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Dimensions of Moral and Civic Development

...Mature moral and civic understanding...entails the acquisition of rich substantive knowledge, which provides the foundation for wise and effective judgment.

Moral judgment. The ability to think clearly about difficult moral issues is important not only in the domain of personal morality but *also in civic and political affairs*, because the latter domain so often entails such issues as balancing the rights and welfare of individuals and groups.

...Moral judgment is part of the broader domain of social cognition.... ...It is clear that social, moral, political, and religious development all have an important intellectual core. *It is therefore impossible to divide moral and civic development sharply from intellectual or academic development because much of moral and civic development is intellectual*. ...This insight reinforces our central argument that moral, civic, and political development have important links. It also points to an essential compatibility between efforts to foster these intellectual aspects of moral and civic development and the academic endeavor more broadly.

...Concepts such as distributive justice, moral authority, trust, and accountability are central to morality, and the way they are understood plans an important part in understanding ambiguous moral situations. However, the developmental aspects of individuals' implicit assumptions are only one source of schemas that shape moral perceptions, interpretations and actions. *Individuals also learn what constitutes a meaningful pattern through interaction with their social environment*. As they participate in cultural routines, they acquire habits of interpretation consistent with that culture. The impact of the social context on habits and schemas is part of the broader issues of socialization of values.

...[It is] possible for individuals to reflect on their moral interpretations and discuss them with others. These processes can lead to moral growth. ...Investigators have found consistently that attending college does increase students' scores on this measure, and many studies have found a significant correlation between years of higher education and scores on Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview... This is true regardless of the student's age. Moral judgment stage is more likely to stop increasing at the end of formal education than at any particular age. [However,] ...most college educated adults do not achieve [Kohlberg's] highest level of moral judgment. Most reason at Stage 4 or some combination of Stage 3 and 4.

A large body of research makes it clear that *the experience of grappling with challenging moral issues in classroom discussions or in activities that require the resolution of conflicting opinions contributes*

significantly to the increasing maturity of individuals' moral judgment. This is especially true when the teacher draws attention to important distinctions, assumptions, and contradictions.

Much of the *positive impact of programs that foster understanding across the diversity of a campus and its environment* may reside in the power of those programs to make students aware for the first time of their previously unquestioned interpretive schemes, to bring biases to light, and to highlight the inherent ambiguity of moral situations that previously appeared clear-cut. This view of moral change also clarifies the *significance of the reflective component that is known to be critical to the success of service-learning courses.*

...Knowledge. Even intellectually sophisticated reasoning and judgment cannot be powerful forces for effective action ***if they are abstract or disembodied.*** Being deeply knowledgeable about the issues is also essential. In addition to fostering clearer reasoning and more mature judgment, colleges can promote students' moral and civic learning by *imparting broad and deep knowledge bearing on civic, political, and moral issues...*

...Likewise, students need to develop foundational knowledge of democratic principles and an understanding of complex social, legal, and political structures and institutions if they are to be fully prepared as engaged citizens. Research on context specifically of expertise suggests that ***programs attempting to foster generic analytical capacities are insufficient preparation for effective action.***

...When considering the impact of college on students' values and political participation, it is important to keep in mind that ***most colleges and universities have few programs that specifically address the moral and civic development of their students,*** and a great many students make it all the way through college without participating in *any* of those programs.

...Students' values and goals can...change **as a result of the activities they seek out.** The people they encounter in the course of those activities and the new demands that are made on them are of consequence.

...The undergraduate experiences that are most powerful are those that connect with and build on interests, commitments, and concerns students bring to their college experience such as care and concern for family and friends... [However,] these kinds of values...by themselves...are insufficient and can coexist with insularity, lack of participation in the democratic process.

Moral and civic identity. ...Moral behavior depends in part on moral understanding and reflection, but it also depends on how and what extent individuals moral concerns are important to their sense of themselves as persons.

Others have written about the **development of political or civic identity** in a way **that parallels this conception of moral identity.** For example, Youniss and Yates present data showing that the long-term impact of youth service experience on later political and community involvement can best be explained by the contribution these service experiences make to the creation of an enduring sense of oneself as a politically engaged and socially concerned person. In their view, civic identity—which entails the

establishment of an individual and collective senses of social agency and responsibility for society and political-moral awareness—links certain kinds of social participation during adolescence and young adulthood with civic engagement by these same people later in adulthood.

