

Title:

From Values Clarification to Character Education: A Personal Journey. By:
Kirschenbaum, Howard, *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development*,
19310293, Sep2000, Vol. 39, Issue 1

Database:

Academic Search Complete

Kirschenbaum, H. (2000). From Values Clarification to Character Education: A Personal Journey. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development*, 39(1), 4-20. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

The author describes his evolution from a national leader of the values clarification movement to an active proponent of **character education** and comprehensive values **education**. Several critical theoretical and strategic issues in the recent history of values and **character education** are explored.

From the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, I was one of the leaders of the values clarification movement in **education**, counseling, and the helping professions. Values clarification was arguably the most widespread of the innovative approaches to values and moral **education** that were popular during this period (National **Education** Association, 1976; Superka, Ahrens, & Hedstrom, 1976). Yet, by the 1980s, values clarification came under widespread criticism from which it has not recovered (Baer, 1982; Bennett, 1980).

Today, the most popular movement in the field of values **education** is **character education**, an endeavor that frequently declares itself opposed to values clarification. Again, it is my privilege to play a part in the development and dissemination of this current movement. With some generosity I have even been described as a leader in the **character education** field (e.g., **Character Education** Partnership, 1996; International Center for **Character Education**, 1999).

How curious it is, over a span of several decades, to go from a leadership role in one educational movement to an active role player in another educational movement that describes itself as opposed to the first one. Indeed, it has been a curious and an interesting journey — one that highlights several important issues in the recent development of values and **character education**.

I should begin by explaining that my own moral and **character** development was of a humane, traditional, and relatively conservative moral tradition. My mother and father were loving but firm parents who modeled respect, honesty, trustworthiness, charity, and other virtues. My father's standards of integrity were of the highest order. When I transgressed those standards (from stealing an Uncle Scrooge comic book [Giant edition no less] from the corner candy store to breaking a neighbor's window) I experienced what seemed to me like the wrath of Jehovah. He would sternly predict my inevitable slide toward bank robbery and prison if I did not change

my ways as he accompanied me back to the store or the neighbor to observe my admittance of wrongdoing and the making of restitution.

Similarly, my religious training in the Jewish tradition, in which I was bar mitzvahed and confirmed, emphasized, if not a theology that I understood then, a tradition of **ethics** and compassion that left its indelible marks on my **character** and conscience. Then there was my **character education** in the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts of America in which, for years, I was instilled with, and instilled in the younger scouts, the importance of being trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. And I was instilled with the oath: "On my honor, I will try to do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the scout law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight." I loved every minute of it, and became an Eagle Scout and later an assistant scoutmaster.

How odd that someone with that basic training in values and **character** would become a leader in the values clarification movement which, at best, took the tradition of inculcating moral virtues for granted and, at worst, denigrated it as perverting the process of real values formation. Yet it wasn't so odd either because my parents raised me to pursue the truth and follow the courage of my convictions. Because I was coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s, as much as my moral training formed me I rebelled against it. I rebelled against a strong father and against the values of a society that tolerated racial segregation, promulgated an unjust war in Asia, discriminated against women, and accepted other social problems and injustices that I, in all my youthful idealism and self-righteousness, witnessed and condemned.

Like many others, I was a product of a schizophrenic time — I reflected on the one hand the moral conscience instilled in me by traditional parenting, **education**, and religion, and on the other the Age of Aquarius, which wanted to leave behind those traditional values and structures that seemed to be thwarting human freedom and potential. Growing up in this era, it was not surprising that I decided to become a teacher and to embrace values clarification, a relatively new approach to values and moral **education** developed by Louis Rath, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney Simon (1966). Through mutual friends, I met Simon and Harmin and soon became their friend and colleague in developing and disseminating values clarification.

Perhaps this would be the time to briefly describe the values clarification approach as it might be used in a classroom, counseling, family, or youth group setting. I have sometimes described values clarification as containing four main ingredients.

First, a value-laden topic or moral issue is selected, such as an issue related to friendship, family, health, work, love, sex, drugs, leisure time, personal tastes, or politics. The issue may be selected by the teacher or student, counselor or client, parent or child, group leader or group members. Values clarification initially helped popularize the discussion of value-laden issues as worthy of focus in schools and other youth settings. The famous psychologist Milton Rokeach (1975), who was not otherwise a fan of values clarification, wrote that "Such a broadening of educational objectives now has a universal face validity, largely because of the pioneering work of the proponents of values clarification" (p. 120).

Second, the teacher, counselor, parent, or group leader introduces a question or activity, sometimes known as a values clarification "strategy," to help the participant(s) think, read, write, and talk about the topic. Over a hundred highly motivating values clarification techniques were developed to foster reflection and discussion of value-laden topics and moral issues (e.g., Simon, Howe, & Kirschenbaum, 1972). These practical strategies were probably the main reason for the popularity of this approach.

Third, during the course of the activity and discussion, the teacher, counselor, parent, or group leader ensures that all viewpoints on the topic are treated with respect and that an atmosphere of psychological safety pervades the classroom, counseling, or group setting.

