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TEACHING ETHICS: EXPANDING ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES BY CULTIVATING MORAL IMAGINATION

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Moral imagination (MI) is described as the ability to challenge operative worldviews in order to discover new ways of framing ethical problems and moral perspective taking. Because operative worldviews can contain implicit bias, MI helps individuals reach beyond their own "ways of knowing" to seek alternative perspectives and find innovative ways to solve ethical problems. This article describes a graduate level ethics curriculum designed to develop moral imagination in leadership students, and ultimately help them make ethical decisions within the context of their organizations. The article also reports results of a concurrent, evaluative qualitative study designed to gather student reflections as they attempt to learn and apply moral imagination in practice.

INTRODUCTION

Moral imagination is described as the ability to challenge operative worldviews in order to discover new ways of framing ethical problems and providing resolutions (Werhane, 1999). For the past several years, a graduate organizational leadership program at a private university has taught students how to use moral imagination in order to make better, ethical decisions within the context of their work as organizational leaders. During the delivery of the course, an ongoing qualitative study was conducted in order to gather reflections on student's application of this innovative approach to ethical decision making. The purpose of this article is twofold: 1) to describe the core curricula used to teach and cultivate moral imagination in leadership students; and 2) to report on qualitative findings gathered from 60 student narratives as part of their course reflections. The overall goals of this paper are to offer innovative teaching methods for moral education with organizational leaders, to specifically demonstrate how to integrate the concept of moral imagination into a curriculum, and to explore how the construct of moral imagination impacts students' own ethical decision making.

MORAL IMAGINATION: A METHOD OF EXPANDING PERSPECTIVES

Though moral imagination is not a new philosophical concept, it has been the subject of recent renewed scholarly interest. Werhane's (1999) groundbreaking research on moral imagination explored why ordinarily decent managers and/or reputable companies make morally suspect decisions and repeat past mistakes. Werhane theorized that some of the rationale is rooted in the fact that individuals often form narrow mental models, or worldviews. A worldview is a perspective gained throughout lifespan development (Nicholi, 2003; Bandura, 1977), and represents a personalized lens through which the world is perceived, interpreted, and experienced (Palmer, 1996). Some worldviews are malleable while others are more rigid.

Although a worldview has the potential to become more than a guiding orientation, it can also serve as a reactive way of operating. Additionally, an individual's worldview is merely one perspective, possibly limited or blinded to see a situation from multiple perspectives. Werhane (2006) asserted that lapses in moral reasoning are related to an overreliance on dominant worldviews: "Sometimes companies get into trouble not because they deliberately meant to do the wrong thing...but because they did not question what they were doing or challenge the mind sets and methodologies with which they thought through issues" (p. 404). In short, an individual's worldview can limit moral responses if s/he is not able to challenge prevailing perceptions or if s/he makes an inaccurate assessment of the situation based on only one prevailing perspective.

Typically, undergraduate and graduate ethical instruction has traditionally focused on teaching a range of moral approaches representative of utilitarian, rule based, rights approach, and social contract frameworks, to allow individuals to reason through moral problems (Ciulla, 2003). Through a meta-analysis of 1800 article abstracts Ciulla (1995) found that studies emphasized general philosophical theories of ethics with limited attempts to contextualize or apply ethics. Additionally, her findings indicated that ethics was taught as an appendage to other constructs or disciplines like leadership, management and others. Knowledge of these theories, however, does not ensure ethical action. In fact, these ethical theories often ignore the "in situ" issues inherent in moral dilemmas in the workplace. The most important issue is that individuals can become trapped in prevailing viewpoints and unable to reach beyond their own worldview to find solutions. Moral imagination, on the other hand, is the ability to challenge prevailing worldviews in order to reframe ethical problems and discover new solutions. Through the act of finding and using other perspectives, individuals can begin to imagine something new that diverges from existing ways of thinking and operating. Moral imagination as an ethical decision-making construct provides a compelling foundation for ethical development required of leaders. Developing moral

imagination allows students to go beyond the simple understanding of moral theories. Instead, it allows them to focus on the existing worldviews that guide their own actions, assess the limitations present in their worldview, and develop a capacity for embracing other perspectives when encountering ethical problems.

