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# The effect of community service work on the moral development of college ethics students.

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## THE EFFECT OF COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK ON THE MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGE ETHICS STUDENTS

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11. ABSTRACT A study designed to test the effect of community service work on college ethics students found that community service work along with discussion of relevant moral issues is an effective means of moving students into the post-conventional stage of principled moral reasoning, as measured by Rest's Defining Issues Test. Other benefits of community service work are also discussed in the paper.

An article which appeared in the New York Times (Lamm, 1986, 35, 1) a few years ago expressed concern that today's generation of college students are being permitted, in the name of scientific objectivity and value-neutrality, ". . . to grow up as ethical illiterates and moral idiots, unprepared to cope with ordinary life experiences". Instead of being taught how to make effective moral judgements, the article continued, students are being told that morality is all relative or a matter of personal opinion. This "counsel of despair", which is "often impressed on our students under the guise of tolerance", is taking its toll on our young people.

As a college ethics teacher I frequently have students coming into my classes who fit this description. They seem unable to make reasoned moral decisions and their lives too often seem to be a series of poor judgements. Ethics

courses have the potential to counter this trend toward relativism and despair. By providing students with the resources necessary to help them recognize situations that call for moral judgement and action, an ethics course can help students make more satisfactory moral decisions and correct harms resulting from poor past decisions (or lack of decisions).

### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that undergraduate ethics students who engage in community service work as part of their course requirement will score higher at the end of the semester on a test of moral reasoning than students who do not. Moral reasoning, for the purpose of this study, was defined as the "process by which a person arrives at a judgment of what is the moral thing to do in a moral dilemma" (Rest, 1990, p. 18).

One of the major assumptions underlying this hypothesis is that students who have an opportunity to put into practice moral principles learned in a classroom will be more likely to continue using these principles in their decision-making in other settings.

A second assumption is that students who have an opportunity in a classroom setting to discuss moral dilemmas encountered in their community service work and everyday life will be better able to come to satisfactory resolutions of moral dilemmas in the future. This greater proficiency in solving moral dilemmas should show up in a move toward more principled reasoning as opposed to the ethical relativism that characterises the thinking of most college undergraduate students.

A third assumption is that it is desirable, from a philosophical point of view, to reason at a higher stage of moral development. Cognitive-developmental theorists, such as Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1971), have been accused of committing the much dreaded "naturalistic fallacy", or going from an "is" to an "ought", in claiming that later stages of moral development are morally more desirable (Loevinger, 1976; Margolis, 1978). Kohlberg (1981) responds that this criticism stems partly from an inadequate epistemology on the part of behaviourist child psychologists who fail to recognize that "the cognitive processes involve knowledge" (Ibid., 1981, p. 101). Rather than going from an "is" to an "ought" Kohlberg maintains that "the concept of morality is itself a philosophical (ethical) rather than a behavioral concept . . . and that one needs to orient developmental research to philosophical concepts of morality" (Ibid., 1981, p. 102).

While it happens to be the case that principled reasoning is characteristic of the higher developmental stages, this is not the reason why philosophers hold this reasoning to be more desirable than the cultural relativism of conventional moral reasoning or the egoism of pre-conventional reasoning, as defined by Kohlberg (1971). Instead, the type of reasoning which is found at the highest stages of moral reasoning is deemed desirable prior to and independently of the findings of cognitive-developmental theorists. The great moral philosophers, such as Socrates and Immanuel Kant, have always held autonomous moral reasoning, universality and impartiality, as well as a concern for justice and mutual respect to be the hallmarks of moral reasoning.

The final assumption of this study is that part of the role of the ethics teacher is to facilitate moral reasoning at a higher stage. In other words, an ethics class should foster independent or autonomous analytical thinking of the type found at the post-conventional stage of moral reasoning, rather than to indoctrinate certain values in students. This assumption is based in part on a progressive philosophy of education in which the purpose of education is to stimulate the natural development of the students' moral capacities and judgements.

