Multicultural Education Review

School wide mediated prosocial development: Applying a sociocultural understanding to inclusive practice and character education

--Manuscript Draft--

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Title

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Abstract

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Keywords: Inclusive Practice, Character Education, Sociocultural, Prosocial Development, Antisocial Behavior

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List of changes following review

A Table of Changes

	Comments	Revisions
Associate Editor & Reviewer 2	Clarify the fit of MS to MER.	Citing a UNESCO (2015) report, we strengthened our argument as to why our MS is relevant to multicultural education (p. 3). Also, we added one paper from MER that dealt with school violence issues in Greece (p. 2)
Associate Editor & Reviewer 1	Provide more information about the intervention program.	Due to word count requirements a brief description is provided and citations included to sign post reader to further research providing more in depth information about the intervention
Associate Editor	Provide more discussion about the context specific nature of results.	The context is broken down for each school and provides context specific information for the reader.
Associate Editor & Reviewer 2	Proof-read the article (Reviewer 2 provide specific text comments).	We went through multiple rounds of proof-reading and fixed all the typos. We also finished all the editing that was requested by reviewer 2. All foot notes were provided in reference to the reviewer request.
Reviewer 2	Strengthen the literature review on multicultural education and character education.	We added references of a recent UNESCO report (2015) and a MER publication (2016) in pages 2 and 3. We also cited two works recommended by Reviewer 2 (i.e., Modood, 2013; Race, 2015).
Reviewer 2	Double check David Cameron reference in the article.	We provided correct references in APA style.
Reviewer 2	Add citations in the research method section.	We cited Cohen et al. (2011) as recommended by Reviewer 2. (p. 9)
Reviewer 2	Add more literature review on both the qualitative and quantitative data analysis parts.	In the methods section a discussion of the data collection and analysis was expanded upon.
Reviewer 2	Add citations in the conclusion.	Updated citations were provided in the discussion, however the conclusions are drawn directly from the findings of the study.

Running Head: School wide mediated prosocial development

Title

School wide mediated prosocial development: Applying a sociocultural understanding to inclusive practice and character education

Abstract

The issue of inclusive practice, particularly as it pertains to how school staff address anti-social behavior to improve learning and life outcomes for children has become a primary topic of discussion among educational stakeholders. Within an action research framework, this investigation used a mixed-method multiple case study approach to investigate what impact character education has on school climate and pupil behavior within five primary schools in England. Data were collected using interviews, observations, and archived records. All data sets suggest that a multi-component socioculturally inspired program can have positive effects on teacher talk, student on-task behavior and decrease disruptive incidences during class and office referrals for anti-social behavior. Moreover, according to participant reports, the findings indicate that there is a positive effect on the school's ability to meet the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of pupils within a multicultural setting following the implementation of a whole-school character education program.

Keywords: Inclusive Practice, Character Education, Sociocultural, Prosocial Development, Antisocial Behavior

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Introduction

The issue of classroom and school management, particularly as it pertains to how school psychologists, teachers, and administrators address antisocial behavior to improve learning and life outcomes for children, has become a primary topic of discussion among educational stakeholders (Arthur, 2005). Of the two perspectives from which human behavior has traditionally been viewed—the *contextualized* and *decontextualized* perspectives—the majority of psychological research has been guided by the decontextualized perspective (White, 2010). Likewise, the field of education has adopted a decontextualized and fractured perspective of human action, conceptualizing behavior within an individualistic perspective while addressing one issue of concern at a time. However, school psychologists and other educationalists should consider that this decontextualized and individualistic phrasing of human action may not be sufficient for gaining understanding of effective strategies for improving learner engagement (e.g., on-task behavior during learning activities) and prosocial development (e.g., social competence and cooperative problem-solving and conflict resolution) within the multicultural school environment. Therefore, this study considers the relationship between learning and development rooted in a sociocultural perspective that emphasizes the role of socially mediated learning in the development of behavior, resilience, and character.

The current perception among educational stakeholders is that as schools and society continue to experience an increase in antisocial behavior (Berkowitz, 2014) general indiscipline is becoming the normal behavioral pattern within classrooms (Logan & Rickinson, 2005; Nikolaou & Samsari, 2016). This concern,

coupled with the current confusion and uncertainty regarding prosociality, ethics, values, and the role of social institutions, particularly schools, in facilitating the process by which children and adolescents acquire prosocial and ethical sensibilities, gave rise to this investigation.

