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Countering Moral De-Education in Business

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Semester Paper

EDUC 7300—Foundations of Education

Fall 2000

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November 29, 2000

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This paper is written as a result of my work experience, principally in the world of business. Approximately 20 years ago, I entered the work force as a newly graduated MBA. Not wanting to want to work for a long-established firm, as is typically the case for individuals with such a background, I planned to establish a career in new business development. Hence—supported by a consulting project set up by a professor—I set out to establish a foothold in the “business-building” field of venture capital. For the subsequent five years I was involved as a founder and partner in a venture capital fund, working in conjunction with other individuals and organizations in that field, some of them quite prominent. Following that experience, I worked as manager of an international food products company of relatively good size, with about \$150 million in annual revenues. After earning a second masters degree in international relations and comparative public policy, I worked as consultant and manager of several companies. After that, I founded a software company that I have managed for about eight years.

Throughout this 20-year period, I witnessed a pattern of behavior among those with whom I worked—typically my superiors—that became increasingly disquieting. Interestingly, even though I worked in several different kinds of environments in separate industries, I noted striking similarities in the behavior of these individuals, in their attempts to persuade me to behave in specific ways that I construed as being either unethical, illegal, or both. I was taken aback by their requests, but even more disquieting was the nature of their enticements. They weren't simply trying to influence my behavior; they were clearly attempting to recruit me into a kind of fraternity—a cabal or faction in which such deeds were ostensibly to be counterbalanced by a variety of rewards. In some cases the rewards we described as being concrete and specific in nature. At times they were presented in vague terms.

The purpose of this report is to outline such commonalities and to consider their societal and educational implications. In this, I will include references in the literature to moral, ethical preparation of students, including religious and philosophical texts where they shed light on the phenomenon. In a sense this paper considers career preparation as a fundamental theme. The educational system's potential for moral development of students and betterment of society will also be considered, along with general benefits to educators and to the educational system from embracing understanding of the phenomenon and developing methods to counter its ill effects.

Implications of the Study

The purpose of the study is to lay the groundwork for a reality based educational experience—including experiences from my career, to be supplemented by activities from others' life experiences as text. My sense is that educators engage in a disservice to their students if, having the benefit of knowing about a generalized moral de-education phenomenon, they don't help students understand the way power functions within our social structures, corrupting people and process to some degree along the way. With anticipatory knowledge of the issue, with some practiced understanding of methods of dealing with enticements to 'join the dark side,' strong ethics within the business structures of a capitalistic society are more likely to be preserved. Otherwise, the success and moral strength of many new entrants into the world of business may continue to be jeopardized (Whitaker, 2000a).

Critical theorists would say that knowledge and power are closely related (Whitaker, 2000a). Greater understanding of the way cultures and power-building processes of commercial institutions and possibly other kinds of organizations function could result in students changing their career goals or could arm them with an ability to make more informed career choices.

Moral de-education as an ongoing business practice is a troubling ethical issue. This is a

significant problem if we educate children toward a future that conflicts with the values taught (even if implicitly) in school. Such are difficult issues that underscore what it means to prepare students for citizenship in a democratic, capitalist society. (Whitaker, 2000a) Given a concern about developing students' (and their own) capacity to act as social change agents, educators should address ethical concerns in school and encourage students to think seriously about our culture's weaknesses as well as its strengths. Surely teachers should prepare students to think critically about political and social issues (Rice, 1997). This being the case, and if the economic structures of society are riddled, if not consumed by, unethical practices that maintain the economic and political status quo, I suggest that teaching become a reform-oriented activity with the purpose of dismantling moral de-education efforts and introducing power structures that are more in line with ideas of equity, fairness, and right.

Review of Moral De-Education

Moral de-education, as I have termed the phenomenon, is an attempt on the part of individuals in positions of power to induce subordinates to engage in corrupt behavior as an entree into a pattern of ongoing, similar activity in a kind of partnership or companionship. I have observed that secrecy in such cases is treated as being of paramount importance. In these situations, I noted that the result of capitulation with suggested compromises would have been a significant disparity between public and private representations of the situation in question. In large part, the difference in effort between bringing about what was to be (the compromised outcome) and what could be (that which was desired and publicly presumed) was not great. Interestingly, in many cases, based on my judgment, the desired, publicly assumed condition could have been achieved more easily than the proposed outcome, with less effort than was achieved by the compromised methods.

After contemplating many such proposals, I came to the conclusion that it was the process, not the specific ethical issue, which was at issue. This was particularly evident in certain cases in which the proposed means of attaining desired objectives was stunningly crude and uninspired when compared with viable, legitimate alternatives. In order to provide some guidelines as to the nature of the problem, I include four examples that illustrate the phenomenon—not at all an exhaustive listing of my own experiences of this type. The behavior described in the examples could possibly be overlooked—or at least, understood—if it described actions of people struggling for an existence—a kind of “Les Miserable” defense (Hugo, 1996 version). In every case, however, the questionable behavior involved people who had graduated from prestigious universities, with graduate degrees and lucrative professional certifications, or with large sums of money in the bank. In terms of their business and professional credentials, they could be considered the cream of the crop. Money was surely an important motivator—but not so much, in my estimation, as power.