The ultimate purpose of studying ethics, however, is not, to use the words of Aristotle, "as it is in other inquiries, the attainment of theoretical knowledge; we are not conducting this inquiry in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, else there would be no advantage in studying it" (Aristotle, 1953, 1103b, 26-29). The role of the ethics

teacher goes beyond merely knowing how to reason well. Although one's level of moral reasoning is related to one's actual behaviour (Rest, 1984), its final goal is to help the students become better, more moral people.

### Review of the Literature

Moral development in college students is of particular interest to many researchers since it has been found that a college education can help people advance to a higher level of moral reasoning (Rest, 1988; Colby et al., 1983). Sadly, studies have found current college programmes in ethics to be relatively ineffective in facilitating an increase in students' level of moral development (Rest, 1988). College students are able to memorise material presented in lectures on the lines of reasoning used by different moral philosophers long enough for the final exam or final paper. However, there is usually little true understanding of what is being presented and little carry-over into their moral reasoning outside the classroom (Rest, 1984). Educational psychologist Howard Gardner has also found that scholastic knowledge "seems strictly bound to school settings" and when confronted with moral issues outside of the academic settings students simply revert back to their earlier forms of moral reasoning (Gardner, 1991, p. 122).

Even though college seems to be an important variable in enhancing moral development, only a small number of undergraduate students actually advance to the post-conventional stages of principled reasoning. Instead, most hold to a higher level of conventional reasoning with the college experience tending to solidify this type of "society maintaining" reasoning. In other words, by the time they finish college, the typical student has learned to conform to societal standards rather than to be an independent thinker (Clinchy, 1990).

As an ethics teacher I was not satisfied with merely pushing my students up on the scale of conventional reasoning. What I wanted was to find a way to move them beyond conventional reasoning to autonomous principled reasoning. If not the standard ethics class or usual college experience, then what could I do, as an ethics teacher, to achieve this goal?

In a study of how college facilitates students' moral development Rest (1988) concluded that the improvement cannot be attributed to classes in moral education. Rather it is primarily the result of: (1) "dilemma discussion interventions" that engage the student in active problem-solving of controversial moral issues; and (2) personality development interventions that involve the student in service projects such as peer tutoring and volunteering in a nursing home, along with attempts to integrate their service experiences by means of reading of developmental psychology and discussions of the personal meaning and relevance of these experiences to their personality development.

Rest (1984) also noted that gains made in moral reasoning tend to be retained and are related to student's decision-making in new circumstances as well as their real-life behaviour.

Boyd (1976, 1980) designed an introductory course in psychology with the objective of moving students from conventional moral reasoning to principled moral reasoning by using readings in moral philosophy and "intensive discussion of both hypothetical and real-life moral dilemmas". He found that by the end of the class students had progressed almost one-third of a stage in their moral reasoning. Blatt and Kohlberg (1975) noted similar results in a comparative study. Their courses, however, did not move students into the principled stages of moral reasoning but to a higher level of Stage 4 reasoning.

Piagetians, who recognise three dimensions of development--social--emotional, cognitive and language--view the child as developing by actively interacting with and "transforming his or her environment and matching it to mental schemes that already exist" (Forman & Kuscher, 1983, p. 4). They especially emphasise the role of conflict in causing children to "rethink their habitual approaches to subjects and events" (pp. 10-11).

Several researchers claim that it is not so much cognitive disequilibrium, brought about primarily by discussions of moral dilemmas and an introduction to higher levels of moral reasoning, but rather social disequilibrium that is most important in facilitating moral development (Haan, 1985; Walker, 1986). "Social disequilibrium" in this context is a

"holistic, emotional and interactive experience wherein participants expose themselves to others' complaints and even to the possibility that they themselves may be found morally wanting or even wrong" (Haan, 1985, p. 997). Haan (1985) argues that more emphasis should be placed on the effect of "the emotional interactive experience of moral-social conflict on moral development", especially in women (Haan, 1985, p. 1005).

