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Evaluating the Pilot Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project:

A study among 11- to 13-year-old students

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Abstract

In order to evaluate the impact of the pilot Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project, a pilot sample of 86 year-seven and year-eight students (11 to 13 years of age) completed a battery of tests both before and after participating for six weeks in the programme. The battery of tests comprised twelve Narnian Character Virtue Scales (to assess the degree to which students saw themselves as behaving virtuously), the Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues (to assess knowledge of virtues gained during the programme), and established measures of personality, happiness, self-esteem, empathy, and religious affect (as control variables). Mean scores were significantly higher at the end of the programme on the Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues, but on none of the twelve Narnian Character Virtue Scales, and on none of the control variables. These data suggest that the Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project was successful in enhancing knowledge of virtues but not in changing self-perceived behaviour. These findings are consistent both with the general educational principle that education informs understanding prior to affecting behaviour and also with the expectations of the project—that improving virtue literacy and understanding of virtues precedes the practice of virtues.

Keywords: character education, virtues, psychometric, curriculum evaluation

Introduction

The programme

The Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project (Pike, Lickona, & Nesfield, 2015) seeks to build on previous work in moral and character education (Lickona, 1992, 2004) with special emphasis on the potential of literature (Pike, 2015) and specifically the Narnia novels of C. S. Lewis (Pike, 2013) to enable children and young people to understand and cultivate a range of virtues underpinning good character. A key aspect of the Narnian Virtues research project is the evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum programme in terms of developing young people's understanding and application of a range of virtues, the subject of the present article. The Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project is informed by the design of the Knightly Virtues project based at the University of Birmingham's Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, which developed a literary curriculum and programme of activities based on four stories for 9- to 11-year-olds (Arthur, Harrison, Carr, Kristjanssen, & Davison, 2014; Carr & Harrison, 2015). The Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project seeks to build upon such previous literature-based character education interventions by: (1) developing a curriculum based on the Narnia novels whose protagonists are children, of an age similar to that of the students reading the novels, (2) extending the curriculum beyond the 9 to 11 age range of the Knightly Virtues project to include students up to 14 years of age, and (3) developing new approaches to the measurement and evaluation of this curriculum intervention.

During 2015 the curriculum project designers (Pike, Lickona, and Nesfield) worked with a group of teachers from the University of Leeds Teacher Education Partnership to develop lesson plans and learning resources based on The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (Lewis, 1989/1950), Prince Caspian (Lewis, 1989/1951), and *The Voyage of the 'Dawn*

Treader' (Lewis, 1989/1955). These three volumes from the Chronicles of Narnia were chosen because resources were to be trialled for use in a longitudinal project over three years (where students would read one novel during each academic year, between the ages of 11 and 14). These particular titles are the first three in publication order, an order in which they are still read by many readers; they are the three stories that have, at the time of the project, been adapted into feature films; and these three titles also form a unit in that they all feature members of the Pevensie family as protagonists, so readers follow these siblings through the three tales where they are major figures.

Teachers were aided as they prepared resources and activities by Lewis scholars Michael Ward (MacSwain & Ward, 2010) and Joel Heck (Heck, 2005) who scoped the novels for virtues. Our hypothesis was that each of these novels had considerable potential for eliciting a personal ethical response from young people. In classroom discussions and in the student materials, we defined 'virtues' as good moral habits. This is consistent with classical thinking, going back to Aristotle, about the nature of virtue. Aristotle taught that a virtue is not a mere capacity or ability but a disposition or tendency to act in a virtuous way (Aristotle, 1987). Twelve 'Narnian' virtues were identified as being salient across the three novels: courage, curiosity, forgiveness, fortitude, gratitude, hard work, humility, integrity, justice, love, self-control, and wisdom. Examples follow of each of the 'Narnian' virtues demonstrated by characters in each of the three novels to show the potential of these novels as rich moral and character education resources. The examples provided here convey the curriculum's focus on engaging children with particular passages that depict characters and events exemplifying the twelve Narnian virtues targeted by our intervention and assessed by our measures. As reader response theory (Tompkins, 1980; Pike, 2012) reminds us, different readers may read the same book or any given passage in different ways, but our Narnian Virtues curriculum quite deliberately 'guided' children's reading and asked them to identify

and reflect on the twelve virtues we wanted them to understand more deeply and see as relevant to their own behaviour.

Courage: In The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe Lucy displays the courage of her convictions about the existence of Narnia, despite Edmund's mockery and Peter and Susan's doubt and even though she is the youngest of the Pevensie siblings. Most famously, we have Aslan's courage in dying for Edmund. The Pevensies have a good role model in Aslan when they have to face their fears, develop courage, and fight to free the Narnians so they can thrive and prosper rather than live in fear. In Prince Caspian, Caspian and the Old Narnians show courage by resisting Miraz's tyranny. Susan is made courageous when Aslan breathes on her. Lucy has the courage to lead her reluctant siblings over what looks like a cliff, but turns out to be the safe way down. Peter displays courage by engaging in single combat with Miraz; he matures into a true knight and a true king. In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* Eustace's attack on the sea-serpent is 'the first really brave thing he had ever done'. All the Pevensies show courage on Narrowhaven in ousting the corrupt governor, Gumpas, and freeing the slaves and the ship's company.