...**People who make a consistent effort to be open minded and take others' perspectives seriously are facilitating their own moral development**, even though they may not consciously think of themselves as perusing integrity or moral growth. ...Many psychologists have written about people's capacity to use self-reflection as a means of playing an active role in their own development, consciously working to shape what kind of person they become. This kind of reflexivity can bear on the question of what kind of person they are and want to be.

What are the implications of this work for moral and civic education? Identity development take place in part through the identification with admired others. (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Hazel Markus (Markus and Nurius, 1986) has described the interplay between people's actual and possible selves; the latter may be both the selves they hope to become in the selves they are afraid of becoming. ...Individuals can reflect on their possible selves, and they understand development is the process of acquiring and then either achieving or resisting certain possible selves. Experience with people who provide either positive or negative models can contribute to the construction of possible selves eventually to the individual's actual self.

Undergraduate programs ... often have self-understanding and self-reflection among their goals, asking students to think about questions like, what kind of self should I aspire to be?, as well as the perennial college student question, who am I? If reflection questions like these are to have a lasting impact on students' sense of self, **they must be of more than theoretical or academic interest**. [Reflection works] best when the questions are asked **in the context of engagement with complex moral pursuits** such as those provided by high-quality service learning; [when] students are engaged in this work with people who represent inspiring models with whom they can identify; and when the campus culture supports the development of habitual moral schemes that are consistent with important moral values. Both academic and co-curricular activities can contribute to students' awareness of and reflection on what is important for them to their sense that they can play an active role in determining what kind of people they become.

Political efficacy and moral and civic emotions.

Colleges and universities can also foster students' sense of efficacy. **In order to be civically and politically engaged and active, people have to care about the issues** and value this kind of contribution. **Socially responsible values alone are not sufficient to motivate action**. People also have to believe that it matters what they think and do civically and politically and that it is **possible for them to make some difference**. This belief is what we mean by having a sense of political efficacy. Much of the research on the sense of efficacy has focused on personal efficacy or personal control, a sense that one has acting agency in one's life, a significant degree of control over the shape and direction of one's life. Although *personal and political efficacy* are not independent of one another, they *are only modestly correlated*,

and political efficacy is more predictive of political activity and civic engagement than his personal efficacy (see, for example, Bandura, 1997). Many people feel they have control over their personal lives but do not feel that anything they might do politically could have an impact.

... Ordinary people, including members of disempowered groups, can make a difference politically if they work together and believe there is hope for change. Offering that hope and galvanizing collective action around desired goals is the essence of leadership, and people can be transformed by inspiring leaders, coming to believe they can make a difference.

... When one takes on great moral and political causes such as poverty or political reform, immersion in the process of collective action can preserve one's spirits and determination. Thus love of the activity for its own sake, passion for the cause, and solidarity with others working toward the same goals can sustain moral and civic commitment in the face of difficulties that would otherwise be very discouraging. *An important question for educators, then, is how to help students achieve [this sense] in their moral, political, and civic discussions and action.*

Moral emotions play an important role in motivating action (Haidt, 2001; Hoffman, 1981), and many programs of moral and civic education include efforts to elicit some kind of moral emotion, either negative or positive... Research indicates that the motivational impact of negative emotions and positive emotions can be quite different. It is important to be aware of this because many educators rely heavily on eliciting negative emotions as a means to rouse students from self absorption... The irony is that in many cases this critical approach, instead of solving the empathy problem, contributes to the growing sense of alienation and cynicism that students feel and finally to a lack of conviction that anything can be done about an injustice that seems so pervasive as to be unavoidable... [In an experimental study by Rahn and Hirschorn (1999),] positive emotions (hopefulness or inspiration) led to greater interest engagement among study participants who began with either a low or a high sense of political efficacy. In contrast, negative feelings like outrage mobilized those who began with high efficacy, but the mobilized even more those who started with low levels of efficacy.

Civic and political skills or expertise.

