A Model of Dewey's Moral Imagination for Service Learning: Theoretical Explorations and Implications for Practice in Higher Education

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Abstract

While John Dewey's learning theory has been widely credited as the essential theoretical underpinning of service learning, lesser attention has been paid to his concept of moral imagination regarding its immense potentials in nurturing college students' moral growth in service learning. This article explores Dewey's framework of moral imagination and its implications for moral education in college service-learning programs to construct a moral imagination model that could enrich current service-learning theory and practice. The key components and structure of the model are delineated in details and the relevant examples of moral imagination in service learning are also discussed.

Introduction

Moral education through service learning at post-secondary level is an important but under-researched field. Most existing studies center on its learning outcomes like academic progress, personal development, communication, and leadership skills, with only a few evaluating the moral development of college students participating in service-learning projects. The lack of study on moral development in service learning indicates a need for clarification of the theoretical underpinnings of service learning, John Dewey's ideas on moral growth, in particular his model of moral imagination and the implications thereof, for current service-learning research and practice. We argue that Dewey's work here can help strengthen the conceptual foundations for moral education in service learning.

It has been widely recognized that John Dewey's philosophy of education constitutes an important theoretical framework for concepts like experiential learning,

inquiry, reflection, and interaction for service learning (Deans, 1999; Hatcher, 1997; Kezar & Rhoads, 2001). Giles and Eyler (1994) also concluded that service learning "reflects, either consciously or unconsciously, a Deweyian influence" (p.78). Moreover, Dewey's experiential learning theory does not just stress cognitive development but also moral and aesthetic growth. For him, dramatic rehearsal (moral imagination) is a consummate intersection between ethics and aesthetics that can enhance students' moral growth and civic understanding. This concept, widely utilized in community service and ethics education, can promote moral development in service learning as it enables students to perceive the moral implications of knowledge and envision alternative possibilities that traditional moral education oftentimes would miss.

A survey of current studies on service learning reveals a strong Kantian influence. First, it emphasizes the importance of applying universal principles in moral judgment in service learning; second, it advocates pure rationality in such moral judgment, asserting that human emotion and imagination would undermine moral reasoning. These beliefs are exemplified by a survey instrument of Defining Issues Test (DIT) developed from Kohlberg's theory of moral development model. Thus far, the instrument has been used by many researchers to measure the development of principled moral reasoning of college students in service-learning projects (Boss, 1994; Cram, 1998; Gorman, Duffy & Heffernan, 1994).

Deweyan educators, however, challenge the propensity of Kant's or Kohlberg's ethical guidance in service learning, asserting that experiential learning is corrupted when the learning purpose is only to understand universal moral principles through rule-directed experience in which moral laws had been regarded as sacred beforehand. To Deweyan educators, moral learning is open-ended rather than predetermined because "it is only through experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance" (Dewey, 1916, p.151). Thus moral theories are subject to test in experience for validity and students need to experiment and verify moral theories in their service-learning experience to gain deeper understanding of moral meaning within given social contexts.

Further, Deweyan scholars hold that aesthetic quality "rounds out an experience into completeness" (Dewey, 1934, p. 48); and thus, excluding the aesthetic dimensions of ethics leaves moral learning in service learning a disconnected, superficial, and lifeless process. Consequently, many advocate incorporating artistic components into their service-learning courses, stressing the roles of emotion, sensitivity, and imagination in service-learning reflection (Collier, 2006; Eyler, 2001; Saltmarsh, 1997). In an article calling for linking business moral education with service learning, Zlotkowski (1996) contends that the experience of emotional engagement and moral imagination is critical for the ethical development of students of business schools.

To conclude, Dewey's moral imagination model has two basic traits, namely, granting students autonomy to test moral theories and stressing the role of emotion and imagination in moral judgment. This open-ended moral learning approach is

significant in service learning because it helps eschew callous abstraction in moral judgment. In the following sections, we explore this framework by analyzing the key components and basic structure of moral imagination and drawing connections to current service-learning theory and practice.