Both Dewey (1939) and, more recently, Kohlberg (1971) insisted that actual experience in confronting moral issues, particularly in the out-of-classroom environment, is important for moral development. While college ethics programmes, with their stress on lofty ideas rather than the practical, tend to ignore this component of moral development, this conviction has been supported by several studies which have found that the most successful moral education programmes in elementary and secondary schools were those that promoted volunteer work or community based experiences (Heller, 1989; Rosenzweig, 1980; Honig, 1990). Nucci (1985), in a study of moral reasoning in elementary school children, also concluded that discussions of moral issues are most effective when they are focused on real-life issues that students encounter and are identified with actual social action.

### Method

Rather than rejecting or favouring one over the other, I decided to try a more eclectic approach to the teaching of ethics by integrating the cognitive and social/experiential approaches.

### Subjects

Participants in the study included 71 University of Rhode Island undergraduate students enrolled in two sections of ethics in the spring of 1991. Both classes were of about equal size, had the same teacher, and met on the same days for the same length of time. Thirty-seven of the students were females, and 34 were males. The mean age was 20.3, with the majority of students being sophomores.

### Procedure

The study employed a pre-test-post-test control group design. Community service work was the treatment or independent variable, and level of moral reasoning the dependent variable. One class served as the experimental group and the other as the control group. The class that was to serve as the experimental group was randomly selected prior to the beginning of the semester. While the teacher was aware of the basic hypothesis of the study, the influence of teacher bias was minimised by having the same structure in the actual classes. Both classes had the same class exercises and book. The tests for both classes were randomly generated from the same pool of multiple choice and essay questions.

Discussions of moral dilemmas and moral development were part of the curriculum of both classes. The stages of moral development were included in the reading with special attention being given to the theories of Gilligan and Kohlberg. While some of the moral dilemmas were part of the reading, students in both classes were given an opportunity at the beginning of each class to bring up moral issues or dilemmas they had encountered outside class. In addition, the experimental group was required to complete 20 hours of community service work and keep a journal of their experiences. The control group was given the option of a more traditional essay assignment or an extra test in lieu of the volunteer work. The work counted toward 25% of the final grade in both classes.

The community service journal included an introduction which was to be handed in within the first three weeks of class, daily entries, a discussion of moral issues encountered by students in their work and, finally, a summary explaining what they personally got out of the experience.

The University of Rhode Island Clearing House for Volunteers and the Volunteers in Action, a statewide group which helps to match volunteers with community service agencies, assisted students in finding appropriate placements. Some students, especially those who lived out of state and went home for the weekends, found their own community

service work. All students were required to choose work that involved working directly with people in need. Types of community service work chosen included helping out in nursing homes, soup kitchens, shelters for the homeless, day care centres and rape crisis centres as well as special community service projects organised by the Clearing House for Volunteers.

### Assessment

Both classes took the Defining Issues Test (DIT) (Rest, 1987) at the beginning of the semester and again during the last week of classes. The DIT, which was developed by Kohlberg's student, James Rest, is basically a reformulation of Kohlberg's 6-stage scheme. Although Rest's definitions of some of the stages differs slightly and he does not separate out content and structures in his scheme, as does Kohlberg, Rest nevertheless acknowledges that the differences between the two schemes are "minor" (Rest, 1979, p. 46).

Students were also given a short form during the post-test asking them for their age, gender, class and previous involvement in community service work, as well as their intention to continue community service work in the future. In addition, students were asked to indicate on a Likert-type scale how they would rate themselves as a moral person, and how they would rate their improvement, in terms of being a more moral person, over the course of the semester. In order to assure anonymity, at least until final grades were in, the last four digits of the students' social security numbers were used rather than their names. Also, the DIT pre-tests were not scored until after the end of the semester. The tests were scored by the University of Minnesota Center for the Study of Ethical Development. Reliability checks were built into the scoring procedure.