Curiosity: In The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe it is Lucy's curiosity and eagerness to explore that leads to the discovery of the land of Narnia in the first place. Her siblings also show the curiosity to follow. In Prince Caspian we see that Caspian's adventures are founded upon by his curiosity about Old Narnia before the rule of the despotic Miraz. Caspian stands in contrast to Eustace in *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* as he has no curiosity or desire to see new places. When Eustace is curious, it is for the wrong things, dragon's treasure, and these corrupt him (a salient reminder that for curiosity to be a virtue it needs to be for the right things). Yet the quest itself, to discover new places and see new things, and the way the Pevensies embrace this quest, demonstrates curiosity as a virtue which all learners need.

Forgiveness: Forgiveness is one of the greatest of the 'Narnian' virtues because Aslan's forgiveness of Edmund for his treachery is the most significant act in The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe. Significantly, this forgiveness is expressed privately and personally. Lewis does not allow us or any of the other characters to be party to the dialogue between Edmund and Aslan as they walk together. We learn that 'it was a conversation which Edmund never forgot' and his subsequent actions show that he knows himself to have been truly forgiven. Lucy forgives Mr Tumnus, even though he had intended to betray her to the White Witch. In Prince Caspian Lucy also forgives her siblings for not believing her (again) when she sees and hears Aslan. Aslan treats the defeated Telmarines well at the end of the novel and pardons them, giving them a fresh start. In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* Reepicheep becomes firm friends with Eustace after forgiving him for his attack. All the Pevensies forgive their cousin for having been a thoroughly unpleasant shipmate.

Fortitude: Lucy shows considerable fortitude in The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe by enduring much opposition in order to follow Aslan and Peter. Susan and Lucy do not give up in their determination to rescue their brother and liberate the land. The Old Narnians have shown fortitude and endurance year after year throughout the harsh winter that the White Witch has imposed on them. In Prince Caspian the Pevensies persevere and demonstrate both physical and moral fortitude as they complete the arduous cross-country hike through the wooded terrain to rendezvous with Caspian. They reach their destination despite attacks from both man and beast. In aligning themselves with Caspian as the rightful king, they are backing the underdog at considerable personal risk because it is the right thing to do. Peter takes on Caspian's fight in single combat against the more experienced and dangerous Miraz and has to persevere despite injury. In the *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* the young mariners keep going despite an attack by a sea-serpent and have to overcome their fears in the blackness of Dark Island.

Gratitude: Gratitude is displayed by many of the characters in the Narnia stories who routinely say ‘thank you’ and are appreciative of, and grateful for, what they have. Eustace and Edmund are especially grateful to Aslan for rescuing them, Edmund from the death sentence of the White Witch in The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, and Eustace from his vile, reptilian existence and, as dragon, separated from human society and his friends, in The *Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’*. In The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe the children are grateful for the hospitality and guidance of Mr and Mrs Beaver. In Prince Caspian, Caspian is grateful that the old Narnians who look after him and nurse him back to health, despite the fact he is a Telmarine, related to the tyrant Miraz, and a member of the race that has cut down trees and sent them into hiding. Perhaps most importantly, throughout the novels the Pevensies are grateful for each other and for friendship as witnessed by Lucy and Edmund’s reunion with Caspian on board the ‘Dawn Treader’.

Hard work: Hard work is an important virtue displayed by the young people throughout the Narnia novels. In The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe they labour as they strive to defeat the White Witch, even though this is physically and morally demanding. In Prince Caspian they realize that Aslan would like them ‘to do what we can on our own’ while they wait for him to act. They use their mental faculties to problem solve and they bring their energies to bear upon the task at hand. By contrast, Eustace is lazy before his ‘undragoning’ in *The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’*. Despite being on a voyage, he avoids work and consequently does not develop his muscles. That Caspian has muscular arms signifies the importance of training and strengthening the body, as well as the mind and the spirit.

Humility: Humility is displayed by the young people in the Narnia novels when they own up to their faults and when they admit their mistakes. The importance of being humble enough to learn, to be teachable and to take advice is repeatedly demonstrated. In The Lion,

The Witch and The Wardrobe Tumnus is humble enough to admit his plan to kidnap Lucy. Edmund is humbled by his experience with the White Witch when he realizes how wrong he has been. Trumpkin learns humility when he realizes what the children are capable of and comes to understand that they really are kings and queens. Susan, Edmund and Lucy are humble enough to learn and to listen to Peter when he realizes they have come back to a ruined Cair Paravel. On their journey to come to the aid of Caspian and the old Narnians, Edmund remembers how he betrayed Lucy in The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe and ensures that he doesn't repeat the mistake. Caspian admits that he doesn't feel sufficient to take up the Kingship of Narnia. In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* Eustace is humbled when he realizes that he is 'a monster cut off from the whole human race'. King Caspian is able to take advice from those with lesser status. Caspian's humility makes his later attempt at selfish abdication all the more shocking, but he admits later 'I've been lessoned'.