However, before a clear and defined way forward can be determined, a coherent understanding of the role of school-wide prosocial character education in pupil behavior should be placed within a perspective that takes into account the pluralistic nature of modern multicultural society (Modood, 2013; Race, 2015). This will be particularly useful in dealing with various school violence problems associated with ethno-cultural diversity as aggression and violence at school can have detrimental impacts on students from marginalized groups (UNESCO, 2015).

It is important to note that these concerns are not new but as Berkowitz (2003) highlights, what does appear new is the sense of angst and urgency that currently accompanies these inter-related philosophical, psychological, and educational questions and concerns. This has led to a reactionary approach to antisocial behavior implemented on a piecemeal basis (White and Warfa, 2011).

Increasing concern throughout the world regarding disruptive antisocial behavior as highlighted by Liang, Flisher, and Lombard (2007) in Africa; Chen and Astor (2012) in Asia; Murray-Harvey and Slee (2010) in Australia; Smith (2002) in Europe and Robers, Zhang, and Truman (2012) in the US has led the drive to develop a robust strategy to combat under achievement, disengagement, and mental health issues. In Europe this has culminated in a resurgence of governmental rhetoric calling for the implementation of character education (Arthur, 2005). Furthermore, the growing prevalence of mental illness among school-age children has led to a proliferation of initiatives in schools varying

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considerably in range and focus (Gott, 2003). These issues have fueled a growing discussion regarding what can be done to address inappropriate behavior and re-establish social cohesion within schools to improve learning and enhance life outcomes across the broader community. Such concern is not groundless; in one study, Logan and Rickinson (2005), found that 85% of teachers with more than 15 years of experience reported that disruptive and antisocial behavior is progressively worsening and that 60% of all teachers reported a behavior crisis within UK schools today. Mayer and Leone (1999) found that US school personnel spend more time and resources on punitive measures aimed at inhibiting anti-social behavior than on positive or preventative strategies.

A United Nations report (UNICEF, 2007) found that the US placed 27th out of 29 OECD countries on a quality of life survey for young people, implying that initiatives to improve life outcomes for children in the US are not meeting needs. Furthermore, this same report indicates that many economically advanced countries are failing to meet the needs of children; with Italy placing 22nd, Hungary 20th, Austria 18th, Canada 17th and the UK 16th. Moreover, Merrell, Tymms, and Jones (2007) reported a "no change" in the cognitive and socioemotional developmental levels of children despite the introduction of several Early Years initiatives over recent years to improve the well-being of children in the UK, suggesting that the developmental needs of children are not being met and that the focus of these initiatives may be wrongly placed.

As evidenced, inappropriate behavior within schools and the failure of many economically advanced nations to meet the needs of children is neither a new concern nor one that has been effectively addressed. In 1997 the Great Britain Department of Education and Science stated that "a strength of character" or "a

moral code" must be taught in schools to overcome poor outcomes for children. However, Arthur (2005) found that without a clear understanding or evidence-based guidance, many schools in the UK are now teaching a "moral code" to pupils through developing initiatives that promote a series of behavioral outcomes taught in a behaviorist fashion that may compound the issues by perpetuating social injustices related to school suspensions and exclusions (White and Warfa, 2011).

Therefore, there is not only no satisfactory definition of character education but no synthesis of psychological or educational research under a unified theory or practice to guide the development of an appropriate character education initiative that can meet the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of children within the complexity of the multicultural setting many schools inhabit.

Moreover, Arthur (2005) warns that character education, which is consistently linked to citizenship, moral education, and values education, is fragmented across many school systems and school staffs as well as other educational stakeholders have no unified understanding of the impact that such undefined programming can have on the well-being of school-aged children. It is this uncertainty and fragmentation of theory that leaves many schools adopting the teaching of rules and regulations or cultural specific social conventions to pupils in a behavioristic fashion to obtain control for the sake of compliance. This authoritarian style of control, referred to as *behavior management or school-wide positive behavior support*, can arguably undermine the development of resiliency, self-regulation, and autonomy (Kohn, 1999). Despite the absence of a modern theoretical basis (Leming, 1997; Mclaughlin & Halstead, 1999), programs that aim to improve the values and behavior of children (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, & Haynes, 1997; Hahn, 1998; Haydon, Mancil, & Van Loan, 2009) have

been implemented in schools in many nations. Many advocates of models that aim to promote certain types of behavior have encouraged their implementation due to the "moral crisis" of modern societies (Williams, Kirst, & Haertel, 2005). Unlike other curricula designed to facilitate the child's ability to reason and solve problems (e.g., math, literacy, and science education), the goal of many forms of character, citizenship, moral, and values education appears to be to encourage children to appreciate and comply with rules and regulations established for control and management of their behavior by others. This goal of telling children *what* to think differs sharply from that of traditional curricula designed to teach children *how* to think for themselves.