Emotion and Expression in Service learning

Human faculties such as emotion and expression, as well as sensitivity and imagination, are key components of moral imagination. In this section, we discuss in detail Dewey's perspectives on the roles of human emotion and expression in moral understanding, and why they are not confounding factors in moral reasoning (as believed by Kantian philosophers) but essential elements in ethical judgment in college service-learning moral education so that students can be sensitive and responsive to community needs.

For Dewey, feelings and thoughts are inseparable. It is emotion that welds ideas together (Dewey, 1887). There are no pure facts existing without evoking or embodying people's emotions such as aversion, delight, sympathy, sadness, concern, fear, yearning, need, curiosity, hope, and so forth. As a result, we cannot understand people's needs and situations without apprehending their emotional status (McVea, 2007). It is not until we can share with the sorrows, joys, concerns, and hopes of the people at stake that we can really understand the situations they confront. This is essential for moral understanding because it is all about human behaviors and human relationships, of which feeling is an integral part.

Thus, service learning becomes a powerful approach to learning, because it not only connects theory with action, but also integrates cognitive learning with affective learning. It is safe to say that without emotional engagement and expression in community service, there would be no responsiveness and hence no real service learning. This is particularly the case when students encounter, detect, and evaluate moral problems in order to come up with solutions in community service.

Emotional involvement is a key component for communication in the moral problem-solving of service learning. Moral problems arise when there are human behavior concerns or conflicts in the interests and values of various stakeholders in muddy community situations. Therefore, we should not just jump to a conclusion and apply moral principles, but instead seek to figure out the context through conversation, investigation, and observation. Such effective communication commands a close emotional engagement with the served so that students understand the latter's feelings and situations, sharing their sufferings and hopes. This emotional understanding is the indication that student participants could truly be responsive to the community's needs.

Like emotional engagement, expression exhibits moral reflection and moral decision-making phases. First, emotional expression such as care and empathy enable the servers to envision hypothetical scenarios of alternative possibilities as well as weigh corresponding moral consequences; next, moral deliberation in service

learning is actually a process of the expression of feelings, needs, and considerations, be it in the form of thoughts, elaboration in writing, envisioning, or acting.

Imagination and Moral Growth

Kantian ethics holds that imagination is a mysterious and whimsical power mostly for the arts and should not be used for serious and rational events like moral life. Dewey opposes such a rationalistic stereotype and claims that imagination is a prevalent human faculty belonging to everyone in everyday experience and therefore is essential to moral understanding and decision-making. He even quotes Shelley's verse to underline his point that "the imagination is the great instrument of moral good" (Dewey, 1934, p. 350). Imagination is the instrument of morality because it is a special human capacity that can present a full moral outlook or create moral scenarios for people, even though at present they may not directly experience it, which piecemeal and analytic moral thinking can not.

Imagination also brings meaning and vision into service-learning experience. Imagination starts with blocking the habits and impulses of student participants, which evokes emotions such as sympathy, uneasiness, and desires to alter current situations. The desires to change the status quo of the community motivate these moral agents to collect and rearrange data, to balance reason and sense, and to imaginatively draw a blueprint with purpose in mind. Imagination interpenetrates the whole process of service, actively seeking meaning out of chaos and confusion and searching for new approaches in an effort to clarify and improve situations.

Visions arise from imaginative endeavors to tap various unknowns or possibilities in service-learning moral inquiry. It is a creativity that Dewey calls a "vicarious, anticipatory way of action" (Dewey, 1933, p. 200). It is anticipatory because the future is foreseen by linking possible actions with possible results that may materialize if actions are implemented. Thus, connections between the known and the unknown are established imaginatively, the results of which turn out to be moral visions.