Integrity: Integrity is displayed by characters in the Narnia novels who are trustworthy and honest and do not lie. In The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe Lucy is not prepared to lie to keep her siblings happy, even though they persecute her for her conviction that Narnia exists when they disbelieve in its existence. The White Witch shows a lack of integrity by deceiving Edmund and exploiting his weakness, promising him what she does not intend to give him. In Prince Caspian Peter refuses to exploit his advantage after Miraz trips and falls during the single combat, much to the frustration of Edmund, who says, 'Need he be as gentlemanly as all that? I suppose he must'. This is in contrast to the treacherous Sopespian and Glozel, who stab their king in the back when he least expects it. In The Voyage of the *'Dawn Treader'* Eustace shows a complete lack of integrity before his 'undragoning' and is deceitful, seeking to steal rations of water at night. This is in contrast to Caspian who exercises leadership with integrity, unlike Gumpas, the corrupt governor of Narrowhaven, and Pug the slavetrader.

Justice: Justice is displayed by Caspian in *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* when he strides into the slave market on Narrowhaven and proclaims, 'I declare every slave in this market free'. Here we see the rights of others being upheld and the powerless having their freedom restored and being set at liberty. In Prince Caspian Peter leads the army in the cause of justice, even though it is Caspian, not he, Peter, who will be the chief beneficiary of victory. In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Peter and Susan begin by thinking only about the danger Edmund is in and wanting to rescue him from the White Witch. However, they end up accepting the challenge to battle against injustice and to liberate the inhabitants of Narnia from the Witch's oppressive tyranny. Throughout the novels we see the central protagonists fighting for justice and striving to achieve freedom from oppression for others.

Love. Love, where characters do what is best for others and put them first, without expecting anything in return, is of central importance in the Narnia novels. Aslan's sacrificial love for the children and for Narnia is the climax of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Love, as a motivating force, pervades the whole of the Narnian narrative. In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe the children show their love for their brother, Edmund, even though he has betrayed them. They show their love for the inhabitants of Narnia by fighting for their freedom. In Prince Caspian the Pevensies put love into action by fighting for justice and coming to Caspian's aid and to that of the Old Narnians. The brotherly love between Edmund and Peter is evident when Peter goes out to fight Miraz in single combat. In The Voyage of *the 'Dawn Treader'* we witness genuine love for Eustace, even when is being truculent and surly and even when he becomes a dragon. The Pevensies do not stop loving their cousin when he is difficult.

Self-control. Self-control is displayed when the young people who are the central protagonists of the novels exercise restraint and control themselves. Although there are

instances where they lose their tempers and are not at their best, there are also examples of wise restraint in the way they interact with each other. Perhaps the best example of a lack of self-control is provided by Edmund in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe when he eats a whole box of Turkish Delight and immediately wants more. What he gets from the White Witch, instead of more Turkish Delight is an iron bowl with 'some water in it' and 'dry bread' on an iron plate. His intemperance or lack of self-control is a key factor that puts his life in jeopardy. In Prince Caspian the Pevensies go without food until they find the orchard, and they have to control their tempers which are all too easily lost when tired and hungry. Peter shows self-control by not killing Miraz. There are many situations where the children exercise self-control by not giving in to fear and by not panicking when they are in danger or under threat.

Wisdom. Wisdom is displayed when the Pevensies, Caspian and the undragoned Eustace work out what is right and good and wisely choose the best course of action. In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe the children are wise enough to trust and follow Aslan who has their best interests at heart. In Prince Caspian Caspian picks his friends and allies carefully. Trumpkin gives wise advice that the army should not be told about the help they might expect as a result of winding the Horn (discretion is the better part of valour). Cornelius wisely weighs all the options about who might respond to the call of the Horn. In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* the children show a lack of wisdom that leads to them being vulnerable and unprotected and which in turn leads to their enslavement. However, they show wisdom by learning from this experience. Peter is shrewd in the way that he deals with the Governor Gumpas and claims his rightful authority.

Vices also play an important role in the three novels. We see displays and consequences of disrespect, selfishness, pride, and ingratitude, for example. In The Voyage of *the 'Dawn Treader'*, Eustace obnoxiously demonstrates various vices before his physical and

character transformation. He is at first a bad host to his cousins when they are guests in his home, then rude and abusive with Reepicheep, then irritable and dismissive when Caspian shows him kindness, and ungrateful for Lucy's cordial that cures his sea-sickness. Yet he is not the only figure whose character improves; others also grow in one or more of the Narnian virtues as we move from one novel to the next.

