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A Pedagogical Model and Practice

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Abstract

THIS PAPER PRESENTS THE STORY of our efforts to improve the character trait development of our students, especially those traits relevant to ethical decision-making (e.g., *courage - critical and questioning attitude toward authority* and *compassion*). We chronicle the development of a new course, Personal Ethics & Corporate Culture, and how we monitored the impact of changes made to the course since 1994 with the survey instrument of Michael Maccoby in The Gamesman, 1976.¹

The most significant improvement was the addition of *Pathfinder* Pragmatic Inquiry® that helped students find answers to such questions as vocational choice and to identify the values on which their choices are based. Also, student ratings on the Maccoby character trait survey showed perceived higher value and higher reinforcement in their business studies after we added the Corporantes Pathfinder Notebook® to the course.

Introduction

Current business magazines have focused on the disillusionment that many in business have faced in their recent corporate lives as a result of the failure of DotComs, LBOs, IPOs, the stock market, corporate malfeasance, etc. With lost confidence in leaders and institutions, the current difficult economic climate serves as a form of reckoning. People are searching for what really matters when it comes to work and are asking: “What should I do with my life?”² After interviewing over 900 people, Bronson found that most people had good instincts about where they belong but made poor choices and wasted productive years on the wrong work. Bolles indicates that most career choices are made on impulse and whim with little investigation.³ People may seek happiness but ignore what Seligman contends is the lasting satisfaction that comes from rising to the challenges of work, love and raising children.⁴ He asserts that this work orientation is a “calling”, that is a passionate commitment to work for its own sake, regardless of the money or status it brings. Sanders contends we can attain a great sense of meaning and satisfaction if we assume that love is the most powerful force in business.⁵

These popular examples, particularly Bronson and Sanders, are unknowing restatements of deep philosophical insights drawn from pragmatic philosophy as well as theology. Here are two sources. Pragmatic philosophy is based on a method of inquiry to test hypotheses in pursuit of the truth, which leads to action. The heart of pragmatic inquiry as a philosophy as defined by Alfred North Whitehead would help Bronson’s subjects think about what they “should” do: “Philosophy is an attempt to clarify those fundamental beliefs which finally determine the emphasis of attention that lies at the base of character”.⁶ Bernard Lonergan articulates a parallel method of theological inquiry which concludes with Sanders’ “love as the most powerful force in business” when Lonergan proposes: “Be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love.”⁷ Both Lonergan and the pragmatists place central importance on action guided by fundamental beliefs or what we call values and vision.

Background

There can be little doubt that American colleges and universities are, and have been, deeply concerned with shaping the values, attitudes, and beliefs of their students.⁸ Pascarella and Terenzini found that most faculty, administrators, parents, legislators, alumni and students themselves agree

that higher educational institutions should be involved in shaping values.⁹ The question is whether some institutions are more effective than others in preparing their students in values or character development.

For over 20 years at St. Mary's College we have used the Maccoby Head and Heart survey of character traits instrument.¹⁰ The survey lists 19 character traits. (See Table 1.) Students are asked to rate each trait as to its perceived importance in achieving business career success. After rating the importance of each trait for career success, the students also identify which of the traits they consider to have been stimulated or reinforced during the course of their past studies.

Maccoby contends that the valuing of character traits are behavioral inclinations in general that can be classified as head traits (thinking qualities related to conceptualizations) or heart traits (feeling qualities related to consciousness). His survey instrument includes nine head traits and ten heart traits. Maccoby argues that head and heart traits should be balanced for one to be sensitive to ethical implications in business decisions. He further argues that comparatively low valuing of heart traits is symptomatic of careerists who constantly ignore *idealistic*, *compassionate* and *courageous (critical of authority)* impulses that might jeopardize their careers.

Klein agrees that emotions behind heart traits can help resolve certain ethical dilemmas. Research by Kochunny and Rogers¹¹, Ruhe and Drevs¹², Stevens¹³ and Kreitner and Reif¹⁴ suggests that business schools do a good job of emphasizing and developing analytical skills (head traits) but a poor job in developing qualities of the heart associated with ethical behavior. Allen et. al. found an increase in perceived importance of heart traits related to ethical inclination such as *honesty*, *compassion* and *generosity* in the same six universities over a fifteen-year period.¹⁵ Ruhe et al.¹⁶ contend that differences in Maccoby's trait importance seemed related to reinforcement differences in school types.

We tested a group of Saint. Mary's students as first year students (1987) and then again when they were seniors (1991) using the Maccoby instrument. As freshmen, all students rated the characters traits nearly the same, both in value to their careers and in their perceptions of the extent to which the traits had been reinforced in their past studies. However as seniors, *business* students, compared to *non-business* students, perceived lower value and lower reinforcement in their business studies of nine of the ten heart traits. (See Table 2.)

This research jolted us. We were especially concerned that the survey indicated that traditional business studies tended to suppress the character traits most important to ethical decision-making: *critical questioning of authority* and *compassion*. We decided to develop and require a

new course, Personal Ethics & Corporate Culture, as well as to try to integrate ethics throughout the business curriculum.

The new class required students to write a paper discussing their career choices and the reasons for their choices. We expected the students to choose based on a Personal Strategic Audit evaluating their personal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). However, in their papers most students wrote only “sterile” outlines that focused on “facts” derived from the audit, with little examination of the broader question of their “calling or vocation.” What was missing in the papers was a context within which to determine meaning and direction. We wanted to challenge students to look on their careers as a deeper study of choices and decisions based on their values and vocation within a larger societal context. (“A value is any belief, principle or virtue held so deeply—either consciously or unconsciously—that it guides behavior, decisions and actions”¹⁷).

As we realized that traditional business studies do not prepare students for an “in-depth inquiry” of who they are and what they love to do, we began to look for a process (instead of self-help books) that would help. Our search led to Ron Nahser who offered to introduce *Pathfinder Pragmatic Inquiry*[®] into the Personal Ethics & Corporate Culture course. (The remainder of this introduction is a justification for this type of inquiry for all students but especially business students.)

People who thrive focus on the question of who they really are, based on what they value, which leads them to work they truly love to do. Although this is not a new idea, it may be the one most disrespected in the corporate world. Too many people look for exciting and challenging work but see no need to consider what is meaningful, significant and fulfilling. It is equally as important to find an environment that reinforces one’s set of values and beliefs and uses the gifts one has to offer. This discovery of meaning and direction occurs as we write the stories of our lives and the stories of our potential places of work.