Fourth, the activity itself and the discussion leader encourage the student, client, or participants to use seven particular "valuing processes" or "valuing skills" while considering the topic. These skills involve understanding what one prizes and cherishes, publicly affirming one's values in appropriate ways, examining alternative viewpoints, considering the consequences of various choices in a thoughtful manner, making a choice free from undue peer or authority pressure, and acting on one's beliefs in a repeated and consistent fashion.

The initial values clarification theory suggested that young people who used these valuing processes in making decisions would become less apathetic, less flighty, less overconforming, less overdissenting, and on the positive side, more zestful and energetic, more critical in their thinking, more consistent, and more likely to follow through with decisions (see Appendix, Phase 1). For this process to work successfully, however, we insisted that under no circumstances should teachers, counselors, parents, or adult leaders attempt to directly inculcate or instill values in young people because this would interfere with their developing values that were truly their own. Had we been able to, we would have gladly added an eleventh commandment, or replaced one of the ten with a new one reading "Thou shall not moralize." In other words, help young people develop their own values; do not impose yours on them.

This was the values clarification approach that, along with Simon, Harmin, Howe and many others, I helped to promulgate. From 1968 on, I gave hundreds of speeches and workshops on values clarification. I wrote or coauthored four books and numerous articles on the subject (e.g., Harmin, Kirschenbaum, & Simon, 1973; Glaser & Kirschenbaum, 1980; Kirschenbaum, 1977; Kirschenbaum & Simon, 1974). I have managed Values Associates, the main consulting group that spread the values clarification method. I have also directed the Values Clarification Trainers Network and ran the national clearinghouse for materials and research on this increasingly popular approach.

And popular it was. More than 40 books and hundreds of articles on values clarification were published during this period (Kirschenbaum & Glaser, 1977). Raths et al.'s (1996) *Values and Teaching* sold over a half million copies. *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies* (Simon et al., 1972) did even better, making these books virtual blockbuster bestsellers in the educational and counseling field. A survey published in Today's **Education** named *Values Clarification* one of the "outstanding **education** books of 1972-73" (National **Education** Association, 1974).

My colleagues and I were invited to address audiences in every state of the union and in countries all over the world. I consulted in over 30 states, 7 Canadian provinces, and 5 continents. I document this not to brag, but to indicate the depth of my investment and involvement in this method. I developed values clarification curricula or provided values clarification training for scores of school districts, state **education** departments, the U.S. Air Force and Army, American Personnel and Guidance Association (now the American Counseling Association), American Red Cross, American Lung Association, Lutheran Brotherhood, United Methodist Women, Catholic **Education** Association, the Canadian postal service — the list was long and varied, as schools, government agencies, and institutions in all walks of life sought to learn about this then current method in **education**, counseling, and the helping professions. Although the moral **education** approach of Lawrence Kohlberg (1981,1984) certainly had greater respect within academia, values clarification was the most popular of the new values **education** approaches in the field.

As popular as values clarification was throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, within a few years it had fallen from popular esteem. Requests for speeches and workshops fell off dramatically, book sales plummeted, and values clarification consultants were out on the breadlines, if you will. Whereas a few years earlier, school principals scurried around to find a values clarification speaker for their in-service program so they might be up to date, by the mid-1980s principals would rather have been accused of having asbestos in their ceilings than using values clarification in their classrooms, so passé, controversial, or discredited had values clarification become. As new or renewed movements such as moral **education** and **character education** sought to pick up where values clarification had left off, their leaders went to great lengths to distance themselves from values clarification. For example, a pamphlet of the **Character Education** Partnership, one of the two major, national coalitions promoting **character education**, explicitly asked "What is CEP's position on values clarification?" Citing several common criticisms of values clarification, the brochure concludes "CEP strongly concurs with these objections" (**Character Education** Partnership, n.d.). To say you believe in values clarification today is in some settings about as popular as declaring yourself for free love, open marriage, or the legalization of marijuana.

What happened? How did values clarification go from being so popular to so politically incorrect? And how did some of us who were leaders of the values clarification movement make sense of and respond to these changes?

Elsewhere I have described four reasons for values clarification's decline in popularity. These are the changing political and economic climate of the 1980s; faddism in educational reform and professional practice; the inconsistent implementation of values clarification; and stagnation in the values clarification movement, that is, lack of attention to research and development (Kirschenbaum, 1992). I also began to explore a fifth reason — a major flaw in the values clarification theory itself. It is this last reason, the fatal theoretical flaw, that I would like to expand on here, because this reason lies at the heart, not only of others' widespread criticisms of values clarification, but of my own personal journey from values clarification to **character education**.

Actually, I have always been a bit of a maverick when it comes to values clarification theory. In an essay titled "Beyond Values Clarification" (Kirschenbaum, 1974), I suggested that we should rethink the goals of values clarification. Values clarification had traditionally emphasized personal satisfaction and effectiveness, with the successful product of values clarification described as being zestful, consistent, and clear about one's values. But all of us involved in values clarification believed that the seven processes of values clarification also helped people make decisions that would be more responsible and better for society; yet that hypothesis did not appear in the theory. I suggested that we should be explicit about this, that an equally important outcome of any values **education** program should be individuals whose behavior was socially constructive. Graduates of values **education** should not hurt other people or infringe on their legitimate rights. They should make positive contributions to the groups of which they are a part.