The moral universe of Narnia and the virtues children learn about by reading the Narnia novels is certainly consistent with the moral vision that Lewis (1978/1943) sets out in The Abolition of Man (see Appendix 1). The character lessons we learn from these stories are 'part of the great moral tradition of humankind, that Lewis in The Abolition of Man calls the Tao' (Tankard, 2007, p. 65).

Pedagogy

Our pedagogical approach reflected 'transactional' theory, an approach to literature that emphasizes finding personal relevance and application more than 'comprehension' or the taking away of information (Pike, 2003; Rosenblatt, 1985). Students began by learning the meanings of each of the twelve Narnian virtues they were to encounter in the novel extracts, thereby increasing their virtue literacy (so that, for instance they knew what humility was). (Relatively short extracts were chosen so as not to infringe the '10% fair-dealing copyright rule'.) Students were then asked to identify, explain, and apply the virtue(s) or vice(s) in each extract. First, they were asked to highlight (yellow for vices, green for virtues) the virtues or vices they could identify in the extract. Next, they were asked to explain how the fictional character described in the extract had displayed the virtue or vice. Finally, they were asked to recall and write about a time when they displayed the virtue or vice in question

Additional activities included a thought-bubble empathy exercise, which asked students to write what they thought a given character in the story was thinking at a particular point in the action; a 'hot-seat' exercise where a class member played the part of a character

and had to answer classmates' questions put to that character; a 'virtues tree' for the class to collaboratively build; and a newspaper article activity that asked students to write a newspaper report based on an extract of the novel. For example, a year 7 class wrote articles either from a Telmarine or a Narnian-perspective newspaper, recognizing the differences in how the characters' actions would be presented by the two narratives. Student journals offered a space for students' personal reflections on what they were gaining from the curriculum and how their new understanding of the virtues was affecting their own behavior in their day-to-day lives.

Knowledge and behaviour

The Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project (Pike, Lickona, & Nesfield, 2015) has two testable objectives: to help students increase their understanding of the virtues exhibited by the characters in the assigned novel; to help students increase their behavioural application of the virtues in their own lives. It should be noted, however, that these objectives are to be measured over a planned three-year intervention. The pilot intervention to test materials and instruments lasted only six weeks and our hypothesis was that we would be more likely to see an improvement in knowledge than in behaviour over such a short period. This is consistent with current educational thinking about character development. Good character has been defined as the 'constellation of virtues possessed by a person' and 'character education' has been defined as 'the deliberate attempt to cultivate virtue' (Lickona, 1997, p.2). However, Berkowitz and Bier (2004) point out that character education 'has long relied upon an Aristotelian principle that character is formed in large part through habitual behaviour that eventually becomes internalized into virtues' (p. 80, italics added). If virtues are habits, those habits need sufficient time and practice to become established.

It is also often considered that a prerequisite for good character education is for students to acquire a language of virtue that enables them to think about the virtues that underpin good character. Kristjánsson (2013, p. 4) cites a study in the USA that revealed the decline between 1901 and 2000 of the use of 'virtue terms' in 5.2 million American books. However, recent research (Arthur, 2010, pp. 79-84; cited in Kristjánsson, 2013, pp. 6-7) has concluded that young people who had initially revealed a 'lack of vocabulary to talk meaningfully about [their character], once they were provided with such a vocabulary, cherished it and enjoyed the opportunity to use it.' Consequently, our first aim, for children to develop an understanding of virtues and for us to be able to measure this understanding, was considered important given the benefits of having a 'virtues vocabulary'.

The research questions

The present quantitative project was designed to evaluate the impact of the pilot delivery of the programme on participating students in year seven and year eight classes in England. This global research aim was expressed and clarified through the specification of three research questions, each of which was related to a specific hypothesis.

The first research question, the primary research question, concerned the impact of the curriculum programme on explicit levels of knowledge concerning the definition and nature of 'Narnian' character virtues. The hypothesis is that, following exposure to the curriculum, knowledge of these virtues will be enhanced.

The second research question concerned the impact of the curriculum programme on the internalisation of Narnian character virtues reflected in changed levels of self-reported behaviour. The hypothesis is that, while the programme was designed to impact knowledge, it was not anticipated that enhanced knowledge would be immediately reflected in changed behaviour within the limited scope of a six-week pilot programme.

The third research question concerned the inclusion of control variables in order to test the consistency of the participants' responses to constructs without immediate reference to the curriculum programme. The hypothesis is that, while the programme may have exercised some effect on character virtues, it should have exercised no effect on the control variables. Control variables were employed rather than a control group in light of the small number of students involved in the project and the time constraints imposed on a pilot experimental delivery of the programme prior to the implementation of the full three-year programme.

Each of these three research questions now requires further elucidation and operationalisation.