An ability to perpetrate a fictional private world while projecting a very different public image is irresistibly compelling to some. My observation is that certain individuals enjoy ‘life on the edge,’ constantly avoiding detection. From my understanding of criminal psychology and recidivist behavior, the thrill of avoiding exposure is often as powerful as hoped-for material rewards (Zuckerman, 2000). Not only is this study an attempt to deal with strategies and tactics for countering the moral de-education process, but to call attention to possible means of infusing students with a depth of character that would supplant or override associated enticements.

I address the issue of moral de-education based on my own observations, amplified by the literature on the subject. In this, I provide commentary on what I perceive the phenomenon’s implications to be and what might be feasible educational objectives and curricular programs to

deal with these issues. In this study, I assume a purposefully hopeful attitude toward dealing with the phenomenon as I describe it and provide suggestions on how the educational system can prepare current and future workers to anticipate its negative affects, to overcome its enticements, and to take steps to defeat it. In addition, I provide ideas on how educators themselves may benefit from an understanding of the moral de-education process and, through it, negotiation in the real world in general.

The Anti-Morality Cabal

Any means of correcting ethical problem sets that exist in business (and from my experience, in the law) and preparing students to deal with moral and ethical issues runs far deeper than can be accomplished through training in ethics and the importance of making good choices. Though these are important activities, there is an issue to be considered that is more relevant to the needs of new entrants into the decision-making ranks of business—and likely government and other environments. Such is an observed process that is deployed in order to morally de-educate and force young professionals to engage in behavior that is clearly against the interests of society, often against the interest of the organizations in questions, and clearly contrary to the moral, ethical, and legal principles on which our society functions. Similar to adolescent disclosures that ‘there is no Santa Claus’, these processes are designed to dissuade nascent decision-makers from believing that moral and ethical behavior is possible or even desired in the world of work. Such kinds of activities penetrate power structures of commerce, government, and other institutions of society and culture (Smith, 1988).

This paper’s purpose is not to make the case for morality generally, nor to argue against the point that governance and power structures must be corrupt—as is a pretext of the moral de-education cabal. The basic goodness—and potential for virtue in society, commerce,

government, and organizational institutions—is assumed. There are many evidences of goodness and virtue among leaders in the history of institutions in the West and in the East. The foundations of American government are established on such a precept—that there can be goodness among leaders, indeed that there must be virtue among the leaders of society. Though a basic tenet of those who promote lascivious behavior is that ‘everybody does it’ and that those who do not concede the point (and join the cabal) are naïve fools, their fundamental insistence on secrecy belies the point. This very secrecy makes the case for goodness. If self-serving, possibly illegal and unquestionably unethical behavior based on false information and false testimony is fully acceptable, the general standard of behavior, why not disclose all? Why not function, unethically, immorally, and illegally all in the open? Truly, secrecy is necessary because such behavior is not acceptable to general society. If such conduct were to be brought into the open, it would typically be held up to scorn, legal, and other remedies.

My objective is to come to a studied understanding of the moral de-education process and how it is applied to provide information that may help educators and other policy makers to begin to understand it and to eventually put policies and programs into place to counter its effects. This will be done by first describing the basic elements of the process—the four characteristics of the ploy. Following recitation of the basic moral de-education model, I will provide four personal examples, coupled with descriptions from the literature, religious, and classical texts.

The moral de-education model takes on the following characteristics.

1. A matter at hand involves large-scale actions or transactions involving several people. This may be a board of directors, a partnership, or a group of individuals with some kind of formal or informal affiliation. Most of the representatives of the group represent themselves as

having long-standing relationships, of having conducted business or otherwise acted in harmony for some period. They hold out membership in the group as being an important factor—in that financial reward, inclusion, and advancement are likely to result from active membership. Typically there are several senior, or long-term members of the group, but only one junior, young, or new member is normally involved in this process at one time.

2. In the course of business, action of a truly preposterous nature is brought forth for ratification or fulfillment. It is presented as *fait accompli*—an action that simply must be carried out—in spite of the fact that there are several alternatives, many of them better than the proposed activity. The senior members of the group represent themselves as being united in the cause—in that they have concluded that the proposed action is the only alternative and that it must be carried out in the manner they propose. Typically one or two of the others presents this news to the junior member of the organization in private. They insist on agreement to cooperate prior to participation in any subsequent meetings of the entire group. I have never seen such a proposal presented other than in private sessions in this manner. My perception is that this step is carried out so as to not face potential embarrassment from being challenged by the junior member, the initiate, in company of the others. Group sessions in such environments are managed with a high priority placed on decorum and order. Furthermore, though group sessions are often formal board meetings or other gatherings for which records are kept and voting records recorded, there are no records of the private meetings.

3. There is great pressure applied in these negotiations outside of the activities of the entire group. In these sessions, both enticements and threats are handed down. The main lure is continued membership in the group—with the implication that participation will result in greater power, privilege, and wealth. Often, there are manifestations of the capabilities of the group to

grant such privileges—such as meetings in exotic locations, making use of substantial expense accounts and special arrangements. In addition, specific enticements are often provided—advancement, certain rewards, possibly illegal or immoral gifts.