Classroom participation was assessed by giving one mark to each student who participated during a given class period. Students could not earn more than one mark per class no matter how often they participated. Since much of the classroom discussion was preceded by small-group discussions of dilemmas in which each group reported their main points back to the class, this system had the beneficial effect of encouraging the more talkative students in a group to encourage those who had not yet participated to speak up in class.

### Analysis of the Data

Analysis of the data was carried out using a t-test to determine if the difference in gain from the pre-test to the post-test DIT scores for the experimental and control groups was significant. A Pearson correlation matrix was used to determine the relationship between the scores on the DIT test and other variables such as age, gender, class (experimental or control group) and previous involvement in community service work.

A significance level of  $P < 0.05$  was selected for acceptance of the proposed hypothesis.

### Results

The average pre-test DIT score of the two classes was 40.0. The experimental group averaged 2 points higher than the control group on the pre-test, a difference which was not statistically significant. Only 14.7% of the students scored 50 or higher, the score which indicates that they are using primarily post-conventional or principled moral reasoning.

The results of the study supported the hypothesis. On the post-test, students in the experimental group made significantly greater gains in their DIT scores than did those in the control group. The mean gain between the DIT pre-test and the DIT post-test was 8.61 for the experimental group, compared to only 1.74 for the control group (see Table I).

By the end of the semester 51% of the students in the experimental group were using primarily principled moral reasoning (scored 50 or higher on the DIT test), while the number of students doing so in the control group remained

relatively unchanged at 13%. In the control group, as in other studies of moral development in college students, students tended to move to a higher level of conventional reasoning rather than moving up into principled reasoning. Interestingly, there was no significant correlation between participation in community service work in the past (prior to the beginning of the semester) and a student's pre-test DIT score, although students who had engaged in community service work in the past were more likely to state that they intended to engage in community service work in the future ( $P < 0.001$ ). Seventy-four per cent of the students in the experimental group reported that they planned to continue their community service work. This figure was corroborated by the director of the University of Rhode Island Clearing House for Volunteers who estimated that about 80% of my students from past classes who had done community service work through them, as a requirement for one of my classes, continued with their community service work during the following semester.

Class participation grades were similar for both classes. However, the experimental group tended to focus on issues arising from their community service work (e.g. homelessness, caring for the elderly, child abuse), while students in the control group were more likely to bring up moral issues encountered in the public media, such as the Gulf War. Extent of class participation in discussions of moral issues and dilemmas was positively correlated in the experimental group with the student's post-test DIT score ( $P < 0.01$ ). The correlation between class participation and post-test DIT scores was not statistically significant in the control group (see Table II). The correlation in both groups was higher for female students. However, there was a higher correlation for males between gain in Dim score and self-rating of improvement in moral development over the course of the semester. Doing community service work also had a greater effect on men's moral development, as measured by the DIT (see Table III).

Students in the experimental group gave themselves a higher rating in terms of having improved, as a moral person, over the course of the semester. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being "I'm worse", 4 "no change" and 7 "Yes, a lot", the students in the experimental group gave themselves a mean rating of 5.27, and those in the control group a mean rating of 5.08. Only 19.7% of students in the combined groups reported no improvement. No students in either group reported a decline in their moral status as a result of the ethics class. Reports of improvement were significantly correlated only in the experimental group, with actual gain in DIT scores or level of moral development ( $P < 0.05$ ). Students in the experimental group also rated themselves at the end of the semester as being slightly more moral than did those in the control group (5.18 as opposed to 4.95 on the Likert scale with 1 being "very immoral", 4 "average" and 7 "highly moral"). Only three students in the combined groups reported themselves at the end of the semester as being less moral than average. Seventy-seven per cent of the students, on the other hand, reported themselves as more moral than average, with 6.2% giving themselves the highest rating. Once again, the rating was significantly correlated with the post-test DIT scores in the experimental group, but not in the control group, although the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant.