Developing an Ethics Curriculum to Develop Moral Imagination

A graduate level organizational ethics course was designed with the primary goal and purpose of developing moral imagination in students. Students represent a diverse range of industries in the public, private, and not for profit

sectors, with entry to executive leadership experience. Students range in age from early 20s to late 50s. The course is divided into four phases that focus on scaffolded competencies tied to the dimensions of moral imagination (See Table 1). Scaffolding theory developed from early work on learning and decision making through categorization (Brunner & Goodman, 1947). His framework, applied in acquisition of ethical competencies for this course, maintains that thought is governed by a narrative mode of sequencing action oriented details and a paradigmatic mode that achieves categorical cognition linked by logical operators. The course content is staged and delivered so as to progressively contribute to both the narrative and paradigmatic modes of thought.

TABLE 1

Scaffolded Competencies

- Exploring Worldview
- Identifying Personal Values
- Considering the Construct of Community
- Practicing Moral Imagination

Exploring Worldview

The course begins by challenging students to explore and identify their worldview and work towards developing an appreciation for diverse worldviews. Students engage in the process of exploring their lifespan development and identify how situations, circumstances, culture, family, and other formative milestones contributed to their construction of existing mental models. Werhane (1999) refers to these socially constructed conceptual schemes as mental models through which we “selectively frame, order, organize, and interpret the data of experience” (p. 12-13). These mental models are socially learned, culturally enacted, “educationally reinforced, and experientially altered” (p.13). In the context of this course, students learn skills to identify their mental models and how these conceptual schemes inform and guide personal responses to ethical problems. The course is designed to help students monitor their growth and progress in transitioning from reactive responses to responses grounded in critical, yet imaginative thinking. Students in this course become aware of socially structured mental models through observation, reflection, and practice. Students read about and view an educational video series on two juxtaposing worldview positions of Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis (Nicholi, 2003). Through observation, students learn about the formative years of Freud and Lewis and how these human experiences socially constructed their conceptual schemes and broader worldview. Inversely, students develop the skills to reflect, clarify, and articulate

the varying human experiences that contributed to their own mental models.

Identifying Personal Values

In the second phase of the course, emphasis is placed on methods to develop the competence of identifying personal values and virtues that inform leadership and conduct within the organizational setting. Module video clips as presented by Nicholi (2003) demonstrate how life experiences impacted the worldviews of C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud. These two juxtaposing worldviews not only provide a platform for openly identifying with and discussing varying worldviews but also models for understanding how moral living is constructed by various events experienced throughout life. Discussions allow opportunity for self-reflection and clarification of ambivalent and/or constant worldviews. Course readings complement dialogue and charter a path for self-reflection and contemplation.

Considering the Construct of Diverse Worldviews

The third phase of the course challenges students to reflect on and consider the construct of community and multiple perspectives as a new metaphor for the organizational setting. Students gain the capacity to identify how personal worldviews impact or dictate professional relationships, recognize development of personal attitudes and behaviors, identify the impact of personal views on forgiveness and reconciliation, and develop strategies that

contribute to a sense of community in organizations. Video clips provide a background for discussions relating to the role of worldviews in decision making. Course readings introduce students to methods and practices of cultivating shared values and to strategies of maintaining community cohesiveness. Students are required to discuss how the precept of "love your neighbor as yourself" is conceptualized by Freud and Lewis, and how these conceptualizations manifest themselves in the organizational setting. Additionally, students view the film *12 Angry Men* (Rose & Lumet, 1957) and learn about cooperative community in a formal group representing divergent worldviews. The film provides another opportunity to understand the importance of context in learning about mental models and how they contribute to bias, stereotypes, and other socially constructed realities. Students implement course content to explain the approaches used by the protagonist to challenge rigid mental models and reconstruct perspectives through dialogic procedures.