If colleges and universities are to educate engaged citizens it is important for students to have a sense of political efficacy. But what about actually *being* efficacious as well as *feeling* efficacious? In addition to understanding and caring about justice, *people need to develop the skills and expertise of civic and political practice* if there are to be engaged and effective citizens.

...Prominent among the needed civic and political capacities are skills of ***deliberation, communication, and persuasion***. ***Engaging and compelling moral discourse requires the ability to make a strong case for something, ensure that others understand one's point of view, understand and evaluate others' arguments, compromise without abandoning one's convictions, and work toward consensus***. ***These capacities go to the heart of moral and civic function because individuals' moral and political concepts are both developed and applied to discourse, communication, and argumentation***. Having these

political and civic competencies...naturally leads to a greater sense of efficacy or empowerment and also leads people to see themselves as politically engaged and thus to be further motivated toward engagement. ...Kuh and colleagues (1991) report, for example, [that] *participation in leadership activities during college is the single most important predictor of students' development of humanitarian social concern and values....*

Pedagogical strategies for educating citizens. If classroom teaching is to support the full range of moral and civic development, you must **connect with students on the emotional level as well as the intellectual level....**

Teaching skills of moral discourse.

Recognizing how important it is for students to learn and practice moral argumentation, many courses and programs focused correctly on these skills. [Cf. examples from the College of St. Catherine and Stanford University and the course by Gerald Shenk and David Takacs at CSU Monterey Bay.]

Faculty: the cornerstone. ...To understand the motivation of faculty, it is important to recognize the centrality of *their* moral and civic understanding, goals, and identities. It is important to understand the moral and civic significance work has for many people. This is especially true for faculty who are teaching for moral and civic responsibility.

...Faculty development is essential to high-quality moral and civic education. *Many faculty lack the expertise to incorporate these issues another teaching in a sophisticated way.* ...Faculty with content knowledge often lack experience with ethical or policy analysis. They may also lack the pedagogical expertise needed to organize a course around complex, open-ended problems, coach students in simulations, or connect student learning experiences in the community.

Campus centers and campus-wide programs can play critical roles in facilitating these kinds of conversations and could also offer seminars and other tools to help faculty gain new expertise and design new courses. [Cf. Tufts University.] Faculty development programs must be of high quality if they are to be useful, and this may be particularly true of programs designed to help faculty bring moral and civic issues into their teaching because these issues are complex and require careful attention to course content, pedagogical approaches, and the classroom atmosphere.

...In addition to opportunities for continuing education about moral and civic issues and unfamiliar pedagogy, faculty need a supportive institutional infrastructure. Without institutional support, they may be too busy to design new courses, special courses that are quite different from those taught in the past. Ethics centers, service learning offices, and teaching and learning centers make it possible for busy faculty to focus on their students' learning rather than being consumed by the practical complexities of teaching that connects with the community.

Developmental impact. Learning how the world works, learning to resolve problems and make judgments in the world beyond the academy, and learning in a deep and flexible enough way to remember and use what they have learned ***require students to engage in complex practices in settings***

that include uncertainties, uncontrolled variants, and unpredictable forces, things academic study too often filters out (Menand, 1997; Shulman, 1997).

...As their work and extensive national studies by Alexander Astin (1984, 1980 5A) show, *the more engaged students are in multiple, mutually reinforcing activities, the more likely they are to learn* in a variety of areas. **Extracurricular activities** can also have a significant influence on students' personal development and acquisition of important values and skills, including development related to moral and civic learning. Not surprisingly, the nature of the activity in which students engages directly relates to its developmental impact. Activities that offer leadership experience, for example, are more likely and more individually focused activities to enhance abilities to work with and motivate others.

...Some campuses have created forums, or campus conversations, that encourage sustained attention to the kinds of issues raised by episodic teachable moments. Several campuses offer regular, structured opportunities for campuswide dialogue about controversial issues throughout the year.

*...Making this kind of form productive is extremely difficult, and community meetings at the College of St. Catherine are still evolving. [But] despite the flaws, the very task of working together to improve them is a valuable learning experience... At Emory University, sustained conversations about campus issues are cultural events like visiting speakers are carried out *electronically*, through the campuses LearnLink e-mail network.*