Such enticements are coupled with warnings. The main threat can be found through rejection of the person by the group overall. Though this is the ultimate punishment, it is by no means the most important factor. The main objective in this stage is to find some element of compromise in the behavior or background of the person in question. There must be found an ‘Achilles heel’ in that person’s history or character—something that can be held up as an ultimate threat to ensure that the person will not tell outsiders of the activities of the group. Examples of such means of ensuring the loyalty and silence include knowledge of immoral trysts—even better yet, an appetite for such—lust for power or money (or both), drug use, illegal activity of some kind, or some kind of secret that would upset the public or private lives of the people involved. My observation is that one purpose of bringing forth preposterous proposals is to build a record of compliance on the part of junior members in particular in the hope that they will become caught in a series of compromised decisions and actions that will serve to keep them from leaving the group, discontinuing support of its activities, and disclosing its secrets.

4. The reward for acceding to the will of the senior members of such groups is to become at one with them. The degree of power one then holds within that group relates to a balance of power based on relative fear. From the perspective of traditional organizations where advancement is based on talent, merit, and contribution to the general good—coupled with leadership and governance skills—the balance of power in such a cabal is perverse in nature. Members with knowledge of more heinous activity by others have an advantage, but it is not very strong, because they are all bound together by secrecy and by the potential for mutual threat

of blackmail and finger pointing. Fundamental leadership within such a group is based on an individual's ability to characterize—then to publicize, a false set of conditions that is plausible and justifiable to the outside world. The cabal exists, then, in the shadows, behinds its veil of secrecy between its public image and its private reality.

5. Moral de-education is a winner-take-all proposition. Members of such organizations, having troubled themselves to recruit new members, react most militantly and decisively when spurned by an initiate. Having allowed such an individual to peer into even a part of their inner workings, they typically commit to long-standing vendettas against the individuals in question to discredit them and to send emphatic messages to others whose loyalty they are pursuing. From the perspective of a business career, the steps taken to discredit such individuals are often draconian and excessive. The fundamental message is as thus: 'You will never work again in this town (or industry, etc.).'

I do not know if there is a distinction between a business-oriented moral de-education cabal as described and possibly similar processes within the power structures of large corporations, political parties, governments, and educational organizations. I have no direct knowledge of those other environments, only small business finance, small business, and mid-sized commercial organizations. My sense is that such activity is less likely to occur in educational organizations because of their emphasis on meritocracy and research into scientific and social truths. Controversy over social constructivism raises questions as to the integrity within the scientific research community (Phillips, 1997) that may take on characteristics similar to those described with respect to commercial enterprises. Though some of the religious texts that I have included make reference to venues outside of commerce, I do not imply that such patterns of behavior exist based on personal experience.

As to my experience, I cannot represent that such kinds of behaviors occur in all small business sectors, only that I have witnessed them in every environment in which I have been involved when acting as an insider where large amounts of money or power are held in the balance. In each case, in order to obscure the chasm between the public view of the situation and reality, secrecy was paramount. There is an important difference to note between the moral de-education process and activities and procedures of organized crime syndicates and other groups engaged principally in criminal behavior, though there may be some similarities. I am aware that many criminal groups engage in legitimate business activities for various reasons (Castells, 1998) but do not imply that there are direct connections between organized crime syndicates and the groups with which I interacted. My dealings were with formally organized, successful businesses, investment institutions, and law firms with no known connection to overt criminal behavior where trafficking in illegal substances, violent crime including murder, prostitution (well, maybe prostitution), smuggling (well maybe smuggling), or other so-called 'non-white collar' crimes.

Much of what I observed could surely be considered under the rubric of white-collar crime. In several cases, I observed unbalanced deals where the interests of one party were unnecessarily subverted, where illegal profits were gained in the absence audit trails, and where weak or targeted parties were inappropriately and unnecessarily stripped of their interests and rights. I observed no evidence of violence nor any threat to people's lives, nor to their physical well-being, nor to that of their families or loved ones. It could not really be said, though, that these cabals engaged in victimless crimes, though, because they often victimized individuals who were not in positions to protect themselves. Often the parent organization itself suffered, at other times legal or international regulations were compromised. One factor existed in each case,

however. The legal and ethical misdeeds were kept secret.

Following are four examples of the moral de-education phenomenon from my experience. Though they are not comprehensive in that they describe all elements of the moral de-education model described previously, they all occurred within that general framework.

(a) In a venture capital fund that I took a lead in organizing, one of my partners "misplaced" \$117,000 of money we had raised from investors. He said to the other two of us, "You knew I needed it, so you should have assumed that I took it." I thought that my other partner would severely castigate him, maybe even find a way to replace him. Since the non-offending partner was leaving on a trip, he asked me to call the other partner to justice, which I reluctantly did. From that time, their relationship became very strong. Given that he knew such a "secret," the partner not at fault could control the behavior of the other partner—a bizarre outcome in my mind at the time. Interestingly, given that the partner not at fault did not "blow the whistle" and take corrective action, he ratified the behavior of the other. Thus, they each had a secret that the other wouldn't want to have disclosed, since "everybody" had bought into the deal (except me). Of course, since I had been the messenger in calling the offending partner to order, he held animosity toward me, but not toward the other partner.