Practicing Moral Imagination

In the final phase of the class energy is devoted to opportunities that challenge students to reflect on morality in the organizational setting and to practice techniques for engaging with ethical dilemmas using multiple perspectives. Students learn to identify the presence and role of morality in the organizational setting and recognize how pluralism impacts on the interpretation of organizational ethics. Students develop a strategy to solve ethical problems and recommend a course of action. Module video clips encourage dialogue about the significance of morality and ethical standards in organizations and the impact of worldviews on interpreting ethical problems. Students have the opportunity to engage in dialogue about the origins of morality, the intuitive sense of right and wrong, moral law as a social convention, and consider how varying perspectives on these issues guide decisions and leadership in organizations. As a final project, students apply Cooper's (2006) ethical decision making model to an ethical problem and design a plan of action for resolution.

Evaluating the Course: Did Students Gain Competency in Moral Imagination?

After piloting and refining the course for several years it was important for the efficacy of delivery to explore the impact of the curriculum on development of moral imagination embedded throughout the course. Given what is known about the framework of moral imagination, it was hypothesized that students would become more aware of their worldviews and dominant cognitive operating models. An open-ended narrative design was used to investigate the hypothesis and explore application of the moral imaginative process in organizational settings. The overarching goal was to evaluate the impact of the course and to hear, through students' own words how they began to explore personal

worldviews, expand their understanding of diverse perspectives, and began to use moral imagination in the organizational setting.

DESIGN

A qualitative narrative research design was implemented to examine the perceived impact of this ethics curriculum on individuals, particularly how they began to develop and use moral imagination. A grounded theory (Straus & Corbin, 1998) approach was used to allow prominent and iterative themes to emerge from the data and to contribute to a deeper construction of a complex construct. Glaser and Strauss (1967) described grounded theory as a constant comparative method of analysis, requiring constant gathering of more data, analyzing, comparing analysis to past analysis, and continuing the process in order to clarify emerging theoretical relationships among variables.

Participants and Instrumentation

A convenience sample of narrative reflections from 4 graduate organizational ethics courses were asked to complete a course reflection at the end of the course. Graduate students in this graduate program are middle age adults, mid-career, and represent a wide range of positions and industries. The convenience sample included 60 narrative reflections to four, open-ended questions focused on theoretical content related to moral imagination. Prolonged engagement with data across a wide variety of classes allowed for tempering of distortions introduced by particular events throughout a given semester. Some of these events may occur on campus, in the course, or world outside of the educational context. Deliberating about ethical corporate practices during or after the corporate and/or banking scandals contributes to different understanding than analyzing and contemplating fictitious case study scenarios. Personal biases, challenges, and emotions in response to a global context may be interpreted as a distortion if not recognized or observed in the context or the timing of this study. This data was gathered several years after the fallout of Enron, but before the collapse of the banking, lending, and auto industry. Prolonged engagement enhances credibility of the study by recognizing the nuances of the culture that would otherwise be inconsequential from a single snapshot observation (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, Allen, 1993).

Questions were integrated at the end of the course and provided an opportunity for students to reflect on competencies gained throughout the course that contribute to moral imagination (See Table 2). The questions were designed and informed by the context of the curriculum. The curriculum towards the end of the course focused on moral awareness, perspective taking, cognitive deliberation, and other principles of moral imagination. Narrative

questions were grounded in the theoretical framework of moral imagination and primed to explore content related to how students concluded the course. In any other context, the

questions may have been perceived as leading or not neutrally phrased.

TABLE 2

Narrative Questions

- Briefly explain whether you have become more fully conscious of personal values and personal identity.
- How is awareness contributing to your responses and ethical decision making in the organizational setting?
- How do you ensure that you have made a good ethical decision while balancing personal and organizational values?
- How have you become more aware, self-sufficient, and more willing to act from personal values in support of organizational viability?

Procedures and Analysis

This study employed an inductive methodology, grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), to analyze narrative responses. Grounded theory involves comparative analysis of data as well as continuous gathering additional data through iterative rounds of data collection and analysis. As data were compared and analyzed, themes emerge and applied to construct theory concerning the phenomenon in question. The overall goal of the chosen methodology is to clarify emerging theoretical relationships and meaningful themes within the data (Abrahamson, 1983).