Progoff contends that we can find where our life wants to go with the use of intensive journaling.¹⁸ Nahser’s *Corporantes Pathfinder Notebook*[®] (1997) builds on Progoff’s journal concept to help individuals and organizations attain a sustainable, competitive advantage in the marketplace by developing their unique potential (what Progoff calls an individual’s “seed”). Nahser believes we must treat what we know about ourselves, and our choices based on that knowledge, as assumptions to be challenged.¹⁹ Among other activities, *Pathfinder* inquiry involves reflection on how our values and beliefs play out in our experiences. As we challenge our assumptions, we examine the evidence of our experience (e.g., life choices and business decisions) and may find that the values and

goals driving our stories are different than what we had assumed, and therefore the meaning of the story is different than we had assumed.

This paper discusses how students in the Personal Ethics & Corporate Culture course can find insights to such questions as vocational choice and identify the values on which their choices are based. We also will discuss how student ratings on the Maccoby character trait survey indicated perceived higher value and higher reinforcement in their business studies of the character traits of *compassion* and *critical and questioning attitude toward authority* after we added the Corporantes Pathfinder Notebook® to the course. (See Table 3.) Students engaged in *Pathfinder Pragmatic Inquiry*® using the *Pathfinder* notebook challenge their career choices by examining and interpreting the evidence of their own experience from multiple perspectives and uncover their values, core purpose and goals. They then can choose careers that enable them to live their values and put their talents to work in service to others.

Student Challenges

For many college students the choice of a vocation in business is a foreboding one. Students are faced with increased globalization that spreads even higher-skilled jobs across the world; competition from others not only across the world, but from others more skilled and experienced who have suffered downsizings; an uncertain and listless economy limited by terrorism and war; and corporate scandals. Many prospective business students are wondering: Why should I major in business with all these problems? Those with strong Christian values might be even more critical of a business career choice.

Corporate Scandals. For those students who considered business schools as a “meal ticket” to their future, business as a vocation does not appear to be all that promising. Corporate scandals have tarnished the image of many corporate icons and brought down such mighty corporate high-flying and well-respected corporations as Enron, Xerox, Arthur Andersen, Nortel, BroadCom, AOL, Global Crossings, Adelphia, and ImClone, HealthSouth, as well as many DotCom companies whose CEOs milked their investors while they enjoyed perks. In many of these companies (and in many others) executives were cheating their stockholders, employees and customers as they manipulated their boards to provide higher salaries, perks and stock options. Many then inflated corporate revenues by accounting tricks and cozy relationships with Wall Street that pumped up a stock to

encourage others to buy while they sold their stock before it dropped. Dash et al.²⁰ reported that hundreds of greedy executives at America's worst performing companies sold \$66 billion worth of stock while encouraging complicity of Wall Street analysts to promote others to buy.

For a time it seemed as if every day a new scandal burst into public view: Bankrupt Kmart's cooking of the books; Adelphia's founding family using corporate funds to subsidize their hockey team; Edison Schools' booking of revenues they never saw; Dynegy's use of special entities like Enron; and the use of other accounting tricks by firms such as Tyco, Qwest, HealthSouth, Reliant Resources, CMS Energy and HCA hospital chain²¹. Entire industries such as mutual fund and insurance are under investigation currently.

Some analysts suggest that many more accounting irregularities were yet to be reported because company auditors were co-opted. Even blue-ribbon companies such as Boeing and face investigation. These unethical practices, especially in corporate accounting, resulted in many firms declaring bankruptcy or restating their financial statements. The result is a loss of trust by investors, employees, *and* college students. Horror stories of persons caught in immoral organizations that force them to do distressing things abound in today's headlines and popular fiction. Too often personal values are compromised by a business climate that condones unethical acts.²² However, we do find stories of courageous women in such companies as Enron, WorldCom and the FBI who challenged the system and spoke out about their discomfort.²³

The Corporate Challenge

The challenge for corporations is to be ethical (make strategic decisions based on their values, which include ethical considerations) and socially responsible as they provide jobs, products, services and a reasonable return to shareholders and standard of living for employees. Kotler states: "...the organization's task is to determine the needs, wants and interests of the target markets and to achieve the desired results more effectively and efficiently than competitors, in a way that preserves or enhances the consumer's or society's well-being".²⁴ However, recent scandals, as well as those in previous decades, have tainted the reputation of corporate America, and some students avoid business careers and their possible contamination. To offset this problem, many corporations are promoting their set of values and goals to help attract, motivate and retain quality people. Unfortunately, many of these *proclaimed* values are not internalized within a firm and applicants have

difficulty in discerning the “truth.” Nahser contends that a company’s Values and Visions should be used to drive performance, not ‘hang on a wall’ to provide ethical guidelines.²⁵

Current conventional wisdom suggests that college students, in determining whether they should apply for employment, should reflect on the values of an organization and an industry to avoid being ethically challenged.²⁶ Scott contends that organizational values and “values fit” should be studied because they affect important individual and such organizational outcomes as productivity²⁷, job satisfaction²⁸, commitment²⁹ and job tenure³⁰. “Values fit” has been shown to be relevant to application decisions³¹. Obviously, students need a process to examine the fit between the moral values of organizations and their own individual values.

Opportunities in Time of Ethical Disgrace. What are students to make of these problems? What does the Christian tradition have to say about a person’s possible future in business? After twenty-five more years of corporate misdeeds, can we be optimistic amidst the growing problems? Is it possible to be a success in business and still remain a faithful Christian? Williams and Houck contend that a career in business can be a challenging and exciting vocation for persons of talent and integrity.³² They argue that in many corporate scandals decent people were just doing their jobs, but later found themselves doing things that they otherwise might not have even considered, had their “roles” not seemed to demand it. But how can college students prepare to avoid getting caught up in such corporate cultures? How can they consider business as a vocation given all the threats presented above from the Marketplace and a specific corporation? Unfortunately, little has been done in business pedagogy to enable students to recognize and evaluate the values of organizations (and how they might fit with their own values) and find a vocation in business. A recent poll by the Aspen Institute at 12 top business schools revealed that only 20% thought that their schools were seriously preparing them to deal with fraud or ethical dilemmas. Few were concerned with ‘values-fit’. This paper will address these issues in some detail.