Clearly, the current conceptualization of behavior management does not consider the underlying drive for autonomy or self-actualization (White, 2010). However, aligning the development of character education with a perspective influenced by modern developmental, psychological, and educational theory and research may provide the required framework to construct character education initiatives designed to develop characteristics associated with rational and ethical decision making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. This type of mediated character education strategy is seen to have the potential to facilitate the development of resiliency, self-regulation, and the support necessary for children to reach their full potential and achieve an autonomous ego.

Considering that children with special needs constitute only 20% of the school population, 55% of all school exclusions in the UK in 2007 involved pupils with special needs, up from 44% in 2003 (Garner, 2007). In the US, students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive an out of school suspension (13%) compared to students without disabilities (6%) as reported by the U.S.

Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014). Furthermore, the same report highlights that although black children in the US make up only 18% of the preschool population, they represent 48% of pupil out-of-school suspensions compared to white students who represent 43% of the preschool population but 26% of preschool students receiving out-of-school suspensions. This argues that behavior management approaches within schools are more than a school issue and give rise to civil right concerns if an effective approach is not implemented to meet the needs of all children at all level of schooling across all communities to enhance inclusive practice.

Summary of the Building Schools of Character (BSC) Program

The BSC program is designed to provide universal (school-wide character education), targeted (restorative processes), and intensive (child centered school support center) strategies. This approach may best be facilitated and managed by a School Psychologist and may meet the needs of all children, even those experiencing intensive and chronic behavioral problems or mental health difficulties or who are at risk of doing so. Recognizing Vygotsky's (1978) argument that learning precedes development, the BSC pedagogy is based on sociocultural theory underpinned by a cultural constructivist framework. This framework provides a preventative pathway for school psychologists, educators and other community mental health professionals to work together to meet the needs of all children, including those with persistent, chronic, and intensive behavioral difficulties, without stigmatizing, marginalizing or isolating those who are most vulnerable.

Considering the above, the primary objective of the BSC Program is to provide community schools with a cost effective and sustainable "tool kit". A tool

kit stocked with mechanisms for facilitating character development and restorative processes through the implementation of School Support Centers (SSCs). These centers should be organized and managed by the School Psychologist or other education professional to facilitate the development of the prosocial attitudes and behavior necessary for children to become socially competent and cooperative within multicultural classrooms. This competence and cooperation may construct the resiliency or "strength of character" required to effectively address and ameliorate childhood difficulties and their consequences. Moreover, as Duckworth and Seligman (2007) highlight, social and emotional competency is a better predictor of academic attainment than IQ.

Methods

Procedure

As the first stage of implementation, the principal investigator held an information session that was used as a platform to recruit participating schools. Following the recruitment of schools (n=5), separate meetings were scheduled and conducted by the researchers with each school's Head Teacher (n=5), Deputy Head Teacher (n=5), and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (n=5). The meetings were conducted as formal semi-structured interviews to develop an understanding of the setting and the needs and desires of the senior management team to address the concerns of each school. The second stage of implementation began with a two-hour meeting, facilitated by the behavior support manager for the county and the researcher, with all school personnel (n= 45) from each school to develop their understanding of the BSC Program and gain their full support and consent. A meeting was then held with participating parents (n=123) in which the senior staff and researchers explained the project to them and gained their full

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consent. Letters were also sent to all parental homes (n= 462) to inform them of the project and provide them with an opportunity to voice any concerns. After finding that no objections had been raised, the project began. During the process of gaining the consent and support of the governing board of the schools, the schools' behavioral policy was rewritten so that the BSC Program was fully incorporated within it, and a letter with the new behavioral policy was then sent home to all parents.

Pre-intervention data collection

Following completion of the logistical aspects of introducing a new program within the school, the research project began with baseline data being collected from pupils (n=1011) and school staff (n=45). Semi-structured interviews with a random selection of pupils (aged 8 to 11; n=60) and all school staff were also conducted the researchers (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). In addition, archival data regarding exclusions, behavioral referrals and actions, absenteeism, and truancy were collected. All baseline data were collected by the researchers prior to providing staff training so that the data would not be affected by a change in behavior-management practice prior to collection. The quantitative data were subjected to statistical analysis that included Chi-square (Corder and Foreman (2014) and Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (Siegel, 1956) calculations. The qualitative data collected during interviews were transcribed and subjected to a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke, (2006). Thematic Analysis is the most common approach to analyzing qualitative data with is main focusing being to closing examine, extract and record patterns/themes within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clark (2006) state, that Thematic Analysis has six distinct phases and begins with an in depth engagement and (1)

familiarization with the data that leads to the first depictions of possible patterns or themes. The analysis of data continues with the (2) generation of initial codes, (3) searching for themes in the initial coding, (4) reviewing the themes that emerge to eventually (5) defining and naming the themes. The above resulting in the final phase of (6) writing the themes in such a way that allows for a final process of analysis before dissemination of the findings.