The study used three levels of coding as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998): (1) Open coding; (2) Axial coding; (3) Selective coding. Data sets were open coded at the conclusion of each course. Two raters coded responses of each course, independently using memos to denote impressions, thoughts, and self-instructions for inquiry. As raters came together to compare and discuss findings, the data was translated into a more coherent and comprehensive analytical narrative. The iterative analytical process allowed for constant comparison: involving exploration for discovery of concepts; specification for the development of concepts; reduction for determining the core concept; and integration for developing a theoretical understanding (Boeije, 2010). The codes were woven together into an integrated whole, representing themes that emerged from the process of data collection and analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative content analysis revealed the following three major themes:

- Heightened self awareness
- Ethical perspective taking
- Negotiating community in ethical decision making

Heightened Self Awareness

Overall the course engaged students in examining values and identity, and the correlate worldviews that students employ. By analyzing their own worldviews as well as reflecting on the lives of Lewis and Freud, students began to uncover the way that personal development informs personal values and ethical approaches. Their narrative responses reflected our theoretical assumption that moral living is constructed by various events experienced throughout life.

I have come to understand myself better in that I know why I make the decisions I make. The decisions I make are based upon a set of standards and values that have evolved and developed throughout my life. (Summer, B, R2)

I am more cognizant of the way values are formed by society and imprinted upon us via family and peers during our early years. (Spring, B, R9)

We get so wrapped in our opinions and views that we seldom take time out to examine where or how those perspectives were formulated. This class has made me take the time out to gain a greater understanding of my own personal identity and has added value to my personal leadership theory. (Summer, A, R17)

Through personal understanding, students were more able to cogently describe their own worldview in order to better understand the personal virtues and values they bring to their work as organizational leaders. Students reported that a key outcome of the course was an ability to better articulate and express their worldview and values.

The course has forced me to codify my beliefs and express them concisely to others – something I do not normally do. (Spring, A, R14)

Words are powerful, and if you can put words to thoughts and emotions in regards to ethical decision making, how much better a leader you can be (Spring, A, R13)

Potentially related to better articulation of values is the development of higher levels of confidence and courage in dealing with ethical issues. Students reflected positively on their ability to apply “stand up” and “speak up” within an organizational setting when addressing ethical issues.

By being aware of why I have the personal values that I have, it makes it that much easier to stand up and defend something. (Spring, A, R8)

I have learned that it is important to speak up and question the decisions of others if you do not agree with them or think their decisions will hinder the organization. (Summer, B, R5)

Another outcome of personal understanding was the ability to define personal methods of decision making and move beyond purely habitual ways of operating. In this way, students expressed a transition from purely reactive responses to ethical situations to more conscious, reflective responses. In particular, students articulated the need for intentionality and deliberation in order to make sound ethical decisions.

I find myself being more intentional in developing and practicing decision making as stepping stones to responding versus reacting. (Spring, B, R5)

I have become more aware but slower to act. (Spring, B, R2)

Like any heightened sensitivity, it has already caused me to pause prior to acting. To consider the ramification of my responses and to more fully consider the various perspectives in play. (Spring, B, R9)

Ethical Perspective Taking

Although most students saw within themselves a worldview – or a dominant, personal method of viewing and evaluating ethical dilemmas – the course offered a chance to see and value other perspectives. By experiencing this broad mix of perspectives within the course setting, many students expressed a shift in consciousness towards understanding others. At the same time, by opening to other ways of addressing ethical issues, students challenged their own

worldviews constructed throughout life leading to a broader understanding of ethics within a community setting.

It has re-energized me in thinking about the ways in which my personal views impact my responses and my decision making...Having this awareness has helped me to seek more to understand other viewpoints, to ask questions, and to ensure I understand why decisions are made or why someone reacted the way they did (Summer, A, R4)

I have come to understand the importance of respecting differing opinions in an organizational setting. It harkens back to the old adage “If you knew everything, you could understand everyone.” Although I may not know everything, by simply understanding the rich diversity of individual worldviews, I believe I am better equipped to deal with ethical issues in an organizational setting. (Summer, B, R14)

This class has taught me to appreciate and tolerate the diversity of moral values which in turn tempers my ethical decision making in an organizational setting. (Spring, B, R12)

Students also expressed a heightened awareness of and ability to engage in constructive dialogue with colleagues when making ethical decisions. In this way, student responses reflected ethical decision making as more than simply a personal choice but rather an outcome of social meaning and negotiation.