University Responses. Although some academics are critical of vocational preparation as a valid and important goal of higher education, Colby (2002) contends that vocational preparation need not compete with or be disconnected from other goals such as integrating a concern for ethical and socially responsible occupational practices that place student understanding of their occupation in a larger social and intellectual context for deeper meaning. In other words, she contends “higher education can help turn occupations into callings, and they will be better for it.” Treating one’s life’s

work as a calling should now be accepted as a legitimate agenda for higher education (Colby, 2002). Unfortunately, that purpose of education has fallen by the wayside. As late as 1967, developing a meaningful philosophy of life was a major concern of 83% of all college freshmen, but that focus dropped to only 40% in recent years. There is hope because as students mature, the concern for a philosophy of life increases to approximately 60% for seniors graduating in 1999 and 2001.³³

Unfortunately, too many students and their parents still consider career preparation as the primary purpose of their undergraduate studies, even at small liberal arts schools. The business disciplines are believed to be the quickest, safest route to highly paid employment. Also lamentable is that moral and civic responsibilities are considered distinct from their business studies. However, work is central to the lives of most adults (especially college-educated women) and, therefore, is a place for seeking meaning and an opportunity to contribute to the welfare of others in the community³⁴. Developing a fully integrated life is one of the most challenging psychological tasks of adulthood. For these reasons educational programs should seek to integrate ethical and socially responsible occupational practices with an understanding of occupation in a larger social and intellectual context for deeper meaning. Universities began from a spiritual base where one's work was considered as a calling and accepted as a legitimate agenda for higher education.³⁵ For example, at Northwestern University, home of the Kellogg School of Management, the undergraduate college was started as a feeder for Garrett Methodist Seminary.

Equally unfortunate, many business schools tend to limit their focus to what the market wants instead of finding the proper "fit" for an individual in the world of work. To some extent higher education has been responding to market pressures that concentrate on preparing students for American industry by giving them the skills needed to compete economically. This corporate model of education places greater importance on the values, assumptions, language and administrative policies of the business world and ignores a focus on character development. Colby believes that higher education's move toward a corporate and individualistic approach is risky because it may subordinate concern for many important learning outcomes and public purposes.³⁶ For example, colleges may even foster a hidden curriculum that rewards faculty for pursuing their own professional prestige rather than caring for others. This encourages competitive climates where one student's (or professor's) success contributes to another's failure. However, when faculty are honest, fair and caring with their students and have integrity in their scholarship, they teach important moral lessons.

Pattillo and Mackenzie in a report for the Danforth Commission on U.S. colleges identified that the most valuable contribution an institution (of higher learning) can make to the lives of its students is a reasoned framework of belief that gives meaning to human existence, a faith that has something to say about the inescapable realities of life.³⁷ While a college cannot “give” a student faith, it can at least help inform the student about the principal alternatives and help him/her acquire the intellectual tools and a disposition to consider maturely fundamental questions. Unfortunately, they found relatively little of this kind of deeper inquiry and synthesis going on in their in-depth study of 50 church-sponsored colleges and universities. The organization of the curriculum educates students away from a willingness to look at broad questions, and the tempo of college life militates against reflective thinking. They concluded that these weaknesses are common to American higher education across the board.

Hauerwas argues that many of today’s Christian universities tend to reinforce the dominant morality of our culture that is corrupt and corrupting.³⁸ He argues that these students lack the virtues necessary for sustaining the life of the mind, because “in the name of objectivity we refrain from trying to shape the lives of our students in a manner that might change their image of what they are or should be.” This omission was noted in a study by Leatherman of administrators of 33 Catholic colleges who were concerned that their institutions were not actually teaching the values that make Catholic colleges unique.³⁹

More recent studies by Naughton and Bausch of 31 Catholic undergraduate business programs indicated that ethics was one of four areas of distinctiveness compared to public business schools.⁴⁰ Inclusion of core values is typically encouraged, anticipated and rewarded at religious schools. Religious schools also tend to attract a more homogeneous faculty who share (or at least support) the values of the sponsoring organization. Students generally attend a private religious school because they understand and accept the culture and values of the institution, and they anticipate that these beliefs will be reinforced. Therefore, one might expect the faculty at religious schools would welcome ethical instruction within their courses.

Parker Palmer⁴¹ also advocates exploration of “the spiritual dimension of teaching, learning, and living,” wherein occurs the “ancient and abiding human quest for connectedness with something larger and more trustworthy than our egos”. Frederick Buechner sees the discernment this way: “We search, on our journeys, for a self to be, for others to love, and for work to do.”⁴² McGee and Delbecq⁴³ contend that leaders in the business community are requesting opportunities to examine the spiritual connections to their vocations. Even though the terms “vocation” and

“calling” may be alien to many leaders, current research suggests that a moral and spiritual dimension plays a part in CEO success⁴⁴. They, as well as McGee and Delbecq, contend that contemplative practice is essential to maintaining commitment of leaders to their calling.

This contemplative practice along with self-knowledge is important in the discernment of an ongoing commitment to a “calling” that is derived from the belief that “vocation” is first and foremost a calling from within⁴⁵. For the Christian, vocation can be seen as a continual process of discovery of the particular image of God in which one is created. McGee and Delbecq and Nahser⁴⁶ argue that “vocation” can come from listening to an “inner voice” through contemplative practice. Palmer suggests that vocation comes from “listening to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for truths and values at the heart of my identity, not the standards by which I must live—but the standards by which I cannot help but live if I am living my own life.”⁴⁷

Critics from outside and within the academy are calling for a revitalization of the public purposes of higher education, including educating for students’ moral and civic development.⁴⁸ Because higher education has such a powerful influence in shaping individuals’ relationships with each other and their communities, its influence must be constructive rather than corrosive. Colby argues that students’ values, moral and civic assumptions and identities are shaped in college and, therefore, faculty and administrators should be more intentional about this. Hutcheon argues that post-secondary education provides a second chance in socializing young people into a society.⁴⁹ Documenting and sharing the students’ efforts with others will allow for public scrutiny of these programs. We hope sharing this paper will encourage other faculty to consider this or other models for vocation development among their students.

