

# Perspectives on “Character and Ethics” from Project Zero’s First 50 Years



PROJECT ZERO  
FIFTY YEARS  
HARVARD GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

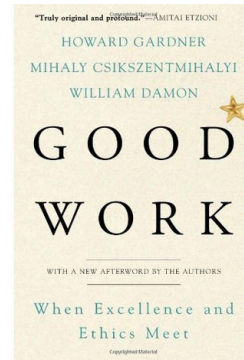


At the beginning, PZ’s research focused on investigating cognitive processing in the arts. This seminal work led researchers to expand to broader aspects of human potential including learning, critical thinking, creativity, and intelligence. In the recent decades, PZ research built on these rich traditions by exploring further fundamental questions of human potential as they relate to contemporary issues facing an array of educational settings—schools, families, museums, and businesses. To celebrate 50 years, PZers looked across the vast body of research and developed an organizing framework that includes nine research areas representative of many facets of the five decades of work. These nine areas include: The Arts, Assessment, Character and Ethics, Civic Agency, Creativity, Developing Understanding, Global Competencies, Intelligences, and Thinking. PZ created a brief overview of each of the 9 areas as stand-alone “booklets.” Each of the four-page booklets describes PZ’s research in the area along with a set of “PZ perspectives,” notes some big questions that are launching PZ into the future, lists key PZ projects, highlights important PZ quotes, offers a sample of notable PZ publications, and visualizes the main frameworks and ideas.

*The artwork and graphic elements featured on these pages was created by our collaborators, dpict, a local graphic facilitation and design firm, along with Matt Riecken, PZ’s digital learning specialist.*

# CHARACTER AND ETHICS

The development of good character has been a fundamental interest at Project Zero for decades. We've examined the issue of character, from its development in childhood to its realization at the workplace and in the broader community.



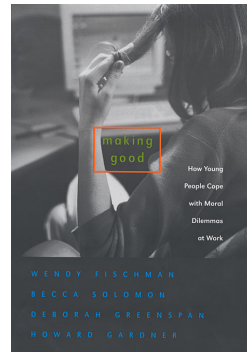
## BIG QUESTIONS

What does it mean to do good work? To be a good citizen?

How do we help young people become the kind of persons of whom we can be proud? What are the obstacles?

Is 'good character' a role that one can assume, or is it a more complex, longer lasting, developmental phenomenon?

Why do students cheat? What can make them not cheat? Not even think of cheating? Be constructive with peers?



## PZ PERSPECTIVES

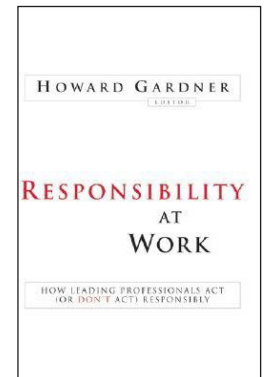
Good work is work that is excellent in quality, personally engaging, and carried out in an ethical way.

Similarly the good citizen is well informed, involved in civic activities, and ponders the effects of his/her civic involvement on others in the community.

There is an important distinction between neighborly morality—the kind of behaviors endorsed or prohibited in religious texts—we learn these when we are young and are expected to honor them with neighbors; and the ethics of roles, the kinds of behaviors, attitudes, and principles that we associate with professional roles.

Professions are impressive human inventions and they presuppose that individuals strive to work in a disinterested way; they are at risk in a digital, neoliberal era.

Institutional contexts and role models play crucial roles in determining individual character, including whether one cheats and whether one behaves in a disinterested professional way.



## KEY PROJECTS

Good Work (1995 – current)

Good Play (2007 – 2016)

Good Collaboration (2012 – 2015)

Family Dinner Project (2014 – current)



# CHARACTER/ETHICS

WHAT DOES IT MEAN to DO GOOD WORK? to BE a GOOD CITIZEN?

IS 'GOOD CHARACTER' a ROLE THAT ONE CAN ASSUME, OR is it a MORE COMPLEX, LONGER LASTING DEVELOPMENTAL PHENOMENON?

HOW DO WE HELP YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME the KIND of PERSONS of WHOM WE CAN BE PROUD? WHAT are the OBSTACLES?

WHY DO STUDENTS CHEAT? WHAT CAN MAKE THEM NOT CHEAT, OR EVEN THINK of CHEATING? ... BE CONSTRUCTIVE with PEERS?

**GOOD WORK**

CARRIED OUT in an **ETHICAL WAY**

**WELL INFORMED**

INVOLVED in **CIVIC ACTIVITIES**

**GOOD CITIZEN**

PONDERS the **EFFECTS** of THEIR INVOLVEMENT on OTHERS in the COMMUNITY

**EXCELLENT QUALITY**  
**PERSONALLY ENGAGING**

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS and ROLE MODELS PLAY CRUCIAL ROLES in DETERMINING INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER

**NEIGHBORLY MORALITY**  
v.  
**ETHICS of ROLES**



PROFESSIONS PRESUPPOSE that INDIVIDUALS STRIVE to WORK in a DISINTERESTED WAY — @ RISK in a DIGITAL, NEOLIBERAL ERA.

**TO ACT or NOT to ACT,**

and THEN to ACT WISELY or FOOLISHLY OR DESTRUCTIVELY — THOSE ARE the QUESTIONS.

## NOTABLE PZ PROJECTS

- GOOD WORK
- GOOD PLAY
- GOOD COLLABORATION
- FAMILY DINNER PROJECT

# KEY FRAMEWORKS

## the GOOD WORK TOOLKIT



an APPROACH to ENGAGE INDIVIDUALS and GROUPS in REFLECTION and CONVERSATION about GOOD WORK

STIMULATE CONVERSATIONS with PEERS, COLLEAGUES and FAMILY MEMBERS

## VALUE SORT

REFLECT UPON WHAT is MOST IMPORTANT to you PERSONALLY