I argued that if this were so (that the outcomes of values **education** should be individuals whose lives are both personally satisfying and socially constructive) then many other methods other than values clarification could help achieve those outcomes (see Appendix, Phase 2). These other methods included communication, conflict resolution, critical thinking, achievement motivation, and other "life skills" that were being promulgated actively in the seventies (e.g., Kirschenbaum & Glaser, 1978; Silberman, Allender, & Yanoff, 1976; Simpson, 1976). Although I was broadening my concept of values **education**, however, it did not occur to me that if the goal of values **education** was personally satisfying and socially constructive living, then perhaps the direct teaching and modeling of basic values and good **character** might also be added to the list of recommended values **education** practices. It is embarrassing to look back and realize how I resisted this notion, blinded as I was by the times in which I lived, by my own rebellion against traditional authority, and, I suppose, by the intellectual and emotional stake I had in the premise we had been teaching for many years: Thou shall not moralize!

Then, in the mid-1970s, I stretched the limits of values clarification theory one step further in a paper that I drafted titled "In Defense of Values Clarification: A Position Paper" (Kirschenbaum, Harmin, Howe, & Simon, 1977). Values clarification was beginning to take some heat by then, and its proponents were accused of being "values neutral" or "value free," of proposing a method of achieving value clarity and consistency that could produce a Hitler just as easily as a Gandhi. None of us believed this was so, and we all had strong, traditional values and virtues of our own that we intuitively felt were consistent with and fostered by values clarification, even if indirectly. But we had never said this before, either because we were not fully aware of it or because saying that values clarification fostered particular values would seem inconsistent with our theory.

I came out and said so, writing in our position paper that "Values clarification never has been 'values free'" (Kirschenbaum et al., 1977, p. 744). Although it is true that the values clarification teacher, counselor, or parent refrains from imposing his or her views on any particular subject under discussion, the processes and strategies of values clarification have important civic and moral values implicit within them. For example, by teaching students to listen to one another with respect, we are teaching the value of respect. By teaching group members to look at the other person's point of view, we are encouraging them to value fairness and empathy. By urging people to close the gap between what they say and what they do, we are teaching the values of honesty and integrity. By asking about moral dilemmas, we are saying it is important to take time

to think about morality, that morality is important. In short, there was a value-laden, moral context implicit in the values clarification process itself. Although we were not explicitly teaching respect, honesty, empathy, and other moral values, they were part of the hidden curriculum (see Appendix, Phase 3).

What a shame that we had to wait until values clarification was criticized for being devoid of values before we could come to the realization that values clarification in its own way was inculcating certain fundamental values and that we could admit this openly and even be proud of it. Nevertheless, I thought it was a big step forward. Still, this position paper did little to quiet the criticism of values clarification, and in retrospect rightly so. Because after admitting that one of the important outcomes of values clarification was to teach the values of respect, fairness, honesty, integrity, and the like, none of us then had the wisdom or courage to ask the next logical question: If it is good to teach people respect, honesty, fairness, and the like then what methods other than values clarification and life skills **education** might be used to teach these important values? Or, put differently, if it is good to teach some traditional values, might some traditional teaching methods be used to accomplish this?

Slow learner that I was, it took me 7 more years to answer this question in the affirmative. In 1982, I was invited by the Israeli Ministry of **Education** to conduct a 2-day workshop on values clarification in Tel-Aviv and another in Jerusalem. There were separate school systems for Jewish, Christian, and Moslem children, and I was asked to train the leading counselor educators in Israel's Jewish schools in the theory and practice of values clarification. I had worked with counselors before, but going to work in Israel was another matter. I was thrilled at the prospect of visiting Israel for the first time not just to tour, but to visit friends who were living there with my Israeli relatives on a kibbutz, and to work with Israeli professionals. Although I had some serious problems with Israel's Palestinian policy, and therefore arrived with a certain political skepticism, I was unprepared as we commenced our approach to Ben Gurion International Airport and the Jewish National Anthem, "Hatikva," played over the plane's loudspeaker system to find myself weeping and filled with unexpected emotion, as though I were returning home after a long time away.

This was characteristic of my 10-day visit to Israel, filled as it was with surprising personal, political, philosophical, and religious insights that hit me when I least expected them. One such occasion was in the first of the two workshops, which began more or less as usual, until one point on the first afternoon when a participant asked me an innocent enough question: "If we adopt values clarification in Israel will it be more likely or less likely that our young people will continue to emigrate from Israel at the current alarming rate? If we adopt values clarification, will it be more likely or less likely that our young people will be willing to serve in our armed forces?"

These two questions changed my life. Of course, I had heard the questions many times before in various forms. For example, "If young people decide their values for themselves, what if they decide to convert to a different religion? If they choose for themselves, they might, God forbid, choose to live together before marriage." "If they choose for themselves, they might choose drugs." In other words, why should we use an approach that might expose our children to ideas

or values we disapprove of? How can we accept our children's right to choose values we cannot abide by?