Pedagogical Model: A Literature Review

The Role of Stories. As Palmer argued, our *Pathfinder* model does involve listening to the story our lives are telling us who we are. Why does everyone love a good story and how is story related to theological reflection? TeSelle contends that the answers to these questions are related.⁵⁰ Most of us love a good story because we like the basic narrative quality of human experience, especially if we can relate to it and it rings true to human life. Elwood concurs that it is critical to reflect on the story of our lives—and on the stories in our lives, especially the role of God in our lives.⁵¹ We may recognize our own problematic journey in the stories of others’ experiences and struggles. For Christians we can see in the story of Jesus his own struggle of moving forward and

discerning his calling by God. “The most basic call we have from God is to be lovingly conscious of our life as it is given to us in the here and now.”⁵²

TeSelle contends that the bold business of theology starts with the ordinary and everyday, with personal life, with corporate stories, with ‘our times’ in their political and social agony.⁵³ It is exactly where Jesus’ parables start. But to understand Jesus’ parables, Daniel Berrigan insisted we must become skilled at reading the text of the events of our own lives—and order our lives accordingly. Although McCann contends that most American theologians have overlooked the role of narrative in interpreting religious and moral experiences, he presents examples of how readers might see God’s hand even in narratives of Wall Street.⁵⁴

MacIntyre argued that man is essentially a story-telling animal.⁵⁵ He contends that the key question is not ‘What am I to do?’ but ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’ That is because, through story, we understand and define what success and failure, danger, harm, allies and enemies mean. Even management professors such as Down and King argue for making greater use of stories in the classroom.⁵⁶ They suggest that stories in management education can be valuable, because:

- 1] People remember narratives;
- 2] Stories make concepts stand out from the clutter;
- 3] Stories enhance understanding;
- 4] Stories motivate us to understand ‘reality’;
- 5] Stories motivate us to “know thyself,” hence each other;
- 6] Stories convey moral wisdom.

Ready agrees and suggests that storytelling is emerging as the preferred approach for teaching leadership effectiveness in many companies today.⁵⁷ He contends that top management must recapture leadership development from outsourced consultants who offer out-of-context, ill-conceived leadership programs. For stories to be effective Ready suggests that they must:

- 1] Be told by respected individuals;
- 2] Have drama to grab attention centering on making tough choices;
- 3] Have high learning value to produce changes in behavior;
- 4] Be level-appropriate to the managers or students;
- 5] Be context-specific or linked to cultural or strategic context.

Being autobiographical increases the level of trust. An autobiography is the story of a life, and the best autobiographies are written as stories that order events around a central focus. Pascal argues that the reader as well as the writer of a good autobiography should be able to see oneself and say, “Aha! There it is!”⁵⁸ In the autobiography we move from the known to the unknown; through the mystery (story) of self-discovery and through the myriad details of the known, we attempt to discover the mystery of God’s calling.⁵⁹ The stories of others also help us in our own self-knowledge.

An autobiography can become an effective story rather than merely a series of jottings and notes because, like a parable, it is a metaphor of the self. The story has a purpose; the revelation of the self is realized only in and through the details of an actual historical self. Both the writer and the reader identify with the process, the voyage of discovery⁶⁰. A good autobiography contains four components: “concern with self, the importance of a dominant point of view, the harmony between outward events and inward growth and the similarity between the kind of “knowing” we call aesthetic and that which comes from the writing and reading of an autobiography.”⁶¹ Nash proposes that personal narratives reveal a self-understanding of why we are here, who we are, what our purpose is and why certain causes are worth sacrificing for.⁶² By asking the right questions, we are able to develop new forms of understanding and interpretation. Meyer contends that narratives are the essential means humans use to perceive and communicate about the world.⁶³ By revealing values, these narratives suggest how people should act within society.

The story of each and every Christian is formed by the story of another, Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian story is always in the service of that prior story—a Christian autobiography is always vocational.⁶⁴ Saint Paul apparently found his own story useful for his vocation as a preacher. He not only uses himself, but he thinks in and through himself. TeSelle also considers journals as pictures of a journey if the journaling process involves a reflection and analysis of self. Narrative mode is uniquely important in Christianity. A Christian can confess his faith wherever he is, and without his Bible, just by telling a story or a series of stories.⁶⁵ Walker⁶⁶ found that moral exemplars when assessed were found to have: a) integrative narratives of the self, b) dispositional traits and c) contextualized concerns such as developmental tasks and personal strivings.

Methodology

Instrument. The following section describes how students can learn to write, read, and retell the text of their personal stories in a journaling process. Using the Corporantes Pathfinder Notebook®, developed by Dr. F. Byron Nahser, the students learn to apply the method of inquiry—discovery, interpretation, and action—to solve critical questions such as “What should I be doing with my life?”

This flexible framework of exercises has been used with students and executives for more than 20 years in hundreds of settings to help users—individually or as a group—look at a situation, problem, or idea from several angles to get a better picture of reality. (While students use it for their Personal Strategic Plan and Leadership Development, executives have found it useful for uncovering foundational values, developing compelling visions and organization strategies as well as for understanding their realities. More than a dozen colleges and universities, thousands of students, as well as over 100 profit and non-profit organizations and hundreds of executives, have used it successfully.)

The *Pathfinder* process contends that strategic inquiry begins with a question at the base of a triangle of relationships: a person, a market, and an organization or corporation (or an industry or profession) all existing within a broader society.⁶⁷