(b) As a software vendor several years ago (an event that had nothing to do with the venture fund group described above or possible patterns of ethical misconduct endemic to Southern California—this took place in Utah), my company had a client firm that made use of some of our products. We were attempting to get them to make more use of our technology. The owners of the company invited us to a dinner meeting where their leading outside salesmen were present in order to make a formal presentation to them of all of our products, explaining how the client company was going to benefit from using them (since they had strongly implied that they

wanted to do so). We went to the meeting, made the presentation, and their sales people demonstrated clear signs of excitement. The next morning, after the salespeople had returned home, the company owners called and told us that they had decided to discontinue our relationship—with no explanation. Over time, we learned that they had had no intention of using our services, but that the presentation provided the client company with an easy, inexpensive way to lead their salespeople on for the better part of the year, having us use our resources to describe benefits that would never be enjoyed. In the end, when nothing happened, the former client could easily attach blame to us.

(c) When working for the foreign-owned food products company, the potential for "big money" was constantly placed in front of me. Family members made it clear that I would be highly rewarded for loyal service—they were in the process of converting from driving Mercedes Benz automobiles to British Rolls Royce's, so there was plenty of roadworthy hardware available. I was presented with a succession of odd requests, though—quite strategically timed to coincide with favors that they voluntarily provided. On one occasion, I was told to convert "Made in Japan" tags on some products to "Made in the USA." They told me that the distinction was important to people in a certain market. I didn't comply—telling them that "they put people who do that kind of thing in places that I don't want to go," but soon found a group of workers in a corner of the plant making those very changes. Family members also asked me to misrepresent them to regulators on a regular basis. I found ways to "fudge" my way through conversations, telling the truth, but in a way that would not set off alarms. Fortunately, my contract there was for only one year.

(d) One of the companies in the venture fund described in (a) has become a fairly common name in its market. The founding family had been engaged in the oil jobber business

for several generations, providing them with the expertise and the relationships to successfully organize the company. The founders had developed a unique computer-based system for tracking gasoline expenses for trucking fleets. Although the company's business performance under management of the founders was reasonable, the company's revenues in a certain period hadn't increased as desired. As a result, company ended up with empty office space that was a too large and expensive for their needs. A partner in one of the investor companies, a famous financial service company, indicated that he liked the technology and wanted to take control of the company. There were several other large investment groups that would have easily supported company management—conceivably with some changes, but once the others understood that the one investor wanted to assume control of the company, they all stood aside while the founders were ejected and their ownership was diluted down to nothing. When I polled the principals of the various investment groups to argue the merits of retaining the founders, of which there were many, none wanted to even talk about it.

I don't think that any of the above actions can be justified based on even strict commercial terms. The kind of behavior described above is exemplary of norms that are contrary to how our capitalist system is supposed to work. From my own experience, I could outline many more examples of similar kinds of behavior. The point herein isn't that there are dishonest people; rather, that in every case, there was an enticement on the part of the actors to join in with a secret cabal, an association with others in which activity clearly of an ethical, moral, or illegal nature was to be authorized and carried out. In (a), the partnership, it was made clear to me that if I bought in, too, that I would be taken care of—maybe even forgiven for similar behavior if I could figure out a way to do such a thing. In (b), if I did what was asked of me (by falsifying labels and in other ways) I would be richly rewarded and be "part of the family." In (c), my

clients let me know that we sat back and rode out the storm, that we would eventually have more business with them. In (d), I was to turn the other way, and to avoid calling attention to the "feeding frenzy."

The point, though, is this: many of my associates gave in to situations like this. Finding out that relaxing their morals was profitable, they constructed ways of justifying that kind of behavior. To my knowledge, the actors in each case are uniformly prospering. My former partners, described in (a) and (d), who tried to get me to join them in their lies and back-dealing are now managing \$230 million in investment capital and are truly wealthy. The food products company enjoys about \$600 million in sales worldwide, a vast amount of money for one family to manage. The other client company has prospered on a similar scale since the incident in (b).

Based on the examples of these situations, it is not practical to develop educational programs focused on breaking such cycles down on a 'cheaters never prosper' theme. The fact is that many cheaters enjoy abundant rewards for their actions. This should not constitute a great shock to educators and others desirous to institute change for the good, but it points to a critical educational issue. One purpose of education is to introduce people to a wide array of benefits and enjoyments from life (Rice, 1997). Profit or income maximization at any cost clearly carries problems in tandem with its apparent rewards. Such challenges introduce many kinds of burdens and risks—psychological stress being high on the list. Given that individuals living dual lives persist in maintaining false images of their work styles and the byproducts of their professional efforts, they must live with the possibility that their perfidious behavior will be discovered—a considerable strain on both body and soul.