Staff training for the Building Schools of Character Program

Following the collection of baseline data, the primary investigator provided training to six county Behavior Support Teachers who were staff members of the Countywide Special Educational Needs and Psychological Services Division. All six staff received one full day of professional development on the BSC Program. One week later, the researchers in conjunction with the Behavior Support Teachers modeled the character education component of the program for all classes (n=30) in all schools over a one-week period. This was seen as an important process in helping teachers gain a deeper understanding of the facilitation techniques associated with the character education component of the program. Three weeks later, an additional day of training was provided by the principal investigator and Behavior Support Teachers for the Special Educational Needs Coordinator and the three teaching assistants from each participating school who had volunteered to take primary responsibility for the facilitation of the restorative processes and the SSC.

Major Components of the BSC program

The implementation of the BSC Program followed a sequential plan of introduction into the daily routines of the school. Character education, the first component implemented, in the first instance consisted of a one-hour class that

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introduced the six key words (respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and honesty) that form the foundation of the discourse associated with building prosocial attitudes. During this implementation lesson, the pupils engaged in a mediated discussion that defined and demonstrated these words with the use of emotive film clips and a dialogue that discussed who the hero was and what characteristics the hero displayed in contrast to the villain. This process continued until all the key words had been explored, and concluded with exploration of how the pupils' choices lead to their actions and how their choices and actions shape who they are and how they appear to others. The conclusion focused on making a commitment to being the "star" of their own stories (i.e., the hero) and helping others be the heroes of their own stories by signing a full-value contract (Rohnke, 1989), which for the purpose of the BSC program states clearly that they have agreed to become a person of good character. The full value contract clearly stated the expectations of those involved in a cooperative learning experience in age-appropriate language. Prior to their signing of the contract, the teachers discussed the meaning of the full-value contract to ensure that all pupils understood what standards of character they are agreeing to uphold. As previously discussed, this commitment to good character plays an important role in establishing self-regulation and order in the classroom and throughout the school. The school and teachers also agreed to provide in follow-on implicit Character Education lessons once per week to reinforce and enhance the facilitated prosocial development of the pupils.

Following the implementation of the character education component, the second component of the program consisting of restorative justice was implemented. As indicated by the evidence collected from the single-case pilot

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study (White and Warfa, 2011), a three- to four-week period is warranted between starting character-education lessons and the implementation of the restorative processes to provide time for children to learn and begin to internalize the language of prosocial development so that the dialogue of restorative processes can be more effectively facilitated within a restorative justice framework to address behavior that undermines relationships, communities and civil society.

The discourse used in the restorative process within the BSC Program focuses on acknowledgement and the subsequent management of shame facilitated through a guided discourse that allows offenders to accept responsibility for the harm done by their actions (White and Warfa, 2011). This acceptance is followed by a discourse that facilitates the development of sincere regret, followed by an apology for causing harm and the acceptance of a logical consequence for disrespectful and irresponsible actions. To facilitate this discourse, a knowledgeable adult or more competent peer should always refer to the commitment to be of good character; that is, to be a hero. This process provides a space for children to acknowledge how their actions have not only hurt others, but caused them to break their commitment. The discourse then focuses on how they can redress this harm and what actions they must take in the future to ensure that they do not break their commitment again or harm their relationship with others.

Upon completion of the implementation of both the character-education and restorative-justice components of the program, the School Support Centre (SSC) was opened. As this occurred two months after the introduction of the BSC Program, it provided time for pupils and staff to become familiar with the expectations of the program and understand the responsibility placed on them to maintain their commitment to adhere to prosocial standards of conduct. Pupils

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experiencing difficulty in maintaining this commitment were assigned to the SSC so that they could receive intensive character-development and remedial academic programming in smaller groups (*n* < 12).

All SSC programming is best facilitated by a School Psychologist, Behavior Support Teacher, Special Educational Needs Coordinator or other highly skilled member of staff and should focus on helping students become socially competent and cooperative within the learning environment. The SSC provides an opportunity for schools to assure those experiencing difficulties that the staff will maintain their unconditional commitment to assist them in overcoming any obstacles that may be preventing them from reaching their full potential. In addition, the SSC provides schools with the ability to assure all pupils and staff that the disruption of teaching and learning will not be accepted and that they will provide the learning opportunities for all students to be successful within the community school setting.