Assessing Narnian character virtues

In an earlier paper, Francis, Pike, Lankshear, Nesfield, and Lickona (2017) discussed the development and testing of the Narnian Character Virtue Scales (NCVS), 12 five-item scales designed to measure 12 character virtues identified as core within the Narnian narratives: courage, curiosity, forgiveness, fortitude, gratitude, hard work, humility, integrity, justice, love, self-control, and wisdom. Each set of five items was selected from an original bank of six items in order to eliminate weaker items. Data provided by 56 year eight students (12- to 13-years of age) demonstrated that nine of the 12 scales reached satisfactory levels of internal consistency reliability, while three of the scales required further refinement (curiosity, love, and integrity). Pending further development all 12 scales are worth including in the project. The content of these scales can be illustrated by citing the three items within each set of five items that achieve the highest correlations with the sum of the other four items.

Courage is displayed by young people who stay calm in the face of danger, who refuse to panic when things look bad, and who do not let other people's anger stand in their way.

Curiosity is displayed by young people who ask a lot of questions, who are not afraid to experiment with things, and who want to know what makes people tick.

Forgiveness is displayed by young people who do not hold grudges against people, who allow others to make a fresh start, and who do not believe in hurting those who hurt them.

Fortitude is displayed by young people who complete their tasks in spite of difficulties, who can cope with disappointment and setbacks, and who stand up for what is right, whatever the cost.

Gratitude is displayed by young people who feel that they have much in life for which to be grateful, who feel that overall life is good to them, and who are grateful for what they receive in life.

Hard work is displayed by young people who believe in working hard, who give what it takes to finish the job, and who don't give up until the job is done.

Humility is displayed by young people who own up to their faults, who do not like to show off when they get the chance, and who own up to their mistakes.

Integrity is displayed by young people whom others can trust to be fair, who are not willing to lie to get out of trouble, and who are honest with others.

Justice is displayed by young people who find that seeing injustice upsets them, who try to treat people fairly, and who respect other people's rights.

Love is displayed by young people who want what is best for others, who often give to others without expecting things in return, and who generally put others first.

Self-control is displayed by young people who do not lose their temper easily, who can control their feelings, and who do not find it hard to keep control of themselves.

Wisdom is displayed by young people who most of the time can work out what is right, who can generally choose the best course of action, and who think about things before acting.

Assessing knowledge of Narnian character virtues

While the Narnian Character Virtue Scales (NCVS) proposed by Francis, Pike, Lankshear, Nesfield, and Lickona (2017) were designed to assess the internalisation of these character virtues within the lives and behaviour of young people, an explicit aim of the present project was to assess the participants' knowledge of and ability to define Narnian character virtues rather than to express these virtues in their own lives. To this end the authors of the present study designed a new instrument, the Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues (KINCV). This new instrument utilised the bank of 72 items from which the Narnian Character Virtue Scales had been created and which had contained six items conceptually linked with each of the twelve identified character virtues. These items were re-organised so that the name of each virtue was followed by three items belonging to that virtue and three items borrowed from the other 11 character virtues. Participants were invited to choose from the six items three that they thought properly reflected the named character virtue. Correct choices on the instrument could range between 0 and 36. The present study provides an opportunity to check the utility of the instrument.

Control variables

The control variables were included to explore whether constructs unrelated to the curriculum project were affected by the pilot delivery of the curriculum programme. The use of control variables in a project of this nature allows the hypothesis to be tested that the intervention of the programme will impact scores on the variables relevant to the intervention but not on the control variables. The control variables were selected from instruments well established within the research group's portfolio, and included: the abbreviated form of the

Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised, a 24-item instrument developed by Francis (1996); the empathy scale of the Eysenck Impulsiveness Questionnaire, a 19-item scale incorporated by Eysenck and Eysenck (1991); the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, a 10-item measure developed by Rosenberg (1965); the Astley-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Theistic Faith, a 7-item measure developed by Astley and Francis (2012); and the short form of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, an 8-item measure developed by Hills and Argyle (2002).

The abbreviated form of the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised was developed by Francis (1996) from the instrument proposed by Corulla (1990) following in the footsteps of Eysenck, Eysenck, and Barrett (1985), shortening the parent instrument, the abbreviated form proposed four six-item scales to assess extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and the lie scale. This instrument, together with its predecessor, the short form of the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire proposed by Francis and Pearson (1988), has played a central role in Francis' empirical work in the psychology of religion and religious schooling (see, for example, Francis & Village, 2014; Francis, Lankshear, Robbins, Village, & ap Siôn, 2014; Francis, ap Siôn, & Village, 2014).

The empathy scale of the Eysenck Impulsiveness Questionnaire published by Eysenck and Eysenck (1991) has its roots in the conceptualisation and measurement of empathy proposed by Mehrabian and Epstein (1972). Together with the junior version of this instrument proposed by Eysenck, Easting and Pearson (1984), this measure has been employed in a series of studies examining the connection between religion and empathy (see, for example, Francis & Pearson, 1987; Francis, 2007; Francis, Croft, & Pyke, 2012).