Furthermore, there are burdens brought on by unwarranted actions of two-faced decision-makers and executives due to the open nature of our society. Aggrieved parties may file lawsuits

or find other ways of attaining retribution. Family members and honored friends may be apprised of secret, unjustifiable behavior, with a corresponding loss of respect. Many families, associations, and friendships are broken up by such revelations. A significant penalty from joining an immoral cabal is that it is virtually impossible to quit that sphere without a painful, unprofitable, and undesirably revelatory falling out. Possibly the greatest penalty for being a liar in such circumstances is that one is doomed to an existence in a society in which leadership is derived from an ability to tell a better lie. Last, there is assuredly a loss of that peace of mind that comes from being an upright, contributing member of society that cannot be whitewashed with money, a sense of power, and other rewards brought on by group-centered, treacherous behavior.

In my case, when offers were made to me to join such a world, in every case, the prospect felt empty, shallow, and in no way inviting. I couldn't even conceive of purposefully engaging in such behavior, given the nature and environment in which I was reared. Many business associates during those times, however, offered their opinions that I was absolutely out of my mind to reject such overtures. My sense is that an important objective for the educational system would be to instill such reactions of repulsion and rejection on the part of its students. By the same token, that system would hopefully provide a better means recognizing and countering the phenomenon than I had at my disposal in the various occasions in which I have faced the problem.

Literature Review

I have described a moral de-education model based on five basic characteristics: (a) The combined actions of several people functioning as a group with certain power and resources, (b) the introduction of preposterous or wholly unwarranted proposed actions in the face of better alternatives as a part of an initiation process, (c) the use of group dynamics as the backdrop for

private negotiations over membership in the larger group, with attendant benefits, (d) membership as a reward with strings attached—in that members cannot quit the organization at will, and (e) punitive, even draconian punishment of those who decline or defect.

In understanding the implications of the model, we will consider each of these factors—viewing current literature, social, classical, and religious texts. In this, we will review descriptive text and consider suggestions for remediation. One of the reasons for extending this study to include material outside of the academic literature is that by its very nature, the phenomenon is steeped in secrecy. A participant in a cabal of this kind would hardly submit to an interview or publish descriptive information of the organization’s activities. When faced with a penetrating question with regard to a particular organization or action, participants would deny any wrongdoing and refer the questioner to public or official records, which would be appropriately ‘sanitized.’ This is not to say the phenomenon of ‘white collar crime’ has not been studied extensively, because there is a broad stable of work on that subject (Polk, 1999). This aspect of corporate perfidy, however, is not documented in a comprehensive way.

Secret nature of moral de-education groups. In the general discourse, the phrase ‘misery loves company’ comes to mind. Of course, many participants in anti-moral cabals don’t know that they are miserable. Playing a perverse game of one-upsmanship and organizational power, they enjoy more extensive rewards for their perfidy together than would be possible alone.

Most of the current literature on moral training focuses on choices of good vs. evil in an individual setting. McNamara (1999) provides a comprehensive view of methods of deriving ethical decisions, but without attention to such group dynamics—other than suggesting that organizations make use of suggestion boxes and ethics checklists to assure that legal, ethical, or moral issues are considered in making decisions. By the same token, McDonald (2000) and the

Josephson Institute (2000) document ethical and moral decision structures that do not include an organizational dynamic as described herein. McNamara, McDonald, and the Josephson Institute all provide supporting materials focused on individual decision-making processes without concern for a dynamic such as the moral de-education cabal, as is also lacking in the literature relating to white collar crime (Polk, 1999).

Castells (1998) makes reference to criminal “codes of honor, and their bonding mechanisms” along with the Sicilian Mafia’s historical success at “extend[ing] its presence to the entire country [of Italy], to link up with the banking system, and, through it, with the entire political and business elite of the country . . .” (Castells, p. 170.). This is a clear reference to group dynamics in illicit business activities, supplemented by other references to criminal/business connections throughout the world. Another reference to group dynamics in a management environment—government rather than business—was a recent study of a large government bankruptcy, which made reference to a “criminogenic environment” group dynamic that encouraged fraud and white collar crime in a Southern California investment scandal (Sutton, 1998).

There are specific references to nefarious group dynamics in the classical and religious traditions. The Bible (King James Version) makes several references to conspiracies that would be construed as being criminal in the case of Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37:18), political in the case of Saul’s charge of complicity on the part of his son, of David, and of others (1 Samuel 22:8), and religious/criminal in the case of 40 individuals who vowed to kill Paul or to starve themselves to death (Acts 23:13). Mormon (1830/1981) makes repeated mention of the act of banding together in secret organizations to get gain—and to engage in criminal, subversive behavior. He makes specific mention of “flattery” and efforts to place “those who belonged to

his band that they should be placed in power and authority among the people” with “the object of all those who belonged to his band to murder, and to rob, and to gain power (and this was their secret plan, and their combination)” (Mormon, pp. 371).

Mormon makes it clear that the purpose of this and other “secret combinations” was to place themselves in positions of power, to represent themselves as being righteous and good, while conforming in fact to norms of a secret underground cabal. While referring to the phenomenon as promoting elements of violence and political overthrow, commercial gain under a false cloak of goodness is consistently presented as a principal objective of such secret organizations. Furthermore, Mormon strongly implies that such organizations are heavily dependent on secrecy as on the point of discovery on one occasion they “took their flight out of the land, by a secret way . . . and thus when Helaman sent forth to take them they could nowhere be found” (Mormon, p. 372). Mormon makes other references to the desirability of bringing the activities of such secret groups to light as a means of reversing their negative effects on society and government.