Post-implementation data collection

Six months following the full implementation of the BSC Program, data were collected from classroom observations (n=30) and semi-structured interviews with randomly selected pupils (n = 25) and staff (n = 12). In addition, tracking data concerning behavioral referrals to senior staff were collected to conduct a pre/post intervention comparison.

Participants

  School 1. School 1 is a primary school[1] situated in an Education Action Zone (EAZ[2]) in East Anglia, England. Of its 123 pupils, 24.7% are on the Special Educational Needs (SEN[3]) register without statements compared to the national average of 16.1%. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds.

  School 2. School 2 is a primary school situated in East Anglia, England as school 1 and places these two schools in close proximity of each other. Of its 171 pupils, 18.1% are on the SEN register without statements and 2.3% with statements. The school is an area of some socio-economic disadvantage, with many children beginning school with poor social skills. The main needs associated with pupils on the SEN register within the school are social, emotional, and behavioral. The report also highlights that 25% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is slightly higher than the national average.

  School 3. School 3 is in East Anglia, England that admits pupils between the ages of seven and 11. Of its 221 pupils, 14.5% are on the SEN register without statements and 0.9% with statements. The pupils come from a very wide range of

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[1] Primary schools in England consist of: Year R (Reception) (age 4 – 5);Year 1 (age 5 - 6); Year 2 (age 6 - 7);Year 3 (age 7 - 8); Year 4 (age 8 - 9);Year 5 (age 9 - 10); Year 6 (age 10 - 11).

[2] Educational Action Zone (EAZ): were established by the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act and encouraged local partnerships to develop new and imaginative approaches to raising standards in disadvantaged urban and rural areas within England, UK.

[3] Special Educational Needs (SEN) Register: The SEN register meets the statutory requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 in the UK. Once children are assessed and a needs statement developed they are placed on the schools SEN register.

social backgrounds, including some from families with low incomes; 12% of pupils receive free school meals; and that many pupils enter the school with an attainment level well below average.

School 4. School 4 is a junior school[4] in East Anglia, England. Of its 306 pupils, 8.5% are on the SEN register without statements and 0.3% with statements. The attainment on entry has been historically above average and is now exceptionally high, and that the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low, as is the percentage of pupils from a minority ethnic background.

School 5. School 5 is a primary school in East Anglia, England. Of its 190 pupils, 13.7% are on the SEN register without statements and 1.1% with statements. The pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with statements, is above the national average.

Results

Pre-implementation interview data

After conducting the information sessions and gaining participant consent yet prior to implementing the BSC Program, semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior management (n = 5), the teaching (n = 30) and support staff (n = 17), and a random sample of pupils aged 8 to 11 (n = 60) to gain an understanding of their views in relationship to behavior and the school community. These data provided insight into the climate of the schools prior to the implementation of the program. Through the coding, sorting, and recoding of the data, several themes emerged that reflected the views held by all stakeholders in

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[4] Junior schools in England admit children in: Year 3 (age 7 - 8); Year 4 (age 8 - 9);Year 5 (age 9 - 10); Year 6 (age 10 -11).

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relationship to their current perspectives on school climate and pupil behavior

(Cohen's Kappa = .82). Once these themes emerged participant quotes were

extracted to present the situation most succinctly.

Theme 1: Administration and teaching staff dissatisfied with current strategy.

The senior staff across all schools indicated that current behavior-

management and social-emotional learning strategies left them less than satisfied

with current outcomes.

> *Head teacher school 1: "The teachers are dissatisfied and overburdened with the current behavior-management approach of rewards and sanctions based on the Positive Behavior Support approach."*

The following statements highlight the stress that teachers are feeling and

speak directly to how most teachers are experiencing dissatisfaction with current

approaches to improving school behavior.

> *Teacher 1: "Sometimes I dread coming to school in the morning... it is a constant uphill battle it seems."*

> *Teacher 8: "The main issue that gets me is that what we are doing isn't changing anything…. The same child with severe behavioral difficulties isn't really getting what he needs, and it goes on and on day after day with no change in behavior…. It really wears one down."*

Many teachers expressed dissatisfaction with current behavior- management

strategies.

> *Teacher 17: "I have pupils who just don't care, parents who don't care, and I just feel like this approach of ignoring the bad and 'catching' [makes hand gestures] them [students] doing good and giving them stickers or time on the computer is really just making the behavior get worse and worse. Like the more I try, the harder it gets."*

Dissatisfaction with existing policies was further reflected by several

teachers who described the need to provide targeted and consistent programming

to enhance the social competence and self-regulatory skills of pupils not coping

well within the classroom and around the school.