Sensitivity, Sympathy, and Service Learning

Sensitivity and sympathy are the two crucial moral habits for service learning because they enable student participants to be responsive to the needs of the community. Sensitivity originates from organic and interactive relationships between individuals and their environment. For people as social creatures, sensitivity is the keenness and eagerness to know the mental and emotional status of their fellows—their conditions, suffering, pains, and hopes—as well as their relevant social situations and cultural backgrounds.

Sensitivity is Dewey's weapon against moral harshness or numbness. He suggests that moral agents following Kantian ethics are easily confined in abstract theories and concepts, thus losing direct contact with people and situations, which often results in a condescending mindset and an apathetic attitude towards others' suffering. He notes that a community of mutual trust and support depends on ef-

fective communication with sensitivity and care towards others, which is crucial for moral reflection because sensitivity is "an inducement to deliberate or material with which to deliberate" (Dewey, 1932, p. 269).

Sympathy is a human characteristic based on sensitivity and imagination. Dewey defines it as a human faculty, one that "enter[s] by imagination into the situations of others" (Dewey, 1908, p. 150) and a mental activity in which we "put ourselves in the place of others, to see things from the standpoint of their purposes and values" (Dewey, 1932, p. 270). Both are close to the meaning of what we call empathy today. The key feature of sympathy is that thoughts and feelings go beyond oneself and project towards other people. It is a common phenomenon that people tend to consider their own interests and needs while neglecting those of others. However, it is also a part of human nature that people put themselves in the position of others and share their agony and happiness; we call this sympathy. This constitutes the emotional base that allows people in service learning to respond sensitively to the desires and needs of others.

Furthermore, sympathy is not a human weakness that misleads rational thinking but instead is the "surest way to attain objectivity of moral knowledge" (Dewey, 1932, p. 270). Achieving moral objectivity is not to escape from murky realities and complex human feelings, but to embrace the complete landscape of moral scenarios, that is, the full scope of interests, values, feelings, backgrounds, and behavior motivations of various stakeholders. This feature is critical for ethical deliberation, since moral judgment in service learning should be based on an understanding of the full situations and considerations of all stakeholders.

As noted above, sensitivity and sympathy are crucial characters for moral imagination. Both habits equip moral imagination with relevant information collected through communication with and observation of community members. Both of them permeate moral reflection and moral judgment in service learning, empowering students to anticipate and envision current and future moral episodes. Nevertheless, sensitivity and sympathy are not habitual moral traits for everyone. Many students are not inclined to take into account other people's needs. Consequently, there is a need to provide them with more interactive and collaborative social environments like community service learning to cultivate and reinforce their habits of sensitivity and sympathy. The community environment can help evoke student participants' moral sense and feelings of sympathy with the specific situations and concrete experiences of disadvantaged community members.

Dramatic Rehearsal and Service Learning

Reflection is the soul of service learning because it connects service with learning and maximizes the effects of both. Moral reflection, in turn, is the most important instrument to help develop the moral understanding and moral growth of college students in service learning. Dewey defines reflection as an "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of

the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1910, p. 186). He takes reflective thinking as a process of meaning making that connects means with consequences and dramatic rehearsal as a special form of reflection to promote ethical thinking. Dramatic rehearsal is an imaginative rehearsal to reflect, envision, and weigh alternative possibilities and concomitant moral consequences in an effort to solve moral dilemmas and nurture moral sense (Dewey, 1908; Dewey, 1922). Some contemporary Deweyan philosophers use "moral imagination" to replace the term "dramatic rehearsal" (Alexander, 1993; Fesmire, 2003).

In service learning, moral imagination occurs when the actions and habits of student participants are thwarted. This frustration in community settings can force college students to rethink and reexamine their old habits, preconceptions, and stereotyped ideas. The blocking of habits is not limited to the cognitive side, but expands to the affective domain as well. In fact, the blocking of actions in service-learning experience first results in emotional disturbance, uneasiness, and irritation, which compel student participants to realize that something they have taken for granted is problematic and needs to be re-addressed.