Plato (1952 version) provides clear and unmistakable insight into the phenomenon, referring to the tactics of men who “though unjust . . . [would] acquire the reputation of justice . . . [so that] a heavenly life is promised.” Thus, the strategy is one of fundamental deceit, “I will describe around me a picture and shadow of virtue to be the vestibule and exterior of my house; behind I will trail the subtle and crafty fox.” Considering the difficulty of concealing deceit on one’s own, Plato describes the kind of secret, subversive phenomenon witnessed and described herein: “With a view to concealment we will establish secret brotherhoods and political clubs. And there are professors of rhetoric who teach the art of persuading courts and assemblies; and so, partly by persuasion and partly by force, I shall make unlawful gains and not be punished”

(Plato, p. 314).

Preposterous actions as a means test. Most of the work I have reviewed on ethics in the workplace focuses on discerning whether a particular act is ethical, moral, or legal (Henningsen, 2000; Kinsman, 2000; McCullough, 2000; McDonald, 2000; McNamara, 1999; Nucifora, 2000; Rice, 1997). Little or no advice or preparatory material is provided for guidance as to how to deal with coercive actions to engage in unquestionably inappropriate acts on the part of superiors. Hartnagel (1998) provides information on transitional challenges from school to work for young adults, but with respect to lower levels of education and market insertion than *represented in this paper. This is not to say that individuals on the lower end of the pay scale, engaged in more manually-oriented work than business decision making, do not face critical ethical challenges—possibly similar to those described above. This study is directed at the preparation of future business managers and executives.*

There are more complex, sophisticated approaches in the classic literature to the requirements of countering the wiles of conspiring individuals. Plato (1952 version) makes repeated reference a purposeful life of larceny and ill intent, along with arguments in favor of a life of purposeful injustices as a path to power.

If the poets speak truly, why then we had better be unjust, and offer of the fruits of injustice; for if we are just, although we may escape the vengeance of heaven, we shall lose the gains of injustice; but, if we are unjust, we shall keep the gains, and by our sinning and praying, and praying and sinning, the gods will be propitiated, and we shall not be punished (Plato, p. 314).

In this, then, there is no pretence. This is an established strategy—the choice to be pernicious and mean-spirited in order to get gain. Once such a commitment is made to a lack of pretense of goodness—the point becomes one of tactics. What kind of means should be employed to initiate prospective members into a perverse order? There are several tactical

approaches that could be taken. Simply because I observed that stunningly wrong-minded alternatives were placed in my way is no indication that wrong-headed alternatives cannot be introduced slowly into the process by cunning artificers. Similar to the apocryphal story about boiling a frog alive, yet unaware, by introducing it into progressively hotter water, initiates to secret, double-minded cabals may possibly also be seduced into the low morality of secret group through incremental, seemingly innocuous steps.

There is much to be gained, though, from the element of surprise. In the first recorded crime of the Bible, Cain's murder of Abel, was an act that itself was of an unprecedented nature. His prayer wasn't answered, *so he kills his brother?* The act was not only to avenge his embarrassment, but also to take his brother's property, saying "Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain." Later, after the crime had been committed, Cain said "I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands" (Smith, 1851/1979, p. 13). Indeed, after his act of homicide, his insidious response to a question as to the whereabouts of his brother is stunningly misleading: "I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" Machiavelli (1513/1952) describes a pattern of surprising actions in his praise for Spain's King Ferdinand, whose "designs have always been great, and have kept the minds of his people in suspense and admiration and occupied with the issue of them . . . And his actions have arisen in such a way . . . that men have never been given time to work steadily against him." (Machiavelli, p. 32). Hitler's rise to power was marked by a series of acts that were implausible and unexpected acts that left the rest of the world confused and unprepared—unwilling and unprepared to take them at face value (Lane, 2000; Shirer, 1960). Mormon describes the acts of one Amalikhiah, who gained great power and wealth using the same tactic—a rapid-fire series of tricks that were so unlikely and unimaginable that his victims failed to respond from incredulity.

The result was that “by his fraud, [he] gained the hearts of the people” along with great wealth and power (Mormon, 1830/1979, p. 327).

Even if not confronted with fully awful propositions from the outset, aspiring managers face a form of ethical whiplash when they find themselves in the unhappy consequence of dealing with people with pernicious private agendas who attempt to pull them into a public farce. Prepared to deal with decisions of what is right and what is wrong, they are brought front and center with obviously wrong-headed choices. The issue in this moral de-education process isn't the nature of such propositions; it is the structure of the negotiation.

This kind of problem represents an entirely different dimension than neophytes are typically prepared to handle. Should they just quit their jobs? Should they fight for what they would consider to be correct, appropriate alternatives? Should they attempt to appeal to higher authorities within the organization? Should they blow the whistle, informing outsiders of the situation?