I had answered such questions a hundred times before. "Sooner or later," I would say, "Your children are going to be exposed to these ideas and choices anyway. Is it not better to have them consider these ideas in the safety of a classroom or an individual or group counseling setting, not out in the street, but in a place and using a method that encourages them to think seriously about the consequences of these choices, with a method that encourages them to do their best thinking and not simply go along with the crowd?" Yes, I had lots of answers to these questions, which I had always offered respectfully, thoughtfully, and often convincingly. But now I realized that in the back of my mind where I was barely conscious of it myself, I had always felt a little sympathy or even pity for the questioner. Had I been able or willing to verbalize it, I might have added "You poor, frightened parent or teacher. You are so sure your values are the right ones, you are so scared your children will make different or poor choices that you would rather somehow limit their choices if you could (and ultimately you can't) so they won't make the choice you disagree with or think is bad for them. But wake up; it's a new, freer world we're living in. As Kahlil Gibran (1923) wrote, "Your children are not your children ... seek not to make them like you" (p. 17). This is what I might have said if I had been aware of the condescending attitude I held toward those who were not ready to give their children the opportunity, at the appropriate age level of course, for considering all the alternatives.

But now, suddenly, the shoe was on the other foot. As the Israeli educators sat waiting for my answer, I realized what the stakes were. As a salesman for values clarification, I realized that if I said "Values clarification will make it more likely your children will emigrate" or "I don't know what effect values clarification will have on your young people's patriotism" I knew what their response would be "Thanks, but no thanks!" because this was a life-and-death issue for them. If too many young people left the country or refused to serve in the armed forces, the country would not survive. It was that simple. And, to my surprise, values clarification theory aside, I found myself sympathetic to their concern and, in turn, with the premise or hidden assumption behind the question that there are some things in life that are more important to us than maximizing people's free choices.

There are some values that we hold — some core, bedrock values such as, in that instance, the state of Israel and the Israeli educators' devotion to its survival — that are so important that, if it is in our power, we will protect our young people from influences that would undermine these basic values. And if that is true, then the inverse is also true, that we will seek ways to actively expose our young people to influences that will teach, support, and reinforce those basic values that are so dear to us. We will do our best to inculcate, model, and train our young people in these core values.

Boy I felt stupid. Critics and many friends of values clarification alike had been trying to make this argument to me for years. I always thought I had good answers for them. I could fill up a book, in fact I filled up several, with all the answers I gave for why we should encourage and teach young people to thoughtfully examine the alternatives and derive their own best decisions. Not that this was all wrong; we should encourage young people to think more deeply about important issues and to make the very best choices for themselves and others. But I had been

denying and resisting the other half of the picture. At the same time young people are being encouraged to think for themselves, we should try to teach them the best **character** virtues, civic values, and moral values of our democratic and religious traditions. If we want the values that we hold dear to survive, just as those who value the state of Israel would want it to survive, then we will use every appropriate tool at our disposal to ensure that these values are passed on to the next generation.

I am not proud to be describing what a slow learner I was. But when you are in the middle of a historical period, and I was nothing if not a child of the sixties and seventies, and when you are clever enough with words and concepts there is a good deal of merit to your arguments, which blinds you to its flaws, and you have an intellectual, emotional, and financial stake in a particular outlook, it is not always easy to recognize what seems so obvious to those who are not as close to the issue as you are.

And so, belatedly, I recognized the fatal flaw in values clarification: It took traditional values for granted. It assumed that people had within them enough decent goodness, intuitive understanding of right and wrong, fairness and justice, and strength of **character** that, given a chance to identify their own deepest feelings and to thoughtfully examine the alternatives, they would ultimately make good and responsible choices. This raises an interesting philosophical question: given enough time and information, will people not recognize that their own selfinterest is inextricably linked to the welfare of others and therefore that it is in their self-interest to make more socially responsible choices even while pursuing their own personal goals? However you answer this question, which gets at basic human nature, the problem is that in making the scores of values choices and moral decisions each of us makes each day, we do not have all the time and information needed to test this philosophical question. We have limited time and information; so unless we have a strong set of moral principles and good **character** to rely on, our decisions will be less than ideal for others and ourselves.

Values clarification took young people's moral foundation for granted. It failed to acknowledge the traditional moral training young people had already received.

Yet it was this very training in traditional values that had helped develop their sense of right and wrong, conscience, empathy, and responsibility to a sufficient degree that values clarification techniques could work. Among a group of sociopathic personalities, values clarification would be pointless or even dangerous. A certain degree of socialization, self-control, and empathy are required for the thoughtful, respectful values clarification process to work, and much of this has to come from methods beyond values clarification.

Ironically, taking young people's moral foundation for granted may have been more understandable at the time values clarification was developed. Then, teachers using the process were working with young people who for the most part were still raised in a culture that promoted (if not always lived up to) the traditional values of respect, personal and civic responsibility, perseverance (delayed gratification), quality work, and the like. But in the seventies, eighties, and nineties, there has been a steady deterioration of those values among both youth and adults. If one could ever assume that young people came to school with a solid

foundation of **character** development and moral training, and I doubt there was ever such uniformity, there is ample evidence today that this is not the case.