## Discussion

The hypothesis that students who engage in community service work as part of their class requirement will make greater gains in their moral reasoning than those who do not was supported by the results of this study. This supports the claims of Kohlberg (1971) and Dewey (1939), as well as Gardner (1991), regarding the importance for moral development of real-life experience in confronting actual moral dilemmas.

The significant difference between the experimental and control groups appears to support, on first glance, the findings of Haan (1985) and Walker (1986) that social disequilibrium has a greater effect on one's moral development than does cognitive disequilibrium. Both classes experienced cognitive disequilibrium in having their views challenged through the discussion of controversial moral issues. However, only the experimental group experienced any degree of social disequilibrium. On the other hand, involvement in community service work prior to the semester had no significant effect on students' pre-test DIT scores, indicating that community service work without discussion of the relevant moral dilemmas is also ineffective.

A plausible alternative explanation for the findings of this study is that it is the combination of social disequilibrium and cognitive disequilibrium through the discussion of moral dilemmas, especially dilemmas that arise out of one's community service work, that brings about a change from conventional to post-conventional principled moral reasoning. This explanation is in keeping with Rest's findings (1988), as well as Gilligan's (1982) suggestion, that one's fullest potential in moral reasoning comes about through a successful integration of the Kohlbergian justice (cognitive) and the more feminine care (social/affective) perspectives.

The finding that class participation in discussions of moral dilemmas is significantly correlated with students' post-test DIT scores in the experimental group, but not in the control group, adds further support to this interpretation of the results.

Community service work also has several other advantages over simulated experiences in the classroom. Ability to reason well is not the only component of moral development. Moral sensitivity, moral motivation and execution and follow-through are all important components of moral development (Rest, 1984), which are enhanced by community service work.

Many, if not most, of the students in the experimental group reported that the experience of having to find and follow through on their community service work strengthened their self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as their moral sensitivity. This was probably reflected in their higher ratings of themselves as moral people and as having made greater improvement in their moral development in comparison to the control group. Not only were their ratings higher, but the students in the experimental group seemed to have greater insight into their actual status as far as having improved in their moral development and in being highly moral people. A follow-up study might include an actual test on self-esteem or ego-strength, such as that developed by Loevinger, to check out these findings.

Community service work can be helpful in building self-confidence. Ego-strength and the development of assertiveness are important components of the ability to execute and carry through on one's plans of action since they give people the strength to act on their convictions (Rest, 1984).

Identifying oneself as a moral agent is an important element in motivating one to engage in moral action (Rest, 1984; Blasi, 1983). Engaging in community service work helps students to define themselves as effective moral agents. For example, one freshman was doing so poorly at the beginning of the semester that I had to call her into my office for a one-to-one talk. She genuinely seemed unable to identify moral issues or to recognize a moral dilemma. She also had no qualms about cheating on tests--a practice that was contributing to her failing grade since, unbeknown to her, alternate rows received different tests. By the end of the semester her grades (and attitude toward the class) had improved markedly. Her DIT score had also risen to 48.2 from a pre-test score of 25.0. In the conclusion to her journal she wrote:

Before this class I never paid much attention to moral issues. Part of the problem was that I was never asked my opinion on an issue . . .

Because of the volunteer work I feel better about myself. I feel as though I have contributed to society. When people asked me where I was going every Monday at 2:30 they were shocked that I was doing volunteer work. They knew it was for a class but it changed the way they thought about me.

I had a problem defining moral issues, but it made me think.

Many other students, especially those who had scored low on the DIT pre-test, reported feeling similarly empowered by the community service work. A sophomore who had joined the class solely because her boyfriend was in it wrote:

I've realized that if one person can make a difference, then more than one person--many people--can and would make a HUGE difference. I sincerely enjoyed all the volunteer work I have engaged in and I shall continue to engage in them . . . I first felt pressured into doing it and was rather unhappy about it. However, once I started with it, I really feel good about myself knowing that I was making a difference in others. The elderly people were so grateful . . . I felt good knowing I was making a better place to live in for the next generation.