For instance, it is not unusual for student participants to hold the stereotype that "'People are poor because they don't try' or 'People are on welfare because they don't want to work'" (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p.75). Accordingly, they prescribe ready-made solutions for these low-income families based on such assumptions. However, this pattern of behaviors and thoughts is often upset once the students perceive community realities and people's actual situations. Emotional reactions such as frustration, confusion, anger, concern, and sadness are likely to be aroused, which disrupt habitual ways of thinking and feeling and project new impulses and desires for investigation and deliberation. In short, such community experience challenges students' old habits and further jumpstarts dramatic rehearsal.

Emotion does not just play a role in helping students check their old habits; it penetrates the whole process of dramatic rehearsal, because real experiential learning occurs when head and heart can work together (Dewey, 1908). In the above case, feelings of dissatisfaction towards current situations may trigger the impulses and desires of student participants to further seek meaning and solutions for the problems, thus initiating the inquiry to control and transfer the indeterminate condition into determinate state, and dissatisfaction to satisfaction. This affective and cognitive endeavor and a sense of completeness in the problem-solving process is an aesthetic experience leading towards consummation and full growth of individuals. In other words, moral imagination in service learning is an aesthetic experience working for community harmony and personal moral and intellectual growth. It is, Dewey would say, a social artwork for democracy.

Sympathy and sensitivity are the two human faculties saturating moral imagination. Both characters are key components of the moral imagination model to ensure that imagination does not become meaningless and aimless mental meandering, but a serious process of communication and thinking with purpose and human concerns. Again, the blocking of old habits and overt actions does not warrant the

occurrence of moral imagination in service learning; it is sympathy and sensitivity towards their fellow people's situations that motivate students to communicate and imagine in the place of others. For instance, a white college student participant growing up in a middle-class household may not be able to fully understand what an immigrant and minority child from a single-parent, low-income family has experienced until he can project himself in the grounds of the child with sensitivity and understand how the child feels and the reasons behind his behaviors.

Furthermore, imagination with sympathy is pivotal in foreseeing the consequences of potential moral actions in the service-learning experience. One primary difference between Kantian moral judgment and Dewey's dramatic rehearsal is that in the latter, moral situations are too complex to be solved with only one "correct" solution based on a certain moral principle and pure rational reasoning. Dewey suggests that imagination expands people's visions from one single fixed solution to multiple possibilities in the forked-road situation of real life. While it is unrealistic to actually try all the different paths, dramatic rehearsal is a moral technique that experiments hypothetically through imagining and envisioning. After getting to know community situations via communicating and observing, student participants can come up with different hypotheses and envision various future pictures correspondingly by connecting alternative solutions with possible consequences. The results of this imaginative anticipation enable student moral agents to weigh different scenarios so as to make the most appropriate moral judgment and decision.

It is worth mentioning that this process is carried out through imagination infused with emotions. Put differently, it is not like the cold calculation of profits and losses in utilitarianism, but rather a humanistic process endeavoring to embrace the whole scope of life, of which human feelings and imagination are integral parts. With that said, consequences in dramatic rehearsal are not the fixed ends of greatest pleasure and least pain, but serve as references for means. Both ends and means are subject to revision. It is expected that imaginatively projected consequences usually stir up the emotions of moral agents, which in turn prompt them to actively tune up both the means and ends (Dewey, 1922).

Next, dramatic rehearsal takes various stakeholders' feelings and needs into account. Consequences in this model therefore are not judged by net pleasure or pain, but by weighing different needs and situations imaginatively. Deweyan moral judgment never seeks the profits and gains of the majority at the cost of the interests of the weak and disadvantaged people. The moral agents in Deweyan dramatic rehearsal instead imagine consequences with sympathy and care for their fellow people and with a willingness to tie their own interests with those of these misfortunate people. This attitude reflects the meaning of democracy in Dewey's ideal—that the survival and prosperity of social democracy is contingent on whether community members would like to live a shared life and move forward together. The utilitarian calculation in moral deliberation, Dewey would say, only leads to social turmoil and self-destruction in the long run.