All of these alternatives are problematic. Quitting a job—particularly a new job—is a difficult proposition, particularly if there are concurrent personal and financial commitments. Leaving a position one has held for a considerable period can be even more challenging. Truly, though, leaving is likely the best alternative in most cases if the level of proposed compromise is high. In such cases, leaving would likely solve the initiate's ethical and moral problem, and it may strike a blow for an improved society—as such underground organizations are highly dependent on recruitment (Mormon, 1835/1979). History and experience shows that faced with such hard choices, many succumb. This phenomenon is not lost on John, the last Biblical prophet,

Babylon the great is fallen . . . and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit . . . and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance

of her delicacies . . .

And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men (Revelation 18: 2-3, 13).

Of course, we would not want the souls, the ethical and moral compasses of our students and children, to be rightly classified with commercial commodities—available for sale or hire. Such is the challenge of dealing with not only moral choices, but in battles over a new worker's ethical foundation. Awareness of the characteristics of such pernicious negotiations would assist people placed in such compromising positions to know what could be done, including leaving the organization and environment in question. Alternatively, shedding light on the problem within the organization or electing to proclaim the problem to outsiders are possibilities that would best be weighed with some form of preparation. Regardless of the alternative eventually chosen, given the potentially aggressive nature of moral de-education cabals to quickly stack the deck in their favor, understanding of the organizational dynamic of the underlying negotiation is likely to be of more importance to a favorable outcome than an understanding of the nature of the proposed, unacceptable behavior—whether cunning and subtle or crass and obvious.

Private negotiations over group participation. By negotiating one-on-one over considerations that have implications with respect to group membership and participation, proponents of dual-purpose organizations with secret, insidious agendas assume an overwhelming position of power over younger, possibly eager initiates. By remove the opportunity to sell the merits of alternative solutions to other members of the group—while appealing to the power and available resources of the group overall—perpetrators of the moral de-education process leave their victims with few alternatives. Experienced negotiators thus stack the deck, maximizing the force of their advantage in experience and knowledge. As a

result, typical of negotiations of many kinds, “the party with higher power behaves exploitatively, while the less powerful party behaves submissively” (Rubin & Brown, 1975, p. 223), a predictable outcome when the fight is not fair. If the proponent of compromised group activity is also the younger manager’s boss or direct superior, the pressure to capitulate is intensified by a desire to please that person, to fit in, to be a team player, and otherwise to function in a productive, cooperative environment (Whitaker, 2000b). Provided with no access to the group’s decision structure to debate the merits of the proposal, they are left with no choice but to capitulate or to leave.

This tactic brings to bear many elements of the domination literature of Baldwin (1963/1998), Du Bois (1990/1998), Edelman (1974/1998), Freire (1964/1998) Freire and Macedo (1987/1998), Giroux (1988/1998), McLaren (1998), and Stanton (1898/1998). In the environments of concern to them, forms of discrimination are broad-based, often subtle, and based on some way on social class, race, gender, religion, or other kind of general ethnic or cultural differentiation. The motive for discrimination—and the tactics—are built around the fact of what a person is, not necessarily what that person does. Tactics for enforcing such discriminatory actions focus on characteristics and rights of the overall class, race, gender, or other category as a whole. Certainly, individuals within that target group can suffer great personal sorrow, lack of opportunity, and depredation, but the motive of the perpetrators is to do representative damage to the entire social or ethnic group in question. In the case of moral de-education, that which is at issue is behavioral. Domination is not based on the logic of exclusion per se; overwhelming negotiation power is applied in a private setting with the purpose of altering or forcing behavior. The point isn’t the target’s being, the focus is on his or her behavior. Such a form of domination is wholly personal and possibly more pernicious than the rest.

I have experienced moral de-education at the hands of both men and women. In institutional environments, men only were involved. Whenever the organization in question was family-held, both men and women participated in the de-education process. Interestingly, it may have been significant that women were absent in “traditional” business settings, but that they were very much involved—and very aggressive—in the family business settings. This may have something to do with perceptions of power and confidence. Limited though my experience has been, understanding of gender implications of the moral de-education process would be useful.

Of course, the action of forcing and enticing a junior associate in private to cooperate with unwarranted actions is not only coercive; it is a form of bribery. The persuader takes on the role of Mephistopheles or Mephisto, the tempter of Dr. Faust (Goethe, 1952 version). This is an act that brings on illegal ramifications even if the action itself was not illegal. Though the setting—privately inducing an individual to engage in bad conduct—may not be foreseen by the person being targeted for membership in a cabal, the phenomenon is all too common, as revealed by Goethe’s Faust to Mephistopheles, “Now I perceive your worthy occupation! You can’t achieve wholesale annihilation and now a retail business you’ve begun” (p. 33).