All in all I feel that this volunteer work is an excellent program. It helps you to feel great about yourself--gives one self-respect--and it makes others feel great as well.

Another student who choose to do his work in a YMCA day care centre reported:

I had people who depended on me to show up to work. I got a feeling that I was needed and worth something to the community.

Panzl and McMahon found that being concerned about and unable to resolve one moral issue can "cause insensitivity to another which begins before the first is completed" (1989, p. 12). Participation in community service work can provide students with an opportunity to work out moral issues that have been troubling them. In fact, students often chose volunteer work that was related to potential career choices and/or to personal moral dilemmas with which they were currently struggling.

One student, who was struggling with his own self-image in terms of his sexuality as well as a physical disability, finally ended up choosing work which helped him toward sorting out these issues. After several dead ends and "confused feelings" about what type of work to do, he finally chose to do his community service work with the University of Rhode Island Handicapped Services and Project Sunrise, a project run by the URI Clearing House for Volunteers which helps elderly and disabled people with yard work and heavy housework. In his journal he wrote:

If anything, it (the community service work) made me face the fact that I am handicapped. It made me do physical things that I just never attempted before out of embarrassment--raking, moving big things . . . I did jobs I just normally would never try. I guess when I think about it now, the volunteer work was truly rewarding to the people I helped, and especially myself . . . through this volunteer work I do feel as if I did something and made a difference--thank you.

While his post-test DIT score (46.7) remained the same as his pre-test score, on his self-ratings he reported that he had improved a lot and regarded himself as a highly moral person. I agree with his assessment.

The greatest gain in DIT scores in either class was made by a student who went from 45.0 on her pre-test to 75.3 on her post-test. She contributed regularly to class discussions tending to point out common ground rather than adopting a more conflictual style. As the semester progressed she became more and more of a principled moral reasoner. She opposed both capital punishment and the Gulf War, and became a tireless advocate of animal rights and the rights of the homeless and those in need. She, too, chose community service work that was related to moral issues that had been weighing heavily on her.

I chose to do my volunteer work at a crisis pregnancy center . . . I can personally relate to the terrifying feeling of thinking you're pregnant, since I came to college in September believing maybe I was. It turned out I wasn't, but I haven't forgotten how confused, scared and alone I felt at the time . . . I wanted to do something so other girls wouldn't have to feel as lost and desperate as I did . . .

I personally got more out of the volunteer work than I can possibly express. I discovered that I still hold strong emotions about my experience (which I thought was over). I realize it's something you never get over.

Some students were clearly skilled in the cognitive side of moral reasoning but lacked sufficient motivation to carry out their plans. One student, who went from 51.7 to 56.7 on the DIT made several friends in the class during small-group and class discussions because of her exceptional ability in identifying moral issues in classroom discussions of moral dilemmas. However, she had great difficulty in organising and motivating herself enough to carry out her community service work. After a few false starts she finally tried volunteering at a health care centre for the elderly, an interesting choice since she and her family were struggling at the time with the problem of how to best care for an elderly and ailing grandparent. In the summary of her journal she wrote:

The common stereotype of senior citizens by young people as crotchety and boring was so wrong. All the people I met were so nice and I learned so much from them . . . I felt needed and appreciated and I found it so hard to leave when dinner came, which is at 5:00. I actually loved it.

Community service not only improves sensitivity to moral issues, but helps students overcome negative stereotypes that often act as a barrier to interacting with other people. Community service work challenges people's egocentrism by demanding that they actively care for the welfare of another person (Chickering, 1976). Empathy, an important element in moral sensitivity, is usually triggered by the perception of another person in distress (Hoffman, 1976), whereas abstract classroom discussions of the distress of others often has little effect on people's actual feelings of empathy for them.