So there I was in Israel, the scales having fallen from my eyes, in a room full of educators awaiting my answer as to how the widespread use of values clarification in Israel would affect the survival of the nation. But before I can describe my response, I must go back a few years and explain a second reason why I was on that occasion finally able to see values clarification clearly: A few years earlier I had become a parent.

I know this is trite but it is true. I was not the first and surely not the last so-called expert on child development who, when he became a parent himself, realized that he had an awful lot to learn. Learn I did. As I observed myself with my daughter Kimara, I saw, in one sense, validation for much of our work in values clarification. I used many of the values clarification strategies with her, asked her many clarifying questions to get her to think for herself, listened to her answers with respect, and encouraged her to act on her stated goals and values. I presented her with many choices appropriate to her age level and watched her grow into a responsible, compassionate young woman — she is now twenty — with confidence, independence, and her own wisdom of which I am very proud.

But at the same time as I was encouraging her autonomy I noticed that I was inculcating my values all over the place! For years I had been teaching people not to do that — perish the thought that we should stifle their independence by imposing our own values on them. Now here I was trying to instill my own values at every turn. "Kimara, I'm so proud of you for sharing your toy with baby Adam. I really like it when you share." Now, before becoming a parent I would have disclaimed this is not imposing one's values; this is just "sharing your honest feelings," which of course had the seal of approval from the human potential movement I was a part of. But now I had to be honest with myself. Yes, I was sharing my own feelings and I was doing it consciously and frequently to reinforce her sharing behavior every chance I had. It was the most elementary application of behavioral psychology, rewarding the desired behavior with appreciation to increase the likelihood that the behavior would be repeated. Call it inculcation or honestly sharing my feelings; either way, I was consciously manipulating the outcome.

And what kind of books did Kimara's mother and I surround her with? See Dick and Jane run? See Jane with her mother in the kitchen doing the dishes? See Dick with his father learning to fly model airplanes? Not on your life! It was more like see Jane split the DNA molecule. See Jane become Prime Minister. See Jane win the gold medal. And see the big, strong football player tell Dick "It's all right to cry." In the past I might have said it was just a matter of exposing her to a wider range of alternatives — one of the key processes of values clarification. She will get plenty of the traditional alternatives out in the wider world; we are just trying to achieve some balance. Well, that might be true, but whom was I kidding? As parents, we knew exactly what values we wanted Kimara to grow up embracing. We wanted her to value herself and believe in her potential to achieve excellence. We wanted her to value women as much as men. We wanted her to value service to others, to recognize her responsibility for leaving the world a little better off than she found it. So we did everything we could to structure her environment to produce those outcomes. Her earliest books and stories were only a part of our child rearing.

Her values **education** also included our friends and others we surrounded ourselves with; we would often go out of our way to expose Kimara to models of women and men who had courage, commitment, kindness, and an **ethic** of service to others. It included the movies we saw and allowed her to see or not see. It included her mother taking her each year at Thanksgiving to work in the local food pantry. And when she and I watched television, even if the program had little redeeming social importance, I instilled my values through my frequent editorial comments about this person's unethical behavior, that person's moral courage and responsibility, and that one's poor choices.

And so, as a parent, gradually, sheepishly, I had begun to notice the inconsistency between my own practice and the theory I had been promulgating — that young people can learn good **character** and moral values simply by a process of facilitation in a respectful setting. Even if that were theoretically true (and I no longer think it is), how inefficient a process. Here I was giving my daughter a head start toward good **character** by consciously instilling and modeling good **character** and basic values like honesty and caring. Was such a head start good for her but not for other children? Of course not. If I thought it was right for me to consciously try to teach my child what I regarded as the best and most important values I knew, then it was right for other parents, for teachers and religious leaders, in fact for the whole culture to attempt to instill in the next generation the best values in our cultural, political, and religious traditions.

Being a parent had another interesting effect on me. I began to appreciate more than ever before the parenting I had received. Corny, I know. Like the well-known quotation attributed to Mark Twain, who said, more or less, that when he was a teenager he could not believe how stupid his father was, but by the time he was in his 20s he was terribly impressed by how much his old man had matured in those few years. Over the space of several years, my mixed feelings toward my own father, that combination of respect and rebellion, changed increasingly to acceptance, admiration, and love, and I gradually recognized that most of the positive values and **character** traits I could claim were not in spite of my traditional upbringing but because of it.

So what is a values clarifier to do, having reached the conclusion that the method he had been advocating for 15 years was terribly incomplete and tragically flawed -in some ways right on target, in other ways woefully misguided, in some ways helpful and effective, in other ways trivial and, at worst, pernicious? I must admit that a part of me wanted to crawl under a rock in embarrassment or retreat to my cabin in the mountains and stay there. But I had worked too long in the field of values **education** to do that, and besides there were 25 educators sitting there waiting for my answer.