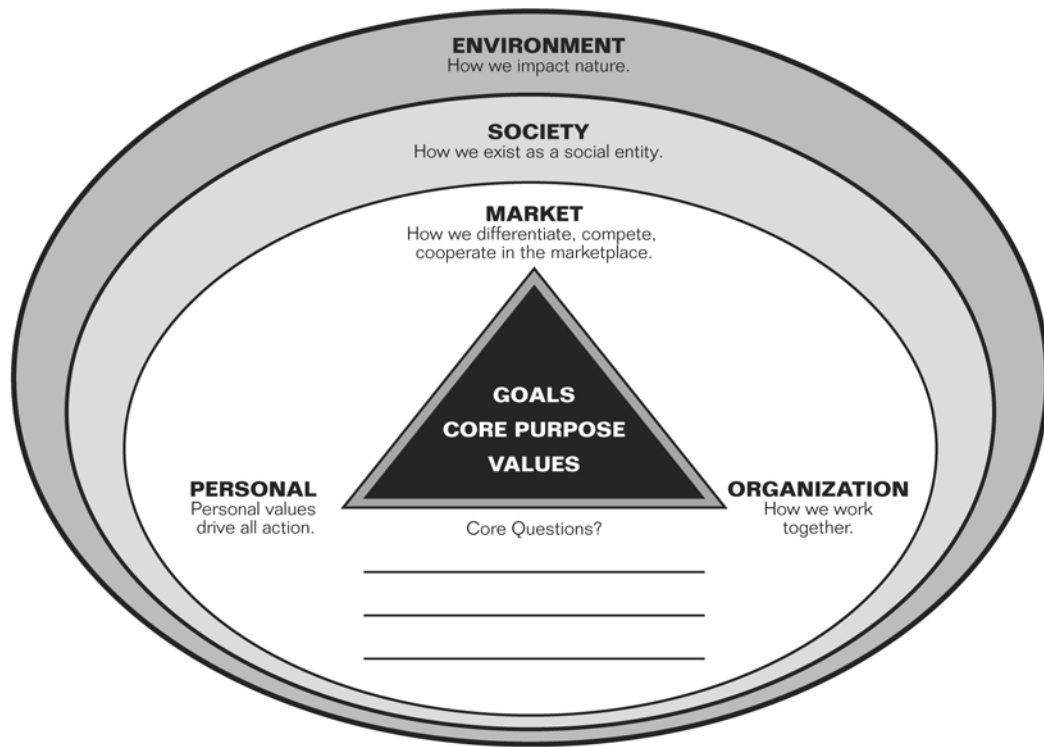


Figure 1
Strategic *Pathfinder* Relationships

During an Inquiry we look at our question, issue or challenge from our personal perspective and those of the market, our current or possible organization and the larger society. The Inquiry then proceeds along a Spiral Path using a notebook, with five major headings (Begin, Explore, Interpret, Decide and Act), that provides leading questions for investigation, reflection and journaling. (Later in the example, we will discuss how we seek God’s perspective in finding our calling.) As we reflect on what values, beliefs, principles or virtues are driving our behavior, decisions and actions, we ask ourselves: “Whom do I want to serve—what market or audience? What organization do I want to serve?” Next, we look at the question within the context of our role in society. From that data, we begin to interpret meaning and to form assumptions that are further tested.

The Practice Using the Model

Subjects. Using the *Pathfinder* process, almost 300 women business students at Saint Mary's College have found answers to their vocational questions through a semester-long application of the Corporantes Pathfinder Notebook® in the required Personal Ethics & Corporate Culture course.

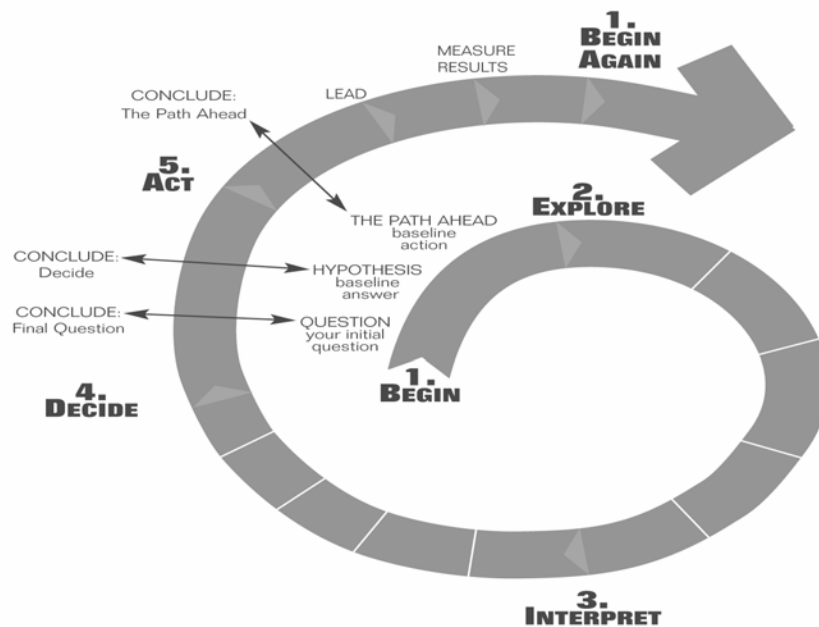


Figure 2

Corporantes Pathfinder Notebook® Model

Practice. Students *begin* with a Question concerning their career choice and writing out their preliminary answer which establishes a baseline assumption to be tested. Then they *explore* their personal beliefs, values and gifts and reflect in their journals on how those beliefs and values have impacted their lives up to now, the path they have been on and where the path seems to be heading. By responding to questions in the Notebook, they then *explore* the Market in terms of serving the needs of customers as well as the challenge of competition and how the market has developed and where it seems to be headed. Next they *explore* how they can serve society, specifically or in general.

(Concurrently, students are involved in a required Service Learning Activity of volunteering in the local community to better understand the broader market.) Finally, the organization/corporation/profession/industry is *explored* in terms of how it serves the market, where it seems to be headed and where the students would like it to head. (Also concurrently, student teams spend most of the semester *exploring* the Ethical Climates of local or regional organizations or the proclaimed and real values of actual corporations or organizations to evaluate their Family Friendly benefits.)

Each bit of information, in terms of facts, evidence and impressions researched and collected, is recorded in the journal. However, the information is viewed as assumptions that will help formulate *hypotheses* that are continually modified, based on evidence that leads to possible answers to their Question. Nahser considers this process as “abduction” or pursuing “the truth we do not yet know” as the students reflect on their experiences.⁶⁸ (This was recently illustrated in the film, Erin Brockovich, when the heroine questioned why medical bills were part of a real estate file.)

Next, students are asked to sketch out the question in the form of some image or map. (Often this *interpretation* results in finding an answer in the picture.) After examining the Maps & Images for ideas, students are asked to explore for other points of views from an imaginary conversation with a person they think can help them with their question. (Many students select God, the Holy Spirit, a saintly, deceased parent or grandparent, a former boss, for example, as they seek an “inner voice.”) Next, they compare their ideas with opinions from others such as parents, roommates, friends, professors, etc. Grabner (1992) contends that we will be able to discern the movement of God as he works in our present moment by being imbued by the Spirit through our silent listening, and through listening to others.

The next step is to identify and *interpret* known and unknown habits, strategies or tactics which lead or limit their progress. On what assumptions and values are these based and what needs to change? Finally, students conclude by reviewing and reflecting on all collected data to see what answers come to them, and what values, beliefs, knowledge, assumptions and purpose become clear. This information forms another *hypothesis* that they put to the test in *action*. For most it leads to a Path Ahead that they might take. For others it means they have refined their Question and can begin their discovery process again.

The *Pathfinder* originally was developed as a method for corporate inquiry, to determine the values and vision driving the performance of corporations because Nahser, during his advertising and marketing career, saw the need to articulate a company’s values and vision as the basis for its

reputation: its so-called “brand”. These values and vision gave the guidance and inspiration to drive business performance. Nahser further saw that progress in business ethics depended on developing organizational cultures (on which reputation is grounded and which drives business decisions) that both institutionalized ethical norms and responded to religious and spiritual concerns that moved individuals to espouse them. Nahser (1997) contends that the conventional version of pragmatism (“do whatever works”) contributed to the ethical blindness, short-term thinking, individualism and machine model of business that limit businesses today because of their lack of focus on Market and Society, that is, service to others. Instead, he suggests that *Pathfinder Pragmatic Inquiry*[®] provides a way for people to discover and tell the stories of their values and beliefs, based on reflection of the evidence of their experience. Nahser contends that learning begins when we face a situation that leads us to question or doubt what we know. Although we can state what we know as a baseline answer, we should treat that as a hypothesis to be tested. We then are asked to rethink our experiences, our plans and what we know as we search for new ideas and explanations of who we are. We are, in effect, reinterpreting the meaning of our experiences and forming new belief patterns. John Dewey embraced this idea as the heart of learning. Dewey (1963), who focused on pragmatism as the logic or theory of inquiry, said “all learning is the continuous process of reconstruction of experience”. Reflecting on and reinterpreting these experiences is the foundation of any successful Inquiry.