Community service work has several advantages over simulated experiences in a classroom because it puts students in direct contact with community values and "real life" moral dilemmas. It is difficult to engage in denial or minimise feelings of moral obligation if one is face to face with a homeless woman and her children, a rape victim or an elderly person who feels depressed and abandoned by the world.

One 20-year-old student took up the cause of defending virtually every cultural bias and prejudice to the point where his outrageously bigoted and insensitive statements (sexist, racist, classist and homophobic) often brought the whole class down on him. The change in him over the course of the semester was visible as he moved from clearly culturally relative moral reasoning to using primarily principled reasoning. For his community service work he chose to work in a local soup kitchen. He wrote:

I got a lot out of my volunteer work. I left the soup kitchen feeling good about myself. I knew I did something good. I learned that most of the people that go to the Store House were quite normal. Before I worked there I thought the people who went to soup kitchens were either crazy or retarded. This wasn't true . . . I thoroughly enjoyed my volunteer work. I will definitely continue to work at the Store House next year . . . I would like to continue to help the community in some way.

It is also important for moral development, according to Rest, for students to meet role models who are happy and successful in their fields, and who are concerned about moral issues and are "active moral agents in a wider social world" (Rest, 1984, p. 26). Community service work brings students into contact with people who are actively working, either as professionals or volunteers, to help others. For example, a 21-year-old junior, who went from 30.0 to 50.0 on his DIT, chose to work with Habitat for Humanity, which builds houses for low income families. He was notably impressed with the leader of the organisation as well as the other volunteers. He wrote in his journal summary: I initially began this volunteer work because it was required for this class, but I noticed that the people (who worked on the project with him) did not need a class to make them come out and build this house.

Very few students expressed any negative feelings about the community service work requirement or the work itself. One exception was a sophomore who went from a 43.5 to a 57.1 on the DIT test. He initially protested the community service requirement for the course, expressing a strong belief that the intellectual, cognitive side of morality should be kept separate from actual moral action or concern for others which, he argued, were not the business of a college ethics course. An exceptionally bright student, his attitude towards other students at times bordered on arrogance. At the end of the semester he reported that he had improved a lot ("7") in terms of being a more moral person. Most of his community service work was with a New York City YMCA day camp. In his journal at the end of the semester he wrote:

Instead of a helpers' high I experience a low, a feeling that I may never truly help someone and know from my emotions that I was good to do it . . . I'm afraid I've confirmed the fear that I have a lack of fellow feeling and an inability to feel more than useful in helping others. I do desire this movement caused by an empathy or will to do what's good.

This volunteer work was a disastrous but necessary failure to act on what I know to be right. I feel glad that it was imposed on me. I think I chose to be ignorant of volunteer service because I've, for a long time, felt a lack of commensurability between myself and others which leaves me little desire to help them. . . .

Must we do good things to be virtuous? . . . I suggest that perhaps a shedding of as much ignorance as possible may lead us to a greater ability to be moral. For this reason I hope to will in the future that I continue volunteering myself from time to time. Perhaps it will grow on me.

One last benefit of community 'service work is on the student's writing skills. The stiff and at times pedantic, at other times sloppy, style in which students wrote their journal introductions had, by the end of the semester, turned into highly readable prose and self-disclosure that made reading their journals a delight for any instructor. Perhaps writing programmes could also learn something: that writing based on actual experiences and written from the heart is far superior to that written from the intellect alone.

In the light of this, I will conclude my discussion of the results with one final entry since it seems only appropriate that the students should have the last word. The following is from the journal of a senior who went from 48.0 on her pre-test to 60.0 on her post-test. Her community service work was divided between an inner city Boys' and Girls' Club and work as a mentor with the University of Rhode Island Multicultural Student Services. The introduction to her journal is one of the better examples:

I have chosen two projects whichh impact me on a personal level. I hope that the sense of personal stake which I feel will translate into a deeper level of commitment, energy, and enthusiasm to these projects. I hope to gain a new perspective of myself, my community, and my heritage as well as to do my part in changing the multi-cultural experience in America.