Teacher 7: "Yes, pupils like to get stickers and rewards, absolutely, but just because they like it doesn't mean it changes anything. I give stickers, fill up marble jars, praise them, and what do they do? The same thing they did the day before. It just goes on and on, and no matter what we seem to do the bad behavior doesn't change, and now it seems like more and more are joining in. It's endless and getting worse."

Teacher 19: "We have circle time, we have golden time, we give reward after reward, and the behavior remains the same, and when some of them kick-off, the words they can string together is appalling. But does anyone care how this affects the teachers? No! We are supposed to take it even though you read signs even in other workplaces that state abusive behavior will not be tolerated, but we have to on a daily basis. I will ask you something: What other professional would be treated the way teachers are treated, and I don't mean just by the kids day after day?"

The following comments from several head teachers and teachers support

the widely held concern over current behavior-management practices and the

need to adopt other approaches:

Teacher 5: "My major concern with the current behavior-management plan is that it does not change behavior; they [pupils] just repeat the same thing no matter how many stickers they get, or they change for the moment and then are back to the same old patterns a day later, or, for that matter, moments later."

Teacher 24: "My primary concern is how really unfair our system is right now. I mean we give stickers and other rewards, but really a lot of them [pupils] are working hard but getting really no recognition, and all of the focus is on trying to get the disruptive ones to behave."

Theme 2: *Need to change behavior-management approach*.

All head teachers and most teachers (n = 28) indicated that they were

interested in adopting an approach that instills intrinsic regulation.

Teacher 8: "I would love to see all children wanting to learn not because of stickers or rewards but because they really want to."

Question: "What do you hope the BSC Program will accomplish?"

Head teacher school 5: "That all children feel that they are being treated fairly and the school's approach is consistent."

As indicated above many of the school staff expressed disillusionment with

current practices and others a growing sense of helplessness, feelings echoed by a

variety of stakeholders. The majority of teachers' desire to address these concerns in a constructive manner was evidenced throughout this phase of data collection.

Pre- & post-implementation differences in behavioral measures.

The data in the tables below were collected through observation and analysis of school behavioral records 3 months prior to and six months after BSC implementation. Observations were conducted for one hour both pre- and post-BSC implementation during math lessons for children aged 5 to 11 to code teacher talk into one of three categories: (a) content delivery, (b) behavior management, and (c) relationship building. For coding purposes, each teacher-initiated sentence was recorded into one of the categories and the totals from all classrooms observed (n = 30) were added together for analysis. In addition, pre- and post-observations were conducted to record disruptive incidences, defined as any pupil action that disrupted the teaching and learning process, and pupil on- and off-task behavior. These figures were also added together from each observed classroom for analysis. School records were searched to collate information regarding office referrals related to anti-social behavior in the classroom and around the school.

A Chi-square analysis of data pertaining to types of teacher talk (Table 1) and pupil on- and off-task behaviors (Table 2) was conducted to ascertain whether there had been a statistically significant change. As shown in Table 1, significant post-implementation changes in all measures were observed (x^2 = 1477.01, df = 2, p < .0001, Cramer's V = .3636). As shown in Table 2, a higher proportion of pupils engaged in post-implementation classroom curricular activities with a chi-square analysis (x^2 = 949.8, df = 1, p < .0001, Cramer's V = .2846) of these data indicating a strong relationship between these variables.

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INSERT TABLE 1

INSERT Table 2

In Tables 1 and 2, paired *t*-tests were used to calculate the means and the standard deviations of pre- and post-implementation disruptive incidences and office referrals for inappropriate pupil behavior, with Cohen's *d* determining the effect size. In the Tables 3 and 4, the Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated that the mean number of disruptive incidences during academic lessons (table 3: W+ = 463.50, W- = 1.50, *n* = 30, *p* < .0002) and office referrals for inappropriate behavior (table 4: W+ = 435, W- = 0, *n* = 30, *p* < .0001) decreased significantly post program intervention. The effect sizes associated with both the disruptive incidences and office referrals indicate a large effect.

INSERT Table 3

INSERT Table 4

As indicated the results are statistically significant, leading the null hypothesis to be rejected on all measures in all schools. As the Tables indicate, when a meta-analysis is conducted, the results are extremely statistically significant for three of the four measures (*p* < .0001) and very statistically significant for the remaining measure by conventional criteria (*p* < .0002).