Procedure. For the past six years business students at Saint Mary’s College have been required to complete a sophomore level business course entitled Personal Ethics & Corporate Culture. During the first week of class the students begin an Inquiry and for the next 12 weeks cover each notebook section with in-class time to write and share their journal reflections.

Although students may complete the course later in their business program, we have developed a unique model for a business ethics course that focuses on ethics as a reflection on values rather than merely learning principles of philosophical schools that do not connect with many managers (Stark, 1993). Therefore, this course develops the capacity of our students to inquire and reflect not only on their own values and life experiences but also on the real values practiced in organizations as well as how they can find their vocation in business.

The course is taught in 30 seventy-five minute class sessions to provide time to develop and discuss their stories, case studies and presentations. The students are required to write three individual papers and two team papers. The first individual paper, Personal Values & Goals, evaluates the ability to identify and reflect from their journals on the sources, implications and potential

conflicts of their values in five goal areas (Spiritual, Career, Learning, Relationships and Leisure). The second paper, Service Learning, evaluates reflections on how students might be involved in the lives of others less fortunate through Community Service. The third paper, A Final Reflection, drawn from their writings in the Corporantes Pathfinder Notebook®, is a reflection on their search for “truth” to the original question developed at the beginning of the semester (usually a career/vocational question). Critical skill analysis and learning are major objectives.

The two Team assignments are both papers and presentations dealing with analyses of case studies—one a first-person research report (a Family Friendly Analysis of local organizations or an Ethical Climate Analysis of local or regional organizations) and another a value-oriented case from the case book.

The Family-Friendly Analysis is used to analyze organizations nominated as family-friendly with work/life balance policies and practices. The students analyze an organization’s proclaimed values by *reading* mission and policy statements, *listening* to CEOs (or other top officials) present their understanding of values, *observing* how people are treated in an organization and finally asking a number of questions to current and former employers as well as to customers and other stakeholders regarding the application of those values. (These questions, especially suited for prospective working moms, deal not only with family-value issues but also with ethical issues that help students develop skills necessary for finding their proper organizational culture “fit”.) Each team of students develops an analytical paper comparing the proclaimed with the real family values practiced in the organization. The executive summaries of these papers are then used by a distinguished panel of judges to select organizations for recognition from the list nominated and evaluated at an Annual Family Friendly Benefits Award Luncheon. (During the fall semester, an Ethical Climate Analysis paper is completed by the teams as a way of helping students distinguish differences between Proclaimed Values and Real Values perceived by current and former employees.) These assignments help students to differentiate between organizations and industries as possible vocation possibilities.

Ethical Climate Analysis. The major team paper, an Ethical Climate Analysis, evaluates a team’s ability to apply the *Pathfinder* process to investigate the ethical climate of an organization’s culture. Students are expected to compare the differences between proclaimed values and real ethical practices of a chosen corporation using the abduction process discussed earlier. The process includes using proclaimed values as hypotheses and testing them against reality by observing and listening to the ‘signs’ or indications of actual practices and by asking various stakeholders (employees, former

employees, customers, suppliers, community leaders and residents) about ethical practices in order to arrive at new theories until new facts are gathered. To encourage students to doubt corporate documents and stay open to the possibility that they might be misinterpreting the signs, drafts of papers are required that provide opportunities for instructor guidance. Also, alumnae speakers and others are invited to tell their stories of being ‘taken in’ by their employers and to suggest critical questioning of their prospective employers. They also offer insights and dilemmas regarding ethics. Students view parts of the movies, *The Firm* and *Erin Brockovich*, and the video, *The Enron Story*, to gain further insights for detecting unethical practices. We also present models for analyzing organizational values and ethical case studies.

In today’s challenging ethical corporate environments, we feel students must understand the values of an organization *before* they apply for employment. There are too many horror stories of persons caught in immoral organizations that pressure them into unethical behaviors.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, there is lack of empirical research that enables students to recognize and evaluate the values of organizations. Ruhe and Nahser contend that it is important for students to seek a “values fit” which is much easier when they have identified and reflected on their values in the *Pathfinder* process.⁷⁰

Students are assigned three textbooks: G. F. Cavanagh’s *American Values with International Perspectives*, 1998; F. Byron Nahser’s *Learning to Read the Signs*, 1997; and Pfeifer and Forsberg’s *Ethics on the Job: Cases & Strategies*, 1998. These books often stimulate reflection in the *Pathfinder* notebook. Cavanagh’s book is used as a foundation for discussion and quizzes on values content as well as the specific paper assignments (Values & Goals, Service Learning, and Ethical Climate Analysis). Other readings from Catholic social tradition and assignments come from Kirk Hanson’s [Christian Values in the Workplace](#) which helps students understand how Scriptural values are applied by the American Bishops’ [Pastoral on Economics](#). While reading and discussing Cavanagh and Nahser’s books, the students are expected to write at least weekly in the [Corporantes Pathfinder Notebook](#)[©] as content is developed. Ron Nahser personally visits the classes at the beginning and towards the end of the journaling period to encourage students in their question choices. Students share examples of their journal reflections to stimulate other students’ commitment to the journaling process. This active inquiry process is then applied in the students’ investigation of their own personal questions as they examine the areas of Personal (visions, beliefs, gifts and motivations), the Market (who do they serve and what are the needs), and the corporation (with whom do they serve).

Results

Although the *Pathfinder* process has been tested on several different groups of graduate students at DePaul, Stanford, Notre Dame, Duquesne and South Florida universities, this group of almost 300 St. Mary's female undergraduate students during five Spring semesters was especially challenging with a mixture of sophomores, juniors and seniors from business and the liberal arts. (Ironically, the seniors in business who had jobs were the ones most likely not to question their decisions and thus limited their investigations. This suggests that the sophomore year is a good time for students to learn the *Pathfinder* method of inquiry.)

To assist the students with their final papers, we told them that the success of *Pathfinder* application would be evaluated in three ways: 1) the depth and quality of the final reflection paper (8-10 pages) that examines what insights they learned about themselves, their religion and the corporate cultures they investigated; 2) the notebook process and 3) the ACTION they identified based on the insights for their vocations/careers.