Moral judgment in service learning can follow the same route. Many community members in service-learning projects are low-income, underrepresented people, and oftentimes in a vulnerable situation, in need of help and understanding. Therefore, college students need to take these people's feelings, needs, values, and situations into consideration when projecting and evaluating consequences. Emotional imagination with sympathy and care enables student participants to fully and truly recognize how their decisions will affect the welfare of community people hypothetically. This anticipation often leads to moral decisions in which student participants are willing to give equal weight to the needs and interests of the people served as those of themselves when there are conflicts of interests between the servers and the served.

A scenario of conflicting needs among different parties is a basic feature of moral imagination, which usually leads to moral dilemma. This dilemma in fact frequently occurs in service-learning projects, indicating a valuable moral education moment. Besides frequency, it is also embodied in complex forms and rich contents. For instance, there might be conflicts of needs or values between the server and the served, conflicts between different stakeholders in community, or even conflicts of interests in the same community members.

It is not rare that student participants must consider how their decisions may influence the welfare of the served in service learning. In order to make moral decisions, the servers often need to project themselves into the positions of others and imagine the consequences. In a service-learning project, a college student was hesitant about whether to quit the service or not because his options could affect people being served.

> I thought of how my decisions could affect the elderly students involved in my class. What if I was tired and decided to hold off on setting up that email account? It wouldn't have been a life altering occurrence for either of us, but she would not have been able to get in touch with her granddaughter, and she wouldn't have become as excited about the course and what she is going to learn about it. I think that this shows that small decisions can have a significant impact on people. (Vega, 2007, p. 653)

Here, the student realizes the potential conflict of needs between him and the elderly student and thus imaginatively envisions how his decisions of quitting or staying will impact the latter's life. Moral habits such as sensitivity, sympathy, imagination, and care prompt him to picture how the elder student will feel if things turn out in this way or that. His decision therefore is contingent on the consequences of options as well as his sense of responsibility and care towards his student. This reflective thinking is important for moral growth: the case is not just how the student makes a moral decision; it marks a new start of forming the moral habit of considering for others when there is a conflict of needs.

It is worth noting that the conflicts in moral situations can be so complex that sometimes even the interests of the same people will conflict with one another.

For instance, a college student working in an environmental community service-learning project observes that "coal mining was damaging the environment and the traditional culture, but at the same time was providing paying jobs for residents who had few economic opportunities" (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 75). Therefore, the student needs to weigh and balance different options, imagining how the consequences would affect local people's well-being or what supplemental solutions are needed to avoid hurting them.

The moral dilemmas in service-learning reality may present even more intricate scenarios of relationships and conflicts. There can be multiple potential conflicts of interests which could influence multiple stakeholders, making the moral situations and considerations even more complicated and tricky. For instance, Schaffer, Paris, and Vogel (2003) illustrate a dilemma in a service-learning project.

> A community partner said that his colleagues expected positive results from a student-generated qualitative research report on levels of racism in community agencies. "When the students finished and handed in the report, some folks were able to receive it as it was, and some received it defensively . . . saying the students don't know that much about the neighborhood . . . the information is distorted." This community partner experienced conflict in formulating straightforward responses to both students and his community colleagues. (p. 157)

In this case, the community partner realizes there are multidimensional conflicts of values and interests among himself, his colleagues, and the student servers. On the one hand, he needs to respond to the students and be fair to them; on the other hand, he needs to respond to his colleagues, whom he needs to respect and wishes to get along with. Moreover, there are other stakeholders that he should attend to, namely, the local people. Since the theme of this report concerns levels of racism in the community, the validity of this qualitative research matters a lot to the local people and the future development of the community, further complicating the moral scenario with considerations of his own job and community responsibility, which demands moral investigation and imagination.