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale developed by Rosenberg (1965) stands alongside two other core instruments developed in the 1950s and 1960s designed to measure perceptions of self: the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale (Coopersmith, 1967) and the Lipsitt

Self-Concept Scale (Lipsitt, 1958). All three instruments have been used in a series of studies examining the connection between religion and self-esteem (see Jones & Francis, 1996; Francis, 2005; Penny & Francis, 2014).

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was developed by Hills and Argyle (2002) to offer a more compact assessment of the notion of happiness originally operationlised by the Oxford Happiness Inventory shaped by Argyle, Martin, and Crossland (1989). Both the Oxford Happiness Inventory and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire have been employed in a series of studies examining the connection between religion and happiness (see Robbins & Francis, 1996; Francis, Jones, & Wilcox, 2000; Francis, Yablon, & Robbins, 2014).

The Astley-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Theistic Faith was developed by Astley, Francis, and Robbins (2012) to stand alongside the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity (Francis, Lewis, Philipchalk, Brown, & Lester, 1995), the Sahin-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Islam (Sahin & Francis, 2002), the Katz-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Judaism (Francis & Katz, 2007), and the Santosh-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Hinduism (Francis, Santosh, Robbins, & Vij, 2008). The Astley-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Theistic Faith was intended to provide a measure of the affective dimension of religion accessible within cultures shaped by the Christian, Islamic and Jewish traditions.

Method

Procedure

The present study was designed as a pilot study to test the effectiveness of the pilot Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project. The project was administered over six weeks to complete classes of year seven and year eight students. The questionnaire was administered to the participants twice, once at the beginning of the programme and again at the end of the programme. Participants were assured of confidentiality. The questionnaires at time one and time two were matched by code names

known only to the individual students. The project and the assessment were conducted in accordance with the ethical procedures of the lead university and with parental consent.

Participants

A total of 86 students (37 males and 49 females) participated in the project by submitting thoroughly completed questionnaires both at time one and at time two, 29 from year seven, and 56 from year eight. In terms of religious affiliation, 33 of the participants identified as Christian, 6 as Muslim, 1 as Buddhist, and 46 as having no religious affiliation. In terms of religious practice, 8 attended a place of worship at least once a week, 4 at least once a month, 26 occasionally, and 48 never attended a place of worship; 6 prayed nearly every day, 4 at least once a week, 2 at least once a month, 15 occasionally, and 59 never prayed.

Instrument

The questionnaire contained the following measures, in addition to sex and school year.

Narnian Character Virtue Scales. This measure proposed by Francis, Pike, Lankshear, Nesfield, and Lickona (under review) comprised the 60 items of the 12 five-item newly constructed Narnian Character Virtue Scales. The items were randomised and rated on a standard five-point Likert Scale ranging from agree strongly (5), through not certain (3) to disagree strongly (1). The score for each scale ranged from 5 to 25.

Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues. This measure (constructed for the present project) comprised the 72 items of the pool of items from which the 12 five-item newly constructed Narnian Character Virtue Scales were constructed, re-organised so that the name of each character virtue was followed by three items belonging to that character virtue and three items borrowed from the other 11 character virtues. Participants were invited to check the correctly positioned items. Correct choices on this instrument ranged from 0 to 36.

Personality profile. Personality was assessed by the abbreviated form of the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (JEPQ-R(A): Francis, 1996). This instrument proposes four six-item indices of extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism and the lie scale. Each item is rated on a dichotomous scale: yes (1) and no (0).

Empathy. Empathy was assessed by the empathy scale of the Eysenck Impulsiveness Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991). This instrument contains 19 empathy-related items developed for the measure of emotional empathy proposed by Mehrabian and Epstein (1972). Each item is rated on a dichotomous scale: yes (1) and no (0).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem was assessed by items adapted from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This modified instrument contains 10 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from agree strongly (5), through not certain (3), to disagree strongly (1).

Attitude toward religion was assessed by the Astley-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Theistic Faith (Astley, Francis, & Robbins, 2012). This instrument contains 7 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from agree strongly (5), through not certain (3), to disagree strongly (1).

Happiness was assessed by the short form of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002). This instrument contains 8 items rated (in this study) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from agree strongly (5), through not certain (3), to disagree strongly (1).

Analysis

The data were analysed by the SPSS package utilising the frequencies, reliability and paired t-test routines.

Results

- insert table 1 about here -

Table 1 presents the mean scale scores (and standard deviations) recorded at time one and at time two on the 12 Narnian Character Virtue Scales and on the Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues, together with the test-retest reliability coefficient, and the t-test comparing the paired means. The core finding from this table concerns the significant increase in the scores recorded on the Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues over the time of the pilot delivery of the curriculum programme. At the same time, there were no significant increases in the scores recorded by any of the 12 Narnian Character Virtue Scales over this period, although there was a small significant decrease in scores recorded on the Gratitude scale.