In her end-of-the-semester summary of her experiences she wrote:

A long time ago, when I was a small child of about six or seven years old, I learned what it meant to be black in America. . . . As I grew up in the ghetto, I remember feeling the frustration around me--frustration that many people don't understand. I knew that that if I wanted to feel like my life had any meaning, I would work to change perceptions on both sides of the fence. . . .

My projects were an extension of that commitment to uplifting my race, and all minorities. I can look back on them with satisfaction, and say that I did my best for a short while to do something to help the people in my community while gaining something for myself.

My projects did not end with the end of this class. They are the types of things I strive to do all the time. . . . They are expression of a firm belief I have in my race and its ability to overcome the problems with which it is presented.

TABLE I. t-test for difference between pre-test and post-test DIT scores

Group	n	Mean gain	Standard deviation	t
Experimental	29	8.61	12.39	2.47[*]
Control	36	1.74	10.04	

\* P< 0.05.

TABLE II. Intercorrelations of the experimental and control groups with selected variables

Legend for Chart:

A - Variables

B - 1  
 C - 2  
 D - 3  
 E - 4  
 F - 5

	A	B E	C F	D
1. DIT post-test score		-- 0.44[1]	0.67[c] 0.47[2][a]	0.47[c]
		-- - 0.08	0.49[d] 0.15[d]	- 0.12
2. Gain in DIT score		-- 0.24	-- 0.32	0.24
		-- -0.12	-- 0.36[e]	0.25
3. Self-rating of improvement in moral development		-- 0.22	-- 0.06	--
		-- 0.08	-- 0.15	--
4. Self-rating as moral person		-- --	-- 0.27	--
		-- --	-- 0.13	--
5. Class participation		-- --	-- --	--
		-- --	-- --	--

a Experimental group; b control group.  
 [c] P < 0.05; [d] P < 0.01; [e] P < 0.001.

TABLE III. Intercorrelations of women and men with  
 selected variables

Legend for Chart:

A - Variables  
 B - 1

C - 2  
D - 3  
E - 4  
F - 5  
G - 6  
H - 7  
I - 8

A	B F	C G	D H	E I
1. Post-test DIT score	--	0.59[f]	0.19	0.34
	0.37[d]	- 0.38[d]	- 0.06	-0.05[a]
2. Gain in DIT score	--	0.71[f]	0.26	0.12
	0.21	- 0.38[d]	0.03	0.03[e]
3. Self-rating of improvement in moral development	--	--	0.12	0.10
	0.30	- 0.21	0.10	0.25
4. Self-rating as moral person	--	--	0.38[d]	0.11
	- 0.02	- 0.21	- 0.09	0.05
5. Class participation	--	--	--	0.18
	0.27	0.09	- 0.13	- 0.04
6. Group[c]	--	--	--	--
	0.34	- 0.04	- 0.03	0.30
7. Group[d]	--	--	--	--
	0.06	0.03	- 0.03	- 0.01
8. Group[e]	--	--	--	--
	--	- 0.14	- 0.26	- 0.18
9. Group[f]	--	--	--	--
	--	0.15	- 0.04	- 0.14
10. Group[g]	--	--	--	--
	--	--	0.26	0.13
11. Group[h]	--	--	--	--
	--	--	0.20	0.08

7. Past community	--	--	--	--
service work	--	--	--	0.64 [f]
	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	0.39 [1]
8. Future community	--	--	--	--
service work	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--

a Women; b men; c experimental group = 1; control group = 2.

[d]  $P < 0.05$ ; [e]  $P < 0.01$ ; [f]  $P < 0.001$ .

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