Actually, I have no recollection of what I said that afternoon. But that night I recall vividly the intellectual turmoil I went through as I sought to rethink and reframe a 15-year career in values **education** and to integrate this with my personal experiences in my family, scouting, Judaism, parenting, and social activism — in short, to restructure my entire concept of values **education**. It was a long night. The next day I returned to the group and shared my answer with them.

"In order to consider the effect of values clarification on the patriotism of the young people in your schools and youth groups," I said, more or less, "I first need to clarify a misunderstanding about values clarification that has existed for some time, even among those of us active in

disseminating the approach. I fear that yesterday I may have given the impression that values clarification was being proposed as a complete program of values and moral **education**. If I or we have given that impression in the past, I have recently realized [more recently than they knew] that we were wrong. In fact, values clarification is only part of a much broader process of values **education**.

"Children and adults develop their beliefs and values in at least three major ways — through inculcation, through modeling, and through personal choice and commitment. All these approaches are necessary. Young people deserve to be exposed to the inculcation of values by adults who care: family members, teachers, and the various institutions of the community. They deserve to see adult role models with integrity and a joy for living. And they deserve to have opportunities that encourage them to think for themselves and to learn the skills for living morally and successfully and guiding their own lives.

"It is in this context of a comprehensive values **education**, that we should consider how values clarification might or might not affect one's commitment to the national values. We will assume then that your students have been exposed to a program of inculcating and instilling an understanding and love of the state of Israel. This would be done through the literature they read, the stories they hear, their religious training, the social and emotional experiences provided for them to engender a love of country, the rules and rewards and limitations they grow up with, the rituals and traditions they experience, and the many other methods available for inculcating a deep appreciation for their national heritage. I will further assume that they have been exposed to good models — at home, at school, in synagogue, in the media and public life — models that demonstrate a positive, believable, enthusiastic dedication to the national ideals. Given this background, I believe that values clarification experiences that help Israeli youth sort out all the conflicting forces they experience about growing up in this beleaguered country will, on the average, serve to help the youth make a personal commitment to stay and contribute to the well-being and improvement of the nation.

"But why do I believe this? Because values clarification is consistent with and supports the universal values of respect, responsibility, fairness, freedom, honesty and integrity, and human dignity, among others. If the ideals and practices of the state of Israel also ultimately reflect these core values, then using the process can only help young people to discover and commit themselves to these values. In the end, I believe that the values clarification process, implemented properly, helps teach and reinforce many of our traditional moral values. If these are the values we are inculcating and modeling, then we need not fear the values clarification process."

Later that day, one of the participants in the workshop came up to me and said "You know, we have been conducting a program here in Israel which is very consistent with your comprehensive approach." And he described to me a youth program that 20,000 Israeli Jewish youth had participated in: a retreat of several days in which the young people explored what it means to grow up in Israel, the pressures of Israeli life, the lures of America and elsewhere, and their feelings about staying or leaving. Many of the activities and discussions were values clarification activities, but there were also patriotic songs and stories and readings to deepen their appreciation of Israel's history and recent independence and positive role models who spoke of

their commitment to staying and defending and improving the country. In other words, it was a comprehensive values **education** program that provided inculcation and modeling but also gave the young people time to sort out for themselves all the inculcation and modeling they had received, in honest, open-ended discussion (i.e., values clarification).

What were the results of this comprehensive program? My informant said that in questionnaires and follow-up surveys, the young people who participated in this program demonstrated a significantly higher commitment to remain in Israel and not to emigrate when compared with similar students who did not participate in the program. I have some qualms about reporting this anecdote because try as I might I have not been able to track down and read this study. All I have is the report of one person who seemed quite knowledgeable about the program and reported that those associated with it were quite convinced it had made a significant, positive impact on the participants.

In any case, I believe the basic premise is true: When we inculcate and model positive values, when we teach good **character**, and when we give young people opportunities to then evaluate these influences for themselves, it increases the likelihood of our **character education** succeeding. In a sense, it is simply good teaching and counseling. If we teach or tell something directly, people may remember a certain amount of it. If we demonstrate what we are teaching, they will remember even more. But if we also give them an opportunity to process that information and make personal meaning out of it, they will remember still more and retain it longer, and it will have a deeper impact on their behavior. Values **education** must be comprehensive to be most effective (see Appendix, Phase 4). If our goal is to promote good **character** in youth, such as the core values of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, caring, fairness, and good citizenship, then we should welcome all the best methods for achieving these goals.

So my experience in Israel in 1982 was a real turning point for me. I recognized and accepted what a terrible mistake we values clarification proponents had made in taking for granted, minimizing, or even denigrating the importance of teaching positive values and good **character**. I saw that values clarification by itself was insufficient for values and **character education**, but that it could be an important ingredient in a more comprehensive approach (Kirschenbaum, 1983).