By understanding myself better, I can listen to others with conflicting views...I am able to find more common ground with others, working with what we have in common instead of what separates us. (Summer, B, R11)

If we seek counsel in the process of decision making and are ‘vulnerable’ enough to share the personal values that motivate our desire to see one outcome over another then I feel open debate of the issues can occur...being heard and having a voice while being honored in that process is key, whether your view prevails or not. (Spring, B, R11)

Finally, students reported an increasing ability to ‘reframe’ ethical decisions and imagine different outcomes. In particular, students reported using a model of ethical decision making that incorporated the use of other perspectives and/or worldviews to reframe the existing situation and produce a creative response.

Reaching beyond my own thoughts and perspective helps me to see situations in a different light and helps me to understand decisions in a broader context (Summer 07, B, R4)

I try to view problems and decisions from multiple vantage points, including from a point in time years after the decision is made. I've always tried out of habit to imagine varying outcomes when making big decisions, but now I recognize the importance of doing so in a methodical and thorough fashion. (Spring 07, B, R9)

Negotiating Community in Ethical Decision Making

As students expressed ethics in terms of a community process, certain tensions inherent in this process were also uncovered. In particular, student responses demonstrated that ethics is more than purely internal reasoning, and therefore, involves necessary negotiation with others within a larger social system.

I am not sure that I have become more willing to act from personal values, and indeed, I am not sure that I should. I am a part of my organization, but I am not the only part . . . when charged with making an ethical decision, I believe I must reflect the views of the organization, not myself. (Spring, A, R14)

A good ethical decision that addresses personal and organizational values would tend to be a compromise. It can't be MY ethical orientation, it must be the intersection of my ethical model and others with whom I am collaborating. . . Upon reflection, ethical decision making is not the rigid and inflexible application of my ethics. (Summer, A, R9)

A notable subset expressed both concern and caution in making personal ethical choices that may diverge from prevailing social expectations. These responses emphasize yielding personal values to that of the larger organizational community.

I believe that I must yield my personal values and ascribe to corporate shared values. . . so when making ethical decisions, the first place to ensure that my decisions are ethical is to our corporate values. (Spring 07, A, R13)

I am able to balance my personal views because when I am at work, it does not matter what I think, it matters what the organization tells me to think. (Summer 07, A, R3)

When working for an organization whose values were not always consistent with mine. . . I have sometimes felt that I needed to compromise my own values for the benefit of the organization. (Summer 07, B, R5)

Alternatively, other students reported managing this negotiation by finding organizations in which their values "fit."

Mostly I've been lucky in managing my career by carefully choosing my places of work, and not compromising on the way in, so I don't have to compromise while I'm in there either. (Summer R9 B)

If I have chosen my job wisely, then my personal and organizational values hopefully are in alignment with one another. If they are in continual conflict, then perhaps I need to look for work elsewhere. (Summer 07, B, R15)

Such responses demonstrate an underlying desire to connect personal values to the larger community. Such alignment allows individuals to express personal values and feel that they do not have to compromise their own worldviews for the sake of the organization.

DISCUSSION

Value of Heightened Self Awareness

In his exploration of moral imagination, Johnson (1993) noted that moral decision making is an imaginative process that requires reflection on personal worldviews (p. 2). Reflection allows one to assess and appraise implicit belief systems and recognize that a problematic situation exists. It also provides space for questioning dominant, and often tacit, ways of operating. This process brings a person in contact with their own frames of a given situation, other possible framings of the situation, and their own traditionally-forged definitions of moral concepts. This constructive imaginative activity is based on perception, personal experience, and individual understanding of dominant moral concepts (p. 2). Johnson (2005) also contextualized self-awareness in leadership development as the ability to engage external data to provoke self-evaluation to learn about what one is doing well and what needs to be improved. One cannot learn to identify ethical gaps or gaps in reasoning that are impacting integrity and performance without heightened self-awareness. In this respect, a core goal of the course was simply to help individuals understand their own worldviews as well as to actively see and engage in other perspectives. By expanding their frame of reference, students developed the capacity to find alternate moral

solutions that they may not have been able to generate from only their own worldview and myopic perspectives.