Student satisfaction with the *Pathfinder* process and the Reflection Paper was rated on a scale of 1 (low) to 6 (high). More than 90% felt very satisfied (5-6) with the process. (Only six percent felt the Inquiry was not valuable to them; most of them were seniors.)

A review of the final papers demonstrates:

- Greater insight to vocations (their purpose or calling);
- Significant self-awareness;
- Greater sensitivity to others—especially in the community;
- Greater sensitivity to organizations and their cultures

A few student comments regarding Inquiry are:

- The *Pathfinder* was an excellent way to present your feeling, values, goals and dreams, making it easier to produce decisions that have dramatic impacts on your life;
- I feel the *Pathfinder* has helped me put my thoughts on paper and helped me understand what I am being called to in life.
- Although I had my doubts in the beginning, the *Pathfinder* turned out to be a wonderful tool of discovery. This has been an awesome semester of enlightenment.

- The *Pathfinder* helped me logically identify questions about all aspects of my life and to think clearly through every detail of the situation. I plan on using this notebook to help guide me in making the correct decisions in the future.
- It has been truly helpful in crystallizing my values for me and giving me a sense of where my future lies. I hope to be able to continue reflecting on my personal experiences and focusing where my talents and gifts are needed most.
- It helped get our thoughts together and map our futures.
- It helped me read the “signs” and get back on track to a path that I temporarily lost. The process of evaluating the signs in your life and the direction that I am being ‘called to’ is an ongoing one that I will need to continuously step back and take the time to see the big picture in order to know what my next step will be.
- It made me realize how confused I was about my future.
- After changing my focus from what the career can do for me to what I can offer society, I am no longer ashamed to admit I have a disability, one that will help me communicate with both the hearing and hearing-impaired.
- The repeated self-evaluation will help me to have a solid balance that will integrate my spiritual life and my job.
- The *Pathfinder* brought about a sense of stability when really I was making radical transformations that will forever affect my life.
- I plan on keeping my *Pathfinder* intact and using it again after a year of working. In that year I most likely will have more pertinent questions and need the personal query guide.
- At the end of my work in the *Pathfinder*, I was still looking for a concrete answer. However, I realized that working in the journal gave me another path to follow pursuing my answer.
- I am ever so thankful for being introduced to such a wonderful, self-discovery experience. You learn from what life deals you.
- Keeping a journal and later reflecting on your writings helps you see how far you have come and how far you still have to go.
- I was not thrilled in having to write in a journal. I felt I didn’t have any questions that are important, but I’ve come to realize that every question I have is important. My

future and what will happen to me are especially important questions worth thinking about.

- It was a great method in helping me grow; I enjoyed the chance to reflect on my beliefs, wants, and life direction.
- A neat way to deal with our lives; It helped me concentrate on what I want out of life;
- It helped me answer a lot of questions I had never thought about;
- I think everyone had a burning question and it was helpful to journal about it. It would be helpful to share our progress in small groups.
- I never expected to learn so much from an ethics course. I have learned a lot about myself, more than I thought I would ever attain from a class.
- I really wish I had this course earlier in my college career because it really gave me direction and insight into what I really want in life.

On the Maccoby scale, the addition of *Pathfinder Pragmatic Inquiry*[®] seems to have resulted in the students' perceived higher reinforcement of the character traits of *compassion* and *critical questioning* of authority with improvement in the traits of *independence*, *satisfaction in creating something new*, *cooperativeness* and *self-confidence*. This higher reinforcement was reflected in higher importance of the heart traits of *compassion*, *critical questioning of authority*, *idealism* and *generosity* as well as the head traits of *satisfaction in creating something new* and *open-mindedness*. These results continued to be consistent in pre- and post tests for the two most recent classes in the Springs of 2001 and 2002. (Dr. Ruhe was on sabbatical during the academic year 2002-03).

While we cannot attribute causality of these changes to the introduction of *Pathfinder Pragmatic Inquiry*[®], it appears that since its introduction in 1998, students perceive greater reinforcement and subsequent valuing with the changes made. Over the past 20 years the Maccoby scale has seemed quite reliable with few other changes in ratings noted among its 19 character traits. Personal observations of student behavior at another university also suggest strong validity.

Since the prime rationale for developing the Personal Ethics & Corporate Culture course was the comparatively weak character development of business majors in 1991, we have continued to monitor each addition to the course by the Maccoby survey. (See Table 1 for the survey.) Early use of the survey indicated that traditional business studies tend to suppress the character traits most important to ethical decision-making (*critical questioning of authority* and *compassion*).

Discussion

The prime purpose of this model is for the students to see the presence of God (Divine, Grace, Spirit, Calling, Destiny, Purpose, Vocation, etc.) in the narrative of their lives and how they can find a better fit with their values for their organizational future. The premise for this focus is the reality that women traditionally have been seen as the developers of values in our families, but now their values are being challenged as they enter the workforce in increasing numbers. To avoid having their values changed by unethical or unsuitable organizations, we help them discover their own values, loves and goals as well as help them learn how to investigate the *real* values, mission and goals of their prospective employers so they can find the proper alignment with their own Christian values. Students need to ask whether it would be a better “vocational fit” to work in a business that is extremely hierarchical, structured, inflexible and where there is little room for initiative, or would it be better to be in a company with a “lateral” structure, where creativity and flexibility are encouraged but ambiguity is rampant.⁷¹ For women students with expectations for a family, this analysis seems to be especially critical. Peck also identifies other questions regarding whether to seek a vocation for money, security, interesting work or benefit to society.

More specifically, this is a story about women students at Saint Mary’s College, Notre Dame, Indiana, and how they assess organizational and individual values through a combination of journal reflections, community service projects, alumnae guest speakers, team research, scholarly study, case studies, simulations, role playing, problem-solving sessions and personal interactions among students, alumnae, faculty and various business connections about what business is like and the challenges they might face in corporate America and even in specific firms.

An added expectation of the Personal Ethics & Corporate Culture class at Saint Mary’s is to reinforce character traits or heart values that Maccoby considers essential to avoid a *careerism* based solely on one’s own career planning and personal fulfillment.⁷² The careerist tends to ignore idealist, compassionate and courageous impulses that might jeopardize his career. To evaluate the course’s reinforcement we give a pre- and post-test of Maccoby’s Head and Heart survey instrument of character traits. So far, we have found higher perceived reinforcement of *idealism* and higher valuing of *critical attitude of authority*. These are in line with our expectations.