There are three primary advantages to using moral imagination over pure rational moral reasoning to consider and solve such moral dilemmas in service-learning experience. First, the full scope of the moral situation and moral consequences are vividly anticipated; second, the moral consequences are retrievable (Dewey, 1908); third, imagination encourages creativity in solving the moral problems.

Contrary to the efforts of Kantian ethics to strip all "unnecessary" and distracting emotions and situational information, moral imagination recognizes intertwined details and embraces every stratum and aspect of moral life: the community culture, the situations and needs of community people, the student's missions and own needs, and the attitudes of local agencies. To this end, moral imagination encompasses all the factors and elements, evaluating and compressing information with emotions, deliberation, and creativity. This process is similar to how Shake-

speare composed his dramas. Shakespeare allowed all the roles in his play to fully express their own experiences, concerns, needs, agonies, hopes, and joys within given situations and contexts. Dramatic rehearsal uses a similar technique to present vivid moral scenarios with rich contents, but is conducted in a more rigorous and scrupulous way in that moral imagination is based on real persons and events and aims at solving real-life moral concerns.

This anticipatory moral drama is a practical moral-thinking tool for students in service learning because the hypothetical consequences are retrievable. Moral imagination for Dewey is a mental experiment concerning various moral hypotheses in which no physical and psychological damage will endanger stakeholders (Dewey, 1922). Since many college students are still immature and inexperienced in solving moral problems, an instrument of moral imagination can provide them with abundant opportunities to reflect on moral situations and make moral judgments hypothetically without taking any risks of hurting others. This is particularly important for moral learning through service learning, as many community members being served are disadvantaged or in vulnerable situations. It is valuable for student participants to go through mental trials before proceeding cautiously in real-life situations.

Last but not least, moral imagination is a tool for stimulating creativity in moral judgment and moral decisions in service learning. Imagination as a human faculty has been long recognized as a source of creativity in the fields of literature, art, science, and technology, but it can also play a critical and creative role in morals. With imagination into the moral situations and future consequences, students are no longer fettered by sacred laws or principles but instead are able to tap novel grounds and seek moral meaning with human wisdom and visions.

Six-Phase Moral Imagination Model for Service Learning

Based on Dewey's moral and aesthetic concepts, his models of reflective thinking, and his theory of dramatic rehearsal as well as the current understanding of moral education through service learning, we reframe and construct the service-learning moral imagination model in the following six phases:

Phase 1. Engage in the service-learning experience with both head and heart.

Phase 2. Perceive the moral problems that arouse perplexity and emotional concerns.

Phase 3. Come up with preliminary suggestions that further motivate moral agents to collect relevant information.

Phase 4. Suggest tentative hypotheses and imagine or elaborate on how alternative options would lead to corresponding moral consequences.

Phase 5. Weigh and balance the consequences in order to figure out the most proper hypothesis.

Phase 6. Put the chosen hypothesis into service-learning reality to solve the moral problem and test its validity.

The six phases of the model constitute a full circle with an extra central module of sympathetic imagination, reasoning, and academic knowledge and moral theories penetrating the whole process, especially in phase three, phase four, and phase five. We will discuss in detail all six phases and the central module in the following paragraphs.

In phase one, students need to immerse themselves in the details of service-learning experience, interacting both cognitively and affectively with the community environment, which may challenge their old beliefs and stereotyped ways of thinking. It is during this time that students may first encounter and perceive moral problems in the service-learning project. Phase two is characterized by the blocking of old moral habits. Students feel confused and frustrated when they fully perceive the moral problem, stimulating their impulses to inquire into the situations. This is what Dewey indicates as a forked-road situation in that the values, interests, and needs of different stakeholders conflict with one another, suggesting various possibilities in problem solving.