Post-implementation qualitative data

The following statements indicate that the schools experienced similar results from implementation of the BSC Program.

Theme 1: A transformation in behavior management.

The data collected from all the head teachers describe how both the staff and pupils were beginning to experience a different climate within the school.

> *Head teacher 3: "The restorative approach has really helped not only with the pupils when they get in a scrum at school but we have also used it when the issues in school, or for that matter that started outside the school involving families."*

> *Head teacher 1: "I have noticed a real difference both in the staff and students; it is much more relaxed."*

Many teachers (n = 21) supported the changing atmosphere in their schools, a transformation that has led to a more inspired outlook as expressed by the comments below:

> *Teacher 13: "Throughout the school it is like a different place. I have been teaching for over 15 years and I wonder why we haven't done this from the start."*

> *Teacher 6: "I can do so much more now. Everyone participates, and when we have something go wrong, we all address it. Responsibility is taken and everyone feels it's been fair; that is really the big difference I think, kids feel it is fair."*

Theme 2: Increased self-regulation and learner engagement.

Many pupils across the schools expressed similar feelings and perspectives in relationship to increased self-regulation and improved behavior.

> *Pupil 31: "I find it much easier to work; there is a lot less noise and running about."*

> *Pupil 23: "If someone is trying to wind someone up, we can say we don't like it. Others have stopped bullying because we say we don't like it and it is not the right thing to do, and we all like doing the right thing."*

> *Pupil 49: "I like the support centre. It helps me when I have problems in class."*

Merging the Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the role of mediated character education in enhancing prosocial development in order to develop a program to meet the needs of all children in the school.

All quantitative data sets suggest that the BSC Program had a positive influence on teaching and learning within the schools that participated in this study. Teachers were able to significantly increase the amount of time that they could devote to content delivery and decrease the amount of time spent on reactive behavior management, while students significantly increased their on-task interactions and significantly decreased their disruptive behaviors during group learning.

Discussion

Previous research into the impact of character education programs has yielded neither a clear guideline regarding what character education should provide (Arthur, 2005) nor discussed how a character education program can be effectively implemented school wide to promote prosocial development among school-aged children. This lack of guidance has opened the door for ill-conceived culturally centric programs to be implemented in schools. Poorly designed research has been used to promote these initiatives and little reliable and valid evidence has been previously available to understand the impact of these initiatives. Therefore, this study focused on providing a sound research design and robust triangulation of datasets to build an understanding of how a multicomponent integrative character education initiative might impact the school community. As highlighted in the findings above the data collected from school staff and pupil interviews, observations, and school records in this study suggest that following the implementation of the BSC Program in five primary schools, pupil behavior and school climate improved. However, a robust discussion of the role culturally competent teacher mediated prosocial development learning opportunities is required to fully understand the findings. This discussion is

paramount for avoiding the deleterious effect that culturally centric inspired character education may have on the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children.

Role of prosocial development in educational and life outcomes

A growing body of evidence supports the view that prosocial character traits influence educational outcomes, emotional well-being, and the ability to overcome adversity (Walton and Cohen, 2007; Walton, and Cohen,2011; Wang, and Eccles, 2012).

The current research provides considerable evidence that school staff can serve as significant protective factors in the lives of children by providing culturally competent initiatives that meet the prosocial developmental needs of the whole child as well as mediated-learning activities facilitated by authentically caring adults within the school.

The findings of this study raise fundamental questions about how schools and other culturally constructed environments (e.g., families, youth clubs, and mental health institutions) influence prosocial development and life outcomes. In addition the study considers how these environments should address prevention and intervention efforts to provide the most beneficial outcomes for children by moving from a behavior management model to a mediated behavior development model. The findings also suggest that overall school morale can be improved for the entire school community when character education focuses on the development of emotional wellbeing, a cooperative environment and individual autonomy through enhanced self-regulation. All participants reported an increase in engagement with learning and a much more relaxed and friendly environment within the classroom and across the school setting. This development of

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cooperation and friendliness suggest that teacher mediated learning opportunities that focus on behavior development can be much more effective then common reactive behavior management programs. In turn, the increase in student and staff morale is seen as a positive outcome that increases the learners' feelings of belonging to a caring and fair community. Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning preceded development and that it is through culturally competent mediated learning opportunities that assist the learning in moving beyond their current level of understanding. Therefore, the BSC initiative embraces this understanding and provides school staff with a research informed approach to leading development so that learners can become autonomous self-regulated members of the learning community. Members who have a voice to exercise their rational and ethical decision making, problem solving and conflict resolution skills while being supported by more competent peers and teachers within a caring and trustworthy environment.