In particular, the use of film and literature provided creative exercises for students to expand their frames of reference. Students read and viewed the *Question of God* (Nicholi, 2003) series which covers the formative worldviews of Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis. This series describes the lives of two worldviews that influenced the moral fabric of contemporary Western civilization. The purpose of this series and its implication in the curriculum of this course is to look at human life from two diametrically opposed points of view – those of a worldview grounded in faith and reason. The book and series is an intimate view of various formative life events and experiences that contributed to their philosophy on life. Students have the opportunity to observe, through the video series, perspectives not aligned with their own and learn about formative life experiences that contributed to the views of Lewis and Freud. In turn, students reflect on their own worldviews and learn about life experiences that constructed their philosophy on life. Pardales (2002) noted that literature “involves us with the narratives of others. We are able to assess their actions, decisions, emotional states and the rich particularity of their lives” (p. 345). By observing the particularity of two very different individuals, Freud and Lewis, students were able to become involved in other narratives and explore new ways to approach moral issues. Group discussions allowed students to tell their own stories and hear others’, thus connecting to a range of narratives. Johnson (1993) hypothesized that moral reasoning is tied to the exploration of narrative:

Moral deliberation is an imaginative exploration of the possibilities for constructive action within a present situation. We have a problem to solve here and now (e.g., “What am I to do?” “Who am I to become?” “How should I treat others?”), and we must try out various possible continuations of our narrative in search of the one that seems best to resolve the indeterminacy of our present situation. (p. 180)

Perhaps not surprisingly, students reported increased competence in both articulating values and worldviews and having confidence in their moral decision making. By exploring narratives – those of self, of fellow students, of Lewis and Freud – students were able to begin to appreciate their own values as well as gain access to a greater range of possible moral responses.

Value of Ethical Perspective Taking

In contrast to ethical frameworks that emphasize personal ethical agency at the expense of social relationships, our analysis found that a pluralistic, social process forms the core of ethical decision making. Engaging

with others draws out different perspectives and allows for the creation of new ethical options. By engaging other perspectives, individuals find multiple possibilities for their own behaviors and for addressing situations. People cannot generate possibilities in a vacuum; thus, perspective taking is a necessary prelude to any imaginative activity. Nussbaum (1997) suggested that by broadening their perspectives, individuals can more easily self-evaluate: “As I experience the world from new possible vantage points, I ‘feel’ it differently, and thereby am compelled to re-evaluate my own vantage point” (p. 12). Additionally, Moberg and Seabright (2000) argued that individuals can gain perspective from “referent others,” other individuals who can provide a different or fresh insight into a problem; “moral imagination enables the decision maker to see how an anticipated course of action would be morally evaluated by various, even differing referents” (p. 870). These authors suggested that the most morally imaginative people would have larger and more diverse referent others, allowing for richer exploration of possibilities. In particular, students emphasized the role of dialogue to elicit and uncover alternative outcomes. Such strategies affirm Werhane’s (1999) theory of moral imagination that ethical decision making must challenge personal operating models, identify the limitations of existing schemes, and construct a new reality that has alternative outcomes (p. 404).

Through the combination of social connection and imaginative thought, an individual can connect with other possible mental models and create new scripts and narratives. Bohm (1996) called this type of dialogue “the continual emergence of a new content that is common to both participants...two people are making something in common, i.e. creating something new together” (p. 3). In viewing the *Question of God* (Nicholi, 2003) series, students have an opportunity to learn about life experiences that shifted perspectives held by Lewis and life experiences that further confirmed Freud’s scientific worldview. This comparative context allows students to examine and challenge personal assumptions and habitual ways of knowing or experiencing organizational problems. Students are required to write a critical analysis paper about an ethical scenario at work that requires them to handle diverse interpretations of differing values concerning an issue that has competing values, interests, obligations, and ethical issues at stake. Students are required to develop a plan to address this ethical scenario while fostering relationships, trust, and credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Discussion sessions engage them to present their own perspectives yet also be open to challenges and questions from others. Students often begin to reassess their own positions in light of other possible thoughts and ideas.