I was not alone, nor first in this recognition. For example, others seen previously had ways to combine values clarification with traditional Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic **education** (Alternatives in Religious **Education**, 1973; Elkins, 1977; Hall & Smith, 1973; Larson & Larson, 1976). Later my colleague Merrill Harmin (1988) also saw the need for a comprehensive approach:

As I look back, it would have been better had we presented a more balanced picture, had we emphasized the importance of helping students both to clarify their own personal values and to adopt society's moral values. ... It makes a good deal of sense to say that truthfulness is better than deception, caring is better than hurting, loyalty is better than betrayal, and sharing better than exploitation, (p. 25)

In the succeeding years, I have tried to follow the implications of these belated understandings. Ever interested in practical methods for achieving lofty goals, I have asked myself and others the following questions. If the inculcation of positive values and **character** is an important and noble endeavor, what are the best ways to do this? If modeling values and **character** is essential for teaching good values and **character** to youth, then what are the most effective ways to be a good model? If values clarification, or more broadly, the facilitation of values development is a useful and important means of helping young people internalize and act on the best values and moral standards, then how can values clarification and other facilitative methods be used in values and **character education**? And, later adding a fourth pedagogy to the previous three, if teaching young people various skills for living personally satisfying and socially constructive lives will enhance values, morality, and good **character**, then what are these skills and how can we best teach them?

The result of this line of thinking, to date, is the comprehensive approach to values **education** described in my book *One Hundred Ways to Enhance Values and Morality in Schools and Youth Settings* (1995). It presents, for example, 35 methods for inculcating, 20 methods for modeling, 30 methods for facilitating, and 10 skills for developing moral virtues and civic and personal values. It attempts to integrate the best approaches and methods of the four major historical movements in values **education** — values realization, **character education**, moral **education**, and citizenship **education** — to teach core values such as respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, fairness, and civic virtue. My thinking has been enriched greatly by many others in today's robust **character education** movement who also have recognized the wisdom of a more comprehensive approach to values **education** (e.g., Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1988; Benninga, 1991; DeRoche & Williams, 1998; Etzioni, 1993; Lickona, 1991; Watson, Solomon, Battistich, Schaps, & Solomon, 1989; Vessels, 1998).

Too much of the history of values **education** in the twentieth century has been like a pendulum, beginning with explicit **character education** at the turn of the century and swinging toward progressive citizenship **education** in the twenties and thirties. Taking values **education** for granted was characteristic of the forties and fifties while society worked to inculcate the goals of the war effort and national prosperity. In the sixties and seventies values clarification, values analysis, and Kohlberg's moral development were predominant. A more directive form of moral **education** took place in the eighties. Now, **character education** has become prevalent through the nineties and into the new millennium. Although oversimplified, such a historical review clearly demonstrates there have been values **education** bandwagons before, which people have jumped onto and then abandoned a few years later when the method proved to be no panacea, or the research was ambiguous and debatable, or the political and economic climate changed once again.

My own journey through the past 30 years of values **education** has convinced me that we need all the help we can get if we are to stem the tide of personal confusion, moral decline, and social disintegration all too present in society today. Whether conservative, moderate, or liberal by inclination or philosophy, today educators, counselors, parents, and youth leaders have the opportunity to work together on a common challenge: to teach, model, and facilitate the traits of **character**, moral virtues, civic values, and responsible self-direction on which our common future depends. If we do this, then the history of values **education** in the twenty-first century will

not be characterized one hundred years hence as a repeated, inconsistent vacillation between changing, traditional, and progressive currents, but rather a comprehensive, uniting, consistent effort in each generation to integrate and apply the best of different approaches for **character** development and values **education**.

Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

REFERENCES

*Alternatives in Religious **Education***. (1973). *There is a season: A values clarification approach to the Jewish holidays* [Brochure]. Denver, CO: Author.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (1988). *Moral **education** in the life of the school* [Brochure]. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Baer, R. (1982, April 12). Parents, schools and value clarification. *Wall Street Journal*, p. A23.
Bennetl, W. (1980). What value is values **education**? *American Educator*. 4(3), 31-32.

Benninga, J. (1991). *Moral, **character** and civic **education** in the elementary school*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Character Education Partnership. (1996). *Third Annual **Character Education** Forum* [Brochure]. Washington, DC: Author.

Character Education Partnership, (n.d.). ***Character education**: Questions and answers* [Brochure]. Washington, DC: Author.

DeRoche, E., & Williams, M. (1998). *Educating hearts and minds: A comprehensive **character education** framework*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Elkins, D. (1977). *Clarifying Jewish values*. Princeton, NJ: Growth Associates.

Etzioni, A. (1993). *The spirit of community: Rights, responsibilities and the Communitarian agenda*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Gibran, K. (1923). *The prophet*. New York: Knopf.

Glaser, B., & Kirschenbaum, H. (1980). Using values clarification in counseling settings. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 58, 569-75.

Hall, B., & Smith, M. (1973). *Value clarification as learning process: A handbook for religious educators*. New York: Paulist Press.

Harmin, M. (1988). Value clarity, high morality — Let's go for both. *Educational Leadership*, 45(8), 22-30.

Harmin, M., Kirschenbaum, H., & Simon, S. (1973). *Clarifying values through subject matter*. Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press.

International Center for **Character Education**. (1999). *First International Conference on Character Education [Brochure]*. San Diego, CA: University of San Diego.