- insert table 2 about here -

Table 2 presents the mean scale scores (and standard deviations) recorded at time one and time two on the eight control variables: the four Eysenckian scales (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and lie scale), self-esteem, empathy, happiness, and attitude toward theistic faith, together with the test re-test reliability coefficient, and the t-test comparing the paired means. The core finding from this table concerns the lack of significant change recorded on these instruments over the time of the pilot delivery of the curriculum programme.

Discussion and conclusion

This study set out to evaluate the impact of a pilot delivery of the Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project on a sample of 86 year seven and year eight students. The students participated in the programme for six weeks. Evaluation took place by means of inviting the participants to complete a battery of tests at the beginning of the programme and at the end of the programme. Comparisons were computed between the two administrations of the battery of tests by means of paired t-tests. The battery of tests contained three types of instruments: the Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues,

(designed specifically for this study), 12 Narnian Character Virtue Scales (developed by Francis, Pike, Lankshear, Nesfield, & Lickona, 2017) and eight control variables. Specific hypotheses were advanced in respect of each of these three types of instruments.

The Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues was designed to examine whether the participants correctly identified the component characteristics of each of the twelve character virtues identified by the project: courage, curiosity, forgiveness, fortitude, gratitude, hard work, humility, integrity, justice, love, self-control, and wisdom. The hypothesis was that since the Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project had been specifically designed to enhance knowledge concerning these 12 character virtues, participants would record significantly higher scores on this index at the end of the programme than at the beginning. This hypothesis was supported by the data.

The 12 Narnian Character Virtue Scales were designed to assess the extent to which individuals identified the internalisation of these character virtues within their own lives by means of self-reported behaviour. The hypothesis was grounded on the view that, although participants were hypothesised to gain knowledge of these character virtues through the programme, the pilot programme of six weeks duration was not of sufficient length to effect behavioural change over such a short period of exposure, at least as assessed by the quantitative measure used. Thus the hypothesis posited no significant increase in scores on the 12 Narnian Character Virtue Scales between the beginning of the programme and the end of the programme. This hypothesis was supported by the data.

The control variables were included in the project to assess constructs unrelated to the intended outcomes of the programme. The hypothesis was that, even if the programme were to have had impact on the participants' internalisation of character virtues (as a conceivable consequence of enhanced knowledge about these virtues), no impact should be expected in respect of the control variables. The control variables were selected from other projects core

to the interests of the research group and included recognised measures of personality (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, lie scale), self-esteem, empathy, happiness, and attitude toward theistic faith. This hypothesis was supported by the data.

The core conclusion of this evaluation project is that the pilot delivery of the Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project achieved what it set out to achieve among this sample of 86 year seven and year eight students.

There are recognised weaknesses with this evaluation study. The sample size was small (N = 86). The time available for the pilot delivery of the programme was short (six weeks). The delivery took place into the final weeks of the last term of the school year, during which there are generally disruptions to the regular school programme and there are distractions to the continuity of student attention. The assessment tools designed for the evaluation, namely the Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues and the 12 Narnian Character Virtue Scales, themselves remain under development and deserve further refinement in the light of this pilot project. The small size of the dataset did not justify more complex multivariate analysis of the available data. The fact that, in spite of these recognised weaknesses, the three hypotheses advanced at the outset of the project were all supported by the data adds weight to the case that the pilot delivery demonstrated the effectiveness of the Narnian Virtues Character Education English Curriculum Project. The project is worthy of further development and of rigorous empirical examination.

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Table 1

Character virtues internalisation and knowledge: Change over time

	r	time one		time two		t	p <
		mean	SD	mean	SD		
Courage	.59	17.8	3.2	17.8	3.5	0.2	NS
Curiosity	.65	19.6	2.6	19.2	2.9	1.5	NS
Forgiveness	.69	17.3	4.3	17.4	4.2	-0.3	NS
Fortitude	.47	18.9	2.7	19.2	2.9	-0.9	NS
Gratitude	.74	21.5	2.8	21.0	3.3	2.0	.05
Hard work	.56	19.6	3.1	19.8	3.7	-0.6	NS
Humility	.53	17.3	2.7	17.3	3.2	0.0	NS
Integrity	.69	19.2	3.0	19.0	3.3	0.9	NS
Justice	.64	20.7	2.8	20.7	3.0	0.2	NS
Love	.68	19.2	2.7	19.3	3.2	-0.4	NS
Self-control	.71	16.0	3.9	15.9	3.7	0.3	NS
Wisdom	.53	18.0	2.7	18.1	3.1	-0.3	NS
Knowledge	.54	23.3	6.9	25.6	6.0	3.4	.001