Phase three marks the initial efforts to clarify the situation. It entails two mutually complementing and reinforcing components: suggestions and information collection. The students come up with suggestions on moral situations based on their ethical understanding, relevant knowledge, past experience, and other related information, which serve as primary direction and guidance for collecting data pertinent to the moral problems. Observation and communication are two major approaches to information collection. Students need to closely observe or have in-depth conversations with the community people at stake so that they can know the whole situation well. Such investigations are not technical protocols for moral judgment, but heart-to-heart communication to gain mutual trust and understanding, of which moral sensitivity and sympathetic envisioning is the key to avoiding apathy and a condescending attitude. It is worth mentioning that suggestions, problem defining, and information collection form a mutually reinforced and unbroken continuity, because while suggestions help guide the information collection process, information obtained from the latter in turn help revise suggestions or intellectualization.

Based on the information collected and problem defined during phase three, student participants can come up with various tentative hypotheses. We suggest multiple tentative hypotheses here, because real-life moral conflicts are so complicated that there can be multiple possibilities for solving the moral problem. This practice is consistent with Dewey's metaphor of forked-road moral situations, which logically leads to multiple hypotheses. For the sake of understanding, we term these hypotheses as Tentative Hypothesis A, Tentative Hypothesis B, and Tentative Hypothesis C, respectively, in this model.

With the tentative hypotheses, students can anticipate and project what kind of consequences each potential solution might produce. For instance, students can foresee consequence A with solution A, and consequence B with solution B. This is also what Dewey calls dramatic rehearsal, since moral agents can imagine and

elaborate moral consequences in vivid episodes of how the interests, needs, and feelings of all the stakeholders will be influenced with each potential solution. Through these dramatic scenes of future possibilities, moral agents are able to seek moral meaning for the current time (Dewey, 1922).

In phase five, student participants start to weigh, balance, and evaluate each tentative hypothesis and consequence. During this time they deliberate back and forth between hypotheses and consequences, revising both means and ends in light of the envisioned scenarios. Such evaluation and weighing is not a mathematical calculation of individual gains or losses, but rather empathetic insight into other people's concerns, pain, hopes, and well-being, as well as visions connecting past, current, and future situations. Based on this deliberation, students can eventually come up with a final hypothesis, which can either be chosen from tentative hypotheses or a revision or even a creative combination of the hypotheses resulting from mental trials.

Finally, students test a hypothesis to see whether the theory or solution formed via moral imagination works or not in service learning. This practice is consistent with Deweyan experimentalism in which a theory needs to be tested in reality for its validity. Putting a hypothesis to test is the final phase of the model, which completes the circle and sends the moral imagination process back to service learning. The solution or hypothesis is regarded as valid if the results thereof meet expectations. However, if the test results fail to do so, student participants may need to go back to earlier phases to revise the previous suggestions or problem defining and restart information collection, which turns on another round of moral investigation.

The central module penetrates all six phases of this model, comprising three combinative and joint components, namely, sensitivity and sympathetic imagination, reasoning and past experience, and relevant academic knowledge and moral theories. This is not a module of three identical parts, but a seamless blending of cognitive learning and affective learning, imagination and reason, academics and morals, and theory with experience. This module is the soul of the model as it serves all the phases, particularly in phase three, suggestions and information collection, phase four, dramatic rehearsal, and phase five, final hypothesis. As a whole, it motivates inquiry, provides insights, and fuels moral imagination. Nonetheless, this projection is not just a one-way ticket. The experience of moral imagination also educates and nourishes the central core because the learning experience acquired from all the phases reinforces and enhances moral agents' abilities to feel, imagine, reason, and apply knowledge.

Forms of Moral Imagination in Service Learning

It is noteworthy that moral imagination, widely used in moral education, does not have to be conducted in the form of lonely mental deliberation, but rather can embody itself in various forms and different ways, some of which are social and interactive. In service learning, it can be done in the form of a journal entry, a reflective essay, a group discussion, or even a self-expressive video clip.