Students emphasized that connecting to other models of knowing or perspectives provides them opportunity to reframe decisions and it enlarges their scope of reference that creates alternative visions of the future. Cooper (2005) argued that perspective taking is critical in helping

individuals assess meaning within social context: "We have to abandon our customary habit of seeing the things of the world from a centralized point of view and recognize their essential incipience when seen from a multiple mix of perspectives" (p. 693). In this way, social experiences contain a morally transformative potential. Individuals can only unleash this potential, however, if they are able to question dominant social habits, expose new possibilities through imagination, and frame responses by choosing the best from among those available (Fesmire, 2003).

Value of Negotiation Community in Ethical Decision Making

A morally imaginative approach requires individuals to actively take other perspectives and function dialogically within their community. Doing so also requires individuals to maintain congruence between their personal worldviews and that of their larger community. Students were required to write a critical analysis paper of the film *12 Angry Men* (Fonda, 1957) integrating course content on leadership and ethics to explain how Henry Fonda created a cooperative community. Given that a jury room is an emotional and intellectual stage where jurors are quickly challenged to reflect on their own worldview in deciding on an ethical or legal issue, students learned about improving group ethical performance in the context of *12 Angry Men* by observing Henry Fonda's character adopt a cooperative orientation, apply strategies for increasing expectancy, and respond to external danger signs that may reflect groupthink, signs of overconfidence, signs of closed-mindedness, signs of group pressure, and mismanaged agreement (Johnson, 2007).

Students expressed an existential negotiation between personal worldview and the values of the larger community. Some students negotiated this issue through Mill's utilitarian perspective (Wall, 2008) and yielded to the community by compromising moral decisions for the principle of utility and greater good, following what the organization formally or informally requires of them at the cost of their integrity. On the other hand, some students express a desire to work in or create an organizational community in which their existing values can be respected so they do not have to compromise personal values.

Such responses reflect a contention that a person's values and moral character are "interwoven with one's cultural horizon, a set of symbol systems, values, beliefs, and histories which define a community" (Fesmire, 2003, p. 12). These responses also demonstrate the fact that ethical decision making involves a constant personal negotiation of values within a larger social community. As Wenger (1998) noted, "by living in the world, we do not just make meanings up independently of the world, but neither does the world simply impose meanings on us. The negotiation of meaning is a productive process" (Wenger, 1998, p. 54). Developing meaning around ethical issues requires understanding the

necessary relationship between person and community and how each works to both sustain and change the other.

CONCLUSION

Ethics as a field of inquiry is at a critical juncture. Sekerka and Bagozzi (2007) asserted that: "leading scholars in the field of ethical decision making have put forth an invitation to integrate constructs, topics, and issues that span academic fields, taking a cross-disciplinary approach" (p. 132). Of key importance in this phase of ethics is finding a way to reconcile opposing perspectives on how individuals encounter, experience, and explore moral issues in everyday life. Educational approaches to ethics must also move beyond the rote expression of moral theories and, instead, reflect how students experience ethical issues; and expand their competence in handling real-life problems.

Moral imagination (MI) provides such an approach: it allows students to expand understanding of self, others, and organizational culture and, in doing so, enlarge their capacity for discovering new solutions. Overall, MI leads to more reflective decision making and helps individuals move away from reactive ways of thinking and operating. As individuals explore alternative perspectives and use a more pluralistic approach, they uncover a wider range of options for problem solving. This study presents a broad snapshot of curriculum for teaching principles of moral imagination and indicates the influence it had on student perspective-taking. The curriculum focuses on developing "scaffolded competencies" in moral decision making: understanding personal worldviews and values, understanding pluralistic worldviews, and practicing moral imagination. These competencies should aid students as they experience "in situ" moral dilemmas that challenge them to find resolution among competing values and worldviews.

Using a grounded theory approach, we explored student response to the curriculum. We uncovered three overarching themes from student narratives: Value of personal understanding; Ethical decision making as a social process; and Negotiation of the Personal-social link. Our results also demonstrate that core course goals are, indeed, being met. Students are gaining an increased awareness of their own personal values while also gaining competence in applied ethical decision making. Students are recognizing the necessary relationship of personal ethical decision making to the larger social community in which they live and work. Most importantly, students are learning to solve moral dilemmas in the real world: build bridges, take the perspectives of others, and work together to imagine a better way.

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