Note: r = test, re-test reliability

Table 2

Control variables: Change over time

	r	time one		time two		t	p <
		mean	SD	mean	SD		
Extraversion	.63	10.3	1.7	10.3	1.8	0.2	NS
Neuroticism	.72	9.2	1.9	9.1	1.9	1.0	NS
Psychoticism	.72	6.8	1.2	7.0	1.3	-1.7	NS
Lie scale	.59	8.9	1.6	8.8	1.6	1.0	NS
Self-esteem	.65	32.6	6.6	32.9	7.4	-0.6	NS
Empathy	.80	39.7	4.0	39.6	4.2	0.2	NS
Happiness	.64	27.2	4.1	27.0	4.9	0.7	NS
Attitude to theistic faith	.78	17.4	8.4	17.3	8.3	0.2	NS

Note: r = test, re-test reliability

Appendix 1

The eight Laws of the Tao from C. S. Lewis' The abolition of man

Lewis' 8 Laws of the Tao	**Examples in The Abolition of Man**
1. The Law of General Benificence Refraining from murder or bringing any sort of misery and suffering upon *one's fellows; not being greedy, cruel* or telling lies. Showing kindness and goodwill, doing one another good not evil, enjoying society and human companionship and loving others as oneself.	'Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you' (Chinese, Analects of Confucius) 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' (Jewish, Leviticus) 'By the fundamental Law of Nature Man [is] to be preserved as much as possible.' (Locke, Treatises of Civil Govt.)
2. The Law of Special Benificence Specifically refers to the duties of brothers, sisters, wives, husbands, children as well as rulers. As human beings we have special obligations and owe particular duties of care to those of our closer and wider family.	Be blameless to thy kindred. Take no vengeance even though they do thee wrong' (Old Norse, Sigrdrifumal) If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith' (Christian, New Testament) Natural affection is a thing right and according to Nature.' (Greek)
3. Duties to Parents, Elders, Ancestors *Honouring one's father and mother by* supporting them, caring for them and *fulfilling one's obligations to them by* showing proper respect, even when they are dead.	For him who fails to honour [father and mother] every work of piety is in vain. This is the first duty.' (Hindu, Janet) 'To care for parents' (Greek, Epictetus) 'You will see them take care ... of old men.' (American Indian)
4. Duties to Children and Posterity Providing for the education of the young and respecting children.	'The Master said, Respect the young.' (Chinese, Analects of Confucius) 'The killing of… the young boys and girls who are to go to make up the future strength of the people, is the saddest part….' (American Indian) 'Children, the old, the poor, etc. should be considered as lords of the atmosphere.' (Hindu, Janet)
5. The Law of Justice Sexual justice, honesty and justice in *court. One must be faithful to one's* spouse and not commit adultery. One should not steal and should render to each person his rights. The legal system should not be partial and treat the poor worse than the rich.	If the native made a "find" of any kind (e.g. a honey tree) and marked it, it was thereafter safe for him….' (Australian Aborigines) 'Justice is the settled and permanent intention of rendering to each man his rights' (Roman, Justinian) 'Whoso takes no bribe ... well pleasing is this to Samas.' (Babylonian)
6. The Law of Good Faith and Veracity	'I sought no trickery, nor swore false oaths' (Anglo-Saxon. Beowulf)

Keeping good faith and keeping promises. Fraud, lying, falsehoods are prohibited. Perjury is condemned as is saying one thing and doing another.	'Hateful to me as are the gates of Hades is that man who says one thing, and hides another in his heart' (Greek, Homer, Iliad) 'I have not spoken falsehood.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul)
7. The Law of Mercy The poor, the sick, the disabled, the weak should be cared for. It should be possible for a prisoner to be set free. Widows, orphans and old men should be looked after. We must always be tender enough to weep.	'In the Dalebura tribe a woman, a cripple from birth, was carried about by the tribespeople in turn until her death at the age of sixty-six…They never desert the sick' (Australian Aborigines) 'When thou cutest down thine harvest … and hast forgot a sheaf … thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.' (Jewish. Deuteronomy) 'Nature confesses that she has given to the human race the tenderest hearts, by giving us the power to weep. This is the best part of us.' (Roman. Juvenal)
8. The Law of Magnanimity Not only should we not injure, but we should protect others from being injured - death is not to be feared.	'The Master said, Love learning and if attacked be ready to die for the Good Way' (Ancient Chinese, Analects) 'There are two kinds of injustice: the first is found in those who do an injury, the second in those who fail to protect another from injury when they can.' (Roman, Cicero). 'Men always knew that when force and injury was offered they might be defenders of themselves; they knew that howsoever men may seek their own commodity, yet if this were done with injury unto others it was not to be suffered, but by all men and by all good means to be withstood.' (English. Hooker, Laws of Eccl. Polity)

Note: This table is reproduced from Pike, Lickona, and Nesfield (2015, pp. 73-74)