Writing is an alternative approach of moral imagination to thinking. When people deliberate on a moral problem and struggle mentally over possible solutions for a period of time, they tend to possess a desire to express their thoughts and feelings. Dewey uses the metaphor of grape pressing to produce juice to describe such creation and outward expression (Dewey, 1934, p. 70). Thinking aloud is only one type of expression. In service-learning moral deliberation, students use writing or speaking to express their moral thoughts. For example, writing journals and reflective essays are important methods of moral reflection in service learning, and are used as moral imagination expression. Such moral imagination expressions can be rich in contents and in-depth thoughts.

Further, moral imagination need not be done privately, but can be conducted in group discussions. One advantage of team over solo deliberation is that brainstorming in a team deliberation usually tends to generate more diverse perspectives and alternative insights. When an individual has encountered moral dilemmas in his service-learning experience, she can share the experience and her moral deliberation with the rest of the class (Smith, 1996). The class can then imagine what they would do in the same situation, and some may even challenge possible solutions or suggest alternative approaches, which the presenters may miss because they are too close to the situation. Moreover, since not every student comes across moral problems in their service-learning project, encouraging those who did to share can supply the others with a valuable experience of moral imagination in a real case.

In the final presentation of the service-learning class, moral deliberation is conducted in various forms. It could be in a usual form, such as verbal description or story-telling or PowerPoint presentation; it could be in a more novel form such as team discussion, video snapshot, or even types of drama, such as a play or skit. For instance, service-learning theater has been suggested by educational researchers as an inviting and dramatic form of reflection (Eyler, 2001). In this route, a service-learning team can write a play based on their experience and their moral imagination of the issue. Each member can role-play one of the stakeholders to re-create the scenarios of the moral dilemma. They could even demonstrate to the audience the imaginative episodes of how different hypotheses can produce different consequences for each of the stakeholders. After the show, they can further raise pertinent moral questions to the class for moral deliberation and discussion. This is in essence a real dramatic rehearsal for moral education in service learning.

Suggestions for a Moral Imagination Model in Service Learning

While this study is mostly a philosophical endeavor to explore Dewey's theory of moral imagination and draw its connections to service-learning practice, it has good prospects for use in college service-learning programs. The moral imagination model as a well-structured and content-rich moral reflection framework can be used by student participants as a thinking instrument to facilitate moral under-

standing and help solve moral problems. To this end, the model can be introduced to student participants in the beginning of service-learning courses to prepare them for moral reflection. Another bonus of learning this model is that it brings students the moral concepts and habits much needed in service learning, including engagement, sensitivity, responsiveness, sympathy, and moral imagination.

Further, Eyler (2001) suggests that faculty encourage students' moral imagination by giving assignments of reflective essay writing with structured questions and with data from students' own server-learning journal entries. Faculty members can help evoke college students' moral imagination by designating structured questions for the final essay assignment like the following:

- Have you ever met any moral issues in your service-learning experience? If yes, describe it in detail.
- How many stakeholders are there? What are the conflicts of interests and values among the stakeholders?
- What is the usual solution? What are the alternative solutions you can think of?
- Can you imagine what consequences each of the solutions may lead to? How would such consequences influence each stakeholder?
- What do you think is the most appropriate moral solution? Why?
- What academic learning content and moral theories could contribute to creatively solving the moral problem?

However, due to the intricate nature of moral situations and the deep influence of moral consequences on stakeholders, moral judgment and decisions out of moral imagination need to proceed with caution. This is particularly true for students in service learning, partly because college students generally are not experienced in dealing with complex moral situations, and partly because they may not be in a position to act or it is beyond their power to make decisions. Consequently, students and faculty members need to weigh the situations to decide whether to proceed. If the students have to take action, what is the most appropriate approach? Such a cautious attitude sometimes is essential to protect local community members and student participants themselves when the environment is not favorable.

Acknowledgements

Note

Citations and quotations of Dewey's works are from *The collected works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, listed below.

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