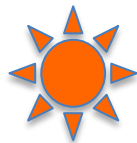


Moral Principles for Social Change Emerge from Sociogenetic Processes



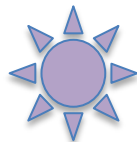
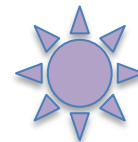
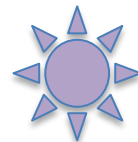
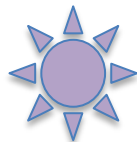
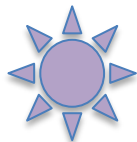
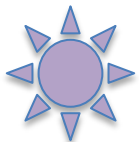
Nice is Not Enough: Moral (critical) Social Engagement

- Critical moral orientation
- Responsive engagement
- “Engaged reasoning is thus reasoning together in the most robust sense of the term.”

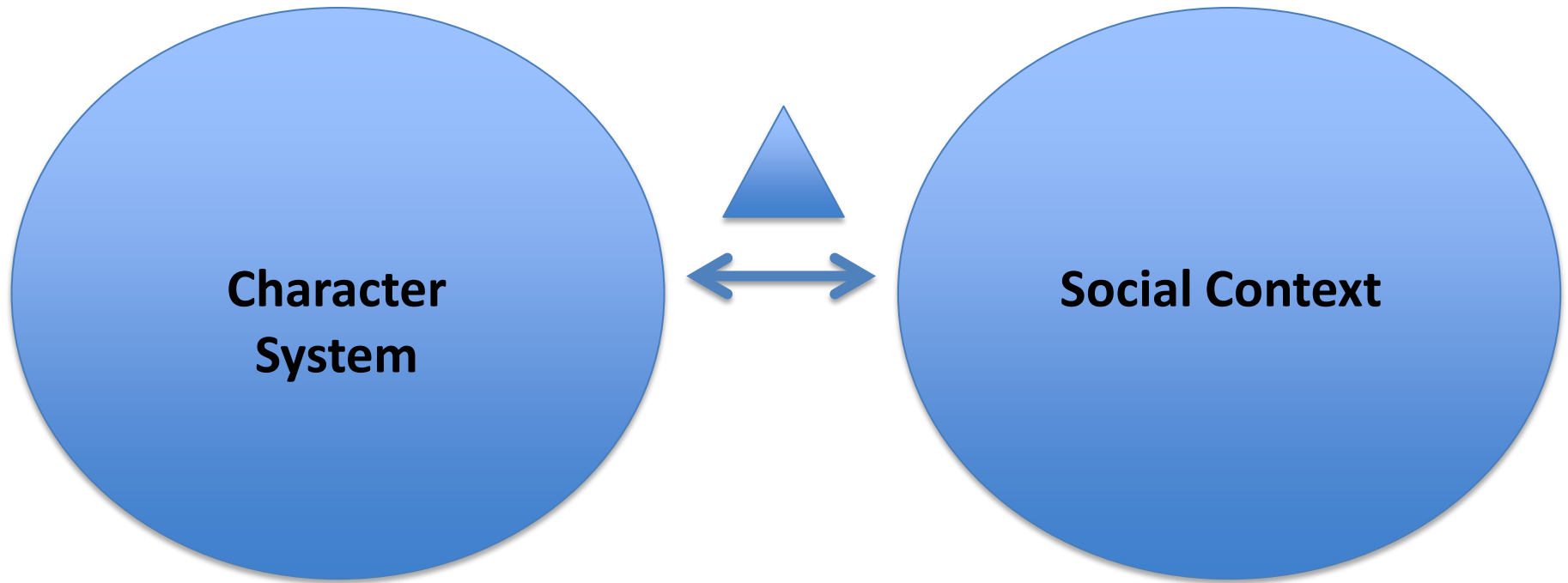


Purpose

- Establishment of a set of personal goals that provide meaning and direction to a person's life.
- Purpose within the context of character links these personal goals to the contribution to social justice and the welfare of others.
- Purpose conjoined with the skills for responsive engagement would address the long sought for post-conventional component of moral development and character education.



Character and Context as Interpenetrating and in Dynamic Relationship





- Notions of character as virtues that exist independent of their enactment within a context are meaningless.
- Any definition of character must be framed in terms of coherence in moral judgments rather than context independent consistency.
- Attempts to impose an impossible level of consistency through theoretical constructs such as “will” or “grit” mistakenly assume a decontextualized psychological system that has little to do with an actual human being.

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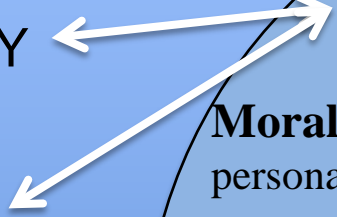
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Comprehensive Assessment



- “To educate a person (man) in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society”

Theodore Roosevelt

Thank you.