

***Journal of Moral Education* 40th Anniversary Conference, Association for Moral Education 37th Annual Conference and Asia Pacific Network for Moral Education 6th Annual Conference**

Conference Report

The *Journal of Moral Education* 40th Anniversary Conference, the Association for Moral Education 37th Annual Conference and the Asia-Pacific Network for Moral Education 6th Annual Conference were held jointly at the Nanjing International Conference Centre in Nanjing, the People's Republic of China, 24-28 October 2011. The conference was hosted by the Research Institute for Moral Education, Nanjing Normal University and was supported by the National Centre for Ethical Studies, Renmin University. Over 300 scholars and professionals from 33 countries participated. The meeting successfully incorporated insightful plenary speeches, meaningful celebratory events, rich cultural experiences and practical professional development sessions into its stimulating academic programmes.

The thought-provoking presentations by the plenary speakers generated lively discussions and debates among the audience. Presenters in different parallel sessions explored the conference theme, 'Cultivating Morality: Human Beings, Nature and the World' from a variety of perspectives, topics and disciplines, such as philosophy, spirituality, education, neurology, psychology, religion, anthropology and aesthetics. The conference also included two mentoring sessions to help scholars at different stages of their academic careers to develop skills for publishing in English language academic journals.

The conference highlight was the *JME* 40th anniversary celebration. Dr. Monica Taylor was recognised for her 35 years as *JME* Editor and received a standing ovation from the participants for her contribution and dedication to the journal and the field. The three organisations (*JME*, AME and APNME) respectively presented their annual awards to several individuals. AME presented the Kuhmerker Career Award to Professor Helen Haste for her outstanding contributions to AME and to the field and the Good Work Award to Professor Dan Hart for his achievement in moral educational practice; APNME presented the Best Poster Award to Dr. Darcia Narvaez, Kellen Mrkva and their co-authors Adam Prister, Brian Bettonville, Elizabeth Mullen and Kayla Delgado, for the

poster titled, *The Crying Baby: Moral Identity Influences Moral Perception*; and *JME* presented the *JME*-Taylor Prize to Dr Sharlene Swartz on behalf of the Africa Moral Education Network, for the 2010 *JME* Special Issue, *Moral Education in sub-Saharan Africa: culture, economics, conflict and AIDS*.

In addition to the above-mentioned events, conference participants enjoyed rich cultural experiences such as a visit to Nanjing Foreign Language School, Xianling Campus, an excursion to the Ming Tombs, Dr. Sun Yet-sen's Mausoleum, the Confucius Temple and the Nanjing Massacre Museum, as well as a post-conference tour to the historical town of Yangzhou. Participants also took pleasure in cultural activities such as poetry, film, songs and dances, gardening, calligraphy, games, stories and shadow play.

This joint conference was significant on several fronts. Firstly, it brought together the three major organisations for moral education: AME, *JME* and APNME. This endeavour created new opportunities for intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogues and collaboration among the three bodies and between individual scholars of moral education. Secondly, it was unprecedented in that it was the first time that AME held its annual conference outside of North America and Europe. Choosing the People's Republic of China as a conference site was meaningful. As our world becomes increasingly global, it is important to look beyond the Western lenses of morality, to consider different moral beliefs and values and to negotiate the disjunctions and differences between the moral understandings of each of our own cultures and those of the 'other'. The Nanjing conference took a giant step forward in reflecting on how different cultural contexts and experiences affect our perceptions of and views on cultivating morality. Thirdly, the *JME* celebrated its 40th anniversary of publication. Over the years, many of its groundbreaking articles have profoundly influenced the field. Its 40th year has confirmed its role as the predominant international forum for interdisciplinary exchanges on morality. Finally, APNME, a network for moral education in the Asia-Pacific region, has become more visible on the international stage through the Nanjing conference and has begun to position itself with a higher profile in promoting dialogues in the region.

The impact of the Nanjing conference will be long-standing. As our field moves forward with the momentum of this conference, we will continue to explore the challenging questions posed throughout the conference: How should fairness and caring

be interpreted and nurtured given the wide disparities between peoples, environments and life opportunities? What meaning should be given to respect, responsibility and rights in different cultural and political contexts? How do we acknowledge and appreciate similarities and differences? Are there moral universals, or is everything just relative in a post-modern world? What, indeed, are the goals of cultivating morality?

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