Recent research by Ruhe, et al. suggests major differences of heart reinforcement and perceived importance between college business seniors in coed and single-sex institutions.⁷³ They found that business seniors in the women's college valued 13 of the 19 character traits more highly than their female counterparts in three coed religious universities. These character traits included: *honesty, compassion, generosity, openness, independence, idealism, loyalty, friendliness, sense of humor, cooperation, open-mindedness, pleasure in learning something new* and *flexibility*. Most of these heart traits were also perceived to have been reinforced in their studies. Compared to their counterparts in three coed public universities, females in the three coed religious schools valued more highly only *critical attitude toward authority, ability to take initiative* and *sense of humor*. It seems that women in coed schools (religious or public) tend to take on the character traits of men. Of the 19 character traits, males in religious coed schools valued only *generosity* more than their public counterparts, while their counterparts were higher on *open-mindedness* and *pleasure in learning something new*.

As professors, we personally can adopt the Pragmatic Philosophy and Theology that underpin Sanders' view of love if we help others to grow to become the people God is calling them to be. As a result, we are being loving/compassionate and therefore we grow.

Recommendations for the Future

- Incorporate journaling at an earlier (sophomore) stage. (Prior to 1998 a Personal Ethics class was offered as an elective course primarily for seniors, but we found that the course was offered too late in fulfilling a need to develop an understanding of their vocation. Most students were already too committed to a particular career field and did not want any dissonance.)
 - Bring alumni (alumnae) to share wisdom of career choice and possibly serve as mentors.
 - Encourage students to analyze their organizational experiences.
 - Require in-depth ethical climate analysis of corporate cultures applying the same inquiry method.
 - Continue use of the Maccoby instrument for pre- and post-evaluation of the results of these efforts that could be used for accountability.
 - Finally, try to reflect our "love" in the way we help our students develop. Perhaps then business can become a loving vocation based on the character traits of compassion and critical questioning of authority.

Table 1

A SURVEY OF STUDENT OPINIONS

University: _____ Major _____ Sex: __ M __ F

Please indicate the extent to which you believe the following traits of character help one Achieve success in a career.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
1. Generosity	_____	_____	_____
2. Satisfaction in creating something new	_____	_____	_____
3. Sense of humor	_____	_____	_____
4. Idealism	_____	_____	_____
5. Ability to take the initiative	_____	_____	_____
6. Compassion	_____	_____	_____
7. Openness, spontaneity	_____	_____	_____
8. Flexibility	_____	_____	_____
9. Pleasure in learning something new	_____	_____	_____
10. Coolness under stress	_____	_____	_____
11. Self-confidence	_____	_____	_____
12. Open-mindedness	_____	_____	_____
13. Critical and questioning attitude toward authority	_____	_____	_____
14. Friendliness	_____	_____	_____
15. Loyalty to fellow students	_____	_____	_____
16. Honesty	_____	_____	_____
17. Independence (vs. dependence)	_____	_____	_____
18. Cooperativeness	_____	_____	_____
19. Pride in performance	_____	_____	_____

Now please CIRCLE THE NUMBERS of those traits which you consider have been stimulated or reinforced during the course of your studies in the past.

(Adopted from Michael Maccoby, The Gamesman, Simon & Schuster, New York. 1976.)

Maccoby argued that our values are shaped and achieved by our organizations. Since 1980 this instrument has been used by various authors in Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Business Education, International Journal of Value-Based Management, SAM, Advanced Management Journal, Journal of Contemporary Business Issues, etc. and found to have high reliability and validity in various university settings.

Table 2

Personal Ethics & Corporate Culture, Saint Mary's College

**Perceived Value of Importance & Reinforcement of Character Traits
Business Seniors vs. Non-Business Seniors**

1991

(Note: Scores were virtually identical for both groups as freshmen in 1987)

Character Traits (Heart Traits in Italics)	Perceived as Very Important (%)		Perceived as Reinforced (%)	
	Business Seniors (N=58)	Non-Business Seniors (N=180)	Business Seniors	Non- Business Seniors
<i>Generosity</i>	33	39	12	18 *
Satisfaction in Creating Something new	53	70*	21	44***
<i>Sense of Humor</i>	57	69	14	33**
<i>Idealism</i>	31	39	7	18*
Ability to take the Initiative	97	93	62	62
COMPASSION	36	54**	16	26
<i>Openness, Spontaneity</i>	62	68	24	36
Flexibility	93	89	83	46
Pleasure in Learning Something New	74	78	45	44
Coolness under Stress	86	93	40	31
Self-Confidence	98	98	78	67
Open-Mindedness	84	89	33	58***
COURAGE - CRITICAL & QUESTIONING ATTITUDE TOWARD AUTHORITY	26	41 *	22	37 *
<i>Friendliness</i>	64	75	22	39
<i>Loyalty to Colleagues</i>	59	61	34	33
<i>Honesty</i>	90	90	53	58
<i>Independence</i>	52	75***	47	61***
Cooperativeness	86	90	55	48
Pride in Performance	88	93	53	64

Probable Statistics

* p<.05

** p<.01

*** p<.001

Table 3

Personal Ethics & Corporate Culture, Saint Mary's College

Perceived Value of Importance & Reinforcement of Character Traits

Before and After

Pathfinder Pragmatic Inquiry®

Spring 2002

Character Traits (Heart traits in Italics)	Perceived as Very Important (%)		Perceived as Reinforced (%)	
	First Day of Class	Last Day of Class	First Day of Class (n=41)	Last Day of Class (n= 29)
<i>Generosity</i>	56	66	12	31 *
Satisfaction in Creating Something new	63	72	24	38 *
<i>Sense of Humor</i>	56	45	37	14
<i>Idealism</i>	17	41 *	2	14 *
Ability to take the Initiative	95	97	73	72
COMPASSION	66	86 *	20	55 **
<i>Openness, Spontaneity</i>	56	69	32	34
Flexibility	93	86	59	62
Pleasure in Learning Something New	57	79	44	52
Coolness under Stress	73	72	22	45
Self-Confidence	98	97	61	93 *
Open-Mindedness	93	90	70	59
COURAGE - CRITICAL & QUESTIONING ATTITUDE TOWARD AUTHORITY	22	55**	24	62***
<i>Friendliness</i>	68	66	37	38
<i>Loyalty to Colleagues</i>	85	72	46	55
<i>Honesty</i>	98	97	73	76
<i>Independence</i>	61	59	39	52+
Cooperativeness	80	90*	63	72
Pride in Performance	83	69	41	66

Probable Statistics

* p<.05

** p<.01

*** p<.001

+ P<.10

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