Practical Implications

This study found that a socioculturally framed behavior-development program facilitated through the delivery of mediated cooperative-learning activities designed to enhance responsibility, respect, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and honesty can have a positive impact on pupil behavior and self-regulation within the multicultural classroom. This finding, coupled with an understanding of the importance of self-regulation, suggests that future school-based behavior-development programs and socio-emotional learning initiatives should consider the role of mediated cooperative-learning activities in developing beneficial character adaptations that promote self-regulation, emotional wellbeing and positive educational and life outcomes. Such educational initiatives should

include the design and delivery of professional development courses for school administrators, school psychologists, teachers, and support staff to facilitate the implementation of school wide programming grounded in a sociocultural framework that targets character development.

In conclusion, the results of the investigation suggest that a mediated holistic approach to behavior development can be facilitated by school staff and that the initiative can have a direct impact on pupil behavior, teacher effectiveness, and school climate within multicultural learning environments. In addition, this study presents a unified theoretical base to a school-wide approach to enhancing prosocial development among school-aged children through the delivery of mediated character enhancement activities and a practical solution for addressing antisocial behavior within the classroom and wider school community.

The findings of this study also suggest that a holistic approach to character education framed within a sociocultural perspective may lead to an effective behavior development strategy that promotes the development of a cooperative-learning environment that improves both staff and student prosocial engagement with education which may facilitate the development of an autonomous ego rooted in a prosocial identity.

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Table 1

All Schools: Type of Teacher Talk during Lesson

	Content delivery	Behavior management	Relationship building	Total
Pre-implementation	1847	3754	332	5933
Post-implementation	2960	1436	842	5238

Note. x^2 = 1477.01, df = 2, *p* <.00001, Cramer's V =.3636. These differences are considered extremely statistically significant by conventional criteria.

All Schools: Type of Teacher Talk during Lesson

Table 2

All Schools: Number of Pupil On- and Off-Task Behaviors during Lesson

	On-task behaviors	Off-task behaviors	Total
Pre-implementation	2699	3065	5764
Post-implementation	4460	1519	5979

Note. x^2 = 949.8, df = 1, p < .00001, Cramer's V = .2846. These differences are considered extremely statistically significant by conventional criteria.

Table 3

All Schools: Number of Disruptive Incidents during Lesson

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Classroom 1	22	7
Classroom 2	8	9
Classroom 3	25	2
Classroom 4	11	3
Classroom 5	13	9
Classroom 6	28	5
Classroom 7	13	4
Classroom 8	12	1
Classroom 9	7	5
Classroom 10	9	1
Classroom 11	11	3
Classroom 12	18	2
Classroom 13	24	2
Classroom 14	26	1
Classroom 15	18	1
Classroom 16	17	3
Classroom 17	25	5
Classroom 18	28	2
Classroom 19	17	11
Classroom 20	22	16
Classroom 21	15	10
Classroom 22	20	11
Classroom 23	16	14
Classroom 24	27	9
Classroom 25	15	4
Classroom 26	22	9
Classroom 27	8	7
Classroom 28	12	5
Classroom 29	19	9
Classroom 30	24	8

Note. Wilcoxon signed rank test: W+ = 463.50, W- = 1.50, *n* = 30, *p* < .0002. These differences are considered statistically significant by conventional criteria.

Table 4

All Schools: Number of Office Referrals

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Classroom 1	5.6	0.3
Classroom 2	8.8	0.7
Classroom 3	11.5	1.4
Classroom 4	7.5	0.3
Classroom 5	9.4	0.6
Classroom 6	13.8	0.4
Classroom 7	4.9	0.1
Classroom 8	7.2	0.3
Classroom 9	11.6	0.7
Classroom 10	8.4	0.2
Classroom 11	12.1	1
Classroom 12	12.3	1.2
Classroom 13	5.4	3.8
Classroom 14	7.3	5.3
Classroom 15	11.6	8.7
Classroom 16	9.4	6.9
Classroom 17	11.2	8.2
Classroom 18	13.4	9.4
Classroom 19	4.6	0.3
Classroom 20	6.1	0.7
Classroom 21	5.2	0.2
Classroom 22	7.8	0.7
Classroom 23	9.4	0.4
Classroom 24	11.6	1.2
Classroom 25	4.6	0.1
Classroom 26	7.9	0.6
Classroom 28	11.3	0.9
Classroom 29	8.7	0.3
Classroom 30	12.6	0.7

Note. Wilcoxon singed rank test: W+ = 435, W- = 0, n = 30, p < .0001. These differences are considered statistically significant by conventional criteria.