Kirschenbaum, H. (1974). *Beyond values clarification*. In H. Kirschenbaum & S. Simon (Eds.), *Readings in values clarification* (pp. 92-110). Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press.

Kirschenbaum, H. (1977). *Advanced value clarification*. La Jolla, CA: University Associates.

Kirschenbaum, H. (1983). *Comprehensive values **education*** (Brief position paper). Upper Jay, NY: National Humanistic **Education** Center.

Kirschenbaum, H. (1992). *A comprehensive model for values **education** and moral **education***. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73, 771-776.

Kirschenbaum, H. (1995). *One hundred ways to enhance values and morality in schools and youth settings*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Kirschenbaum, H., & Glaser, B. (1977). *Values clarification: An annotated bibliography: 1965-1975*. In H. Kirschenbaum (Ed.), *Advanced value clarification* (pp. 153-187). La Jolla, CA: University Associates.

Kirschenbaum, H., & Glaser, B. (1978). *Skills for living*. Findlay, OH: Quest.

Kirschenbaum, H., Harmin, M., Howe, L., & Simon, S. (1977). *In defense of values clarification: A position paper*. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 58, 743-746.

Kirschenbaum, H., & Simon, S. (Eds.). (1974). *Readings in values clarification*. Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press.

Kohlberg, L. (1981). *The meaning and measurement of moral development*. Worcester, MA: Clark University Press.

Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The psychology of moral development: The nature and validity of moral stages*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Larson, R., & Larson, D. (1976). *Values and faith: Value clarifying exercises for family and church groups*. Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press.

Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for **character***. New York: Bantam Books.

National **Education** Association. (1974). *Outstanding **education** books of 1972-73*. *Today's Education*, 63(2), 96.

National **Education** Association. (1976). *Values concepts and techniques*. Washington, DC.

Raths, L., Harmin, M., & Simon, S. (1966). *Values and teaching: Working with values in the classroom*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Rokeach, M. (1975). *Toward a philosophy of values education*. In J. Meyer, B. Bumham, & J. Cholvat (Eds.), *Values education: Theory, practice, problems, prospects* (pp. 117-126). Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press.

Silberman, M., AMender, J., & Yanoff, J. (1976). *Real learning: A sourcebook for teachers* (2nd ed.). Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Simon, S., Howe, L., & Kirschenbaum, H. (1972). *Values clarification: A handbook of practical strategies for teachers and students*. New York: Hart.

Simpson, L. (1976). *Humanistic education: An interpretation*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Superka, D., Ahrens, C., & Hedstrom, J. (1976). *Values education sourcebook: Conceptual approaches, materials analyses, and an annotated bibliography*. Boulder, CO: Social Sciences **Education** Consortium and ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science **Education**.

Vessels, G. (1998). *Character and community development: A school planning and teacher training handbook*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Watson, M., Solomon, D., Ballistich, V., Schaps, E., & Solomon, J. (1989). *The child development project: Combining traditional and developmental approaches to values education*. In L. Nucci (Ed.), *Moral development and character education: A dialogue* (pp. 51-92). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

[APPENDIX: Values Clarification to Character Education: Four Phases PHASE 1](#)

Legend for Chart:

A - Values Clarification Process

B - Outcomes

A: Choosing

B: Less apathetic

A: 1. Choosing from alternatives

B: Less flighty

A: 2. Considering consequences

B: Less overconforming

A: 3. Choosing freely

B: Less overdissenting

A: Prizing

B: More zestful, energetic

A: 4. Prizing and cherishing

B: More critical thinking

A: 5. Public affirming

B: More committed

A: --

B: More consistent

A: Acting

B: --
A: 6. Acting
B: --
A: 7. Acting repeatedly, consistently
B: --

PHASE 2

Legend for Chart:

A - Values **Education** Process

B - Outcomes

A: Values clarification (Seven valuing processes)

B: Personal satisfaction Socially constructive behavior

A: Other life skills

B: --

PHASE 3

Legend for Chart:

A - Values **Education** Process

B - Outcomes

A: Values clarification (Seven valuing processes)

B: Personal satisfaction Socially constructive behavior
Fundamental values

A: Other life skills

B: Respect

Fairness

Honesty

Integrity

etc.

PHASE 4

Legend for Chart:

A - Comprehensive Values **Education** Process

B - Outcomes

A: Inculcating

B: Values Realization

Clear values that integrate thought, Modeling feeling
and action and produce personal satisfaction and meaning
in life

A: Facilitating (Including seven valuing processes)

B: --

A: Value-laden skill building

B: Good **character**

Respect

Fairness

Honesty

Integrity

etc.

A: --

B: Good citizenship Knowledgeable and responsible participation
in community and civic life

A: --

B: Moral behavior

Behavior consistent with universal moral values such
as compassion, justice, fairness

~~~~~

By Howard Kirschenbaum

Howard Kirschenbaum is the Frontier Professor of School, Family, and Community Relations and chair of the Department of Counseling and Human Development at the University of Rochester, New York. Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to Howard Kirschenbaum, Warner School of **Education**, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627 (e-mail: kirs@troi.cc.rochester.edu).

---

Copyright of Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development is the property of American Counseling Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.