Mephistopheles. In this mood you can dare to go my ways.
 Commit yourself; you shall in these next days
 Behold my arts and with great pleasure too.
 What no man yet has seen, I’ll give to you.
 Faust. Poor devil! What have you to give?
 Was any human spirit, struggling to ascend,
 Such as your soft could ever comprehend?
 Still, have you food on which no man can live?
 Have you red gold that runs through, without rest,
 Quicksilver-like, the hand it’s in?
 A game at which men never win?
 A maiden who while on my breast
 Will with my neighbour ogle and conspire?
 The joys divine of honour, once possessed,
 Which vanish like a meteor’s fire?
 Show me the fruit which, ere it’s plucked, will rot,

And trees that every day grow green anew!
 Mephistopheles. Such a commission frights me not;
 Such treasures I can serve to you.
 But, my good friend, the time approaches when we could
 In peace and quiet feast on something good.
 Faust. If ever I lay me on a bed of sloth in peace,
 That instant let for me existence cease!
 If ever with lying flattery you can rule me
 So that contented with myself I stay,
 If with enjoyment you can fool me,
 Be that for me the final day!
 That bet I offer!
 Mephistopheles. Done!
 Faust. Another hand-clasp! There!
 If to the moment I shall ever say:
 "Ah, linger on, thou art so fair!"
 Then may you fetters on me lay,
 Then will I perish, then and there!
 Then may the death-bed too, recalling
 Then from your service you are free;
 The clock may stop, the pointer falling,
 And time itself be past for me!
 Mephistopheles. Consider well, we'll not forget it (Goethe,
 1952 version, pp. 40-41).

In this we can see the duplicity of the seducer, the greed and fascination with the impossible (laced with sarcasm) on the part of a targeted soul who succumbs to temptation. In order to counter the effects of the moral de-education process, educators need to understand this process such that they can prepare their students to avoid it. The tactics of the perpetrator are loathsome but patterned; the weakness of the victim is pitiable but not above diagnosis. Educators are well advised to understand this elemental struggle to prepare their students to recognize its characteristics and turn the tide on its perpetrators. Surely one of the basic objectives of education at all levels is to remove the effects of both desperation and avarice, both in evidence in *Dr. Faust's* fall.

Religious texts provide universal warnings against the idea that individuals can participate in such activities without being tainted. As to the recipient of an offer of bribery,

Moses recorded the following admonition: “Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous” (Exodus 23:7-8). David made reference to this condition, as well. “Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity” (Psalm 26: 9-11).

If the parent organization is large enough and the young manager has functional relationships elsewhere in that institution, there may be an opportunity for a lateral transfer—hopefully to a different department or division. Otherwise, there are few options—unless the *compromised individual feels that others higher in the organization are not involved in the perfidy*. This, however, is an almost certain recipe for disaster. The older, established leaders are sure to have either worked out a veil of secrecy or the superiors in question are likely to also be involved—something that would be impossible to know from the junior party’s perspective. Once the process degenerates to the level described, there is little chance that goodness will prevail.

The good news: you get to live with the liars—the bad news: you have to live with liars.

As insightful description of Hell was given by Smith as being peopled by “whosoever loves and makes a lie” (Smith, 1835/1979, p. 143). Individuals raised in homes, neighborhoods, schools, and communities where ethical, moral standards are the norm do not have groundings for understanding the phenomenon of the liar (Plato, 1952 version). Plato describes the wisdom those who have chosen a life of truth and justice, having suffered in later life from lascivious behavior of others.

But with the judge it is otherwise; since he governs mind by mind; he ought not therefore to have been trained among vicious minds, and to have associated with them from youth

upwards, and to have gone through the whole calendar of crime, only in order that he may quickly infer the crimes of others as he might their bodily diseases from his own self-consciousness; the honourable mind which is to form a healthy judgment should have had no experience or contamination of evil habits when young. And this is the reason why in youth good men often appear to be simple, and are easily practiced upon by the dishonest, because they have no examples of what evil is in their own souls.

. . . the judge should not be young; he should have learned to know evil, not from his own soul, but from late and long observation of the nature of evil in others; knowledge should be his guide, not personal experience.

When [the unjust man] gets into the company of men of virtue, who have the experience of age, he appears to be a fool . . . owing to his unseasonable suspicions; he cannot recognize an honest man, because he has no pattern of honesty in himself. . .

Then the good and wise judge whom we are seeking is not this man, but the other; for vice cannot know virtue too, but a virtuous nature, educated by time, will acquire a knowledge both of virtue and vice: the virtuous, and not the vicious man has wisdom . . . (Plato, 1952 version, p. 337).

This perspective provides important insight into the nature and requirements of integrity and the need to patiently work toward a life of fulfillment and wisdom. By the same token, it draws attention to a need to be constantly vigilant and supportive of youth and young adults as their character establishes its direction and grows in strength. What, then, of the inverse condition to that described—a honest young professionals, trained and prepared to engage in legitimate business interests, thrown into the company of devious mentors that would lead them away from integrity and virtue in their business dealings?

The decision for an individual with good intent to live among the bad—under the governance of a perverse society based on misrepresentations under a cloak of secrecy—is problematic at best. For one thing, unless they join in with the lying and the creative manipulation of lies dressed up as the truth, such advocates of honesty are at the mercy of the creative genius of the myth-makers, destined to be “honorable men . . . blinded by the craftiness of men” (Smith, 1851/1979). Under such a slippery foundation, they must continually fear for

how far their compatriots have fallen into greed and duplicity,

For we have already shown that the just are clearly wiser and better and abler than the unjust, and that the unjust are incapable of common action . . . for if they had been perfectly evil, they would have laid hands upon one another; but it is evident that there must have been some remnant of justice in them, which enabled them to combine; if there had not been they would have injured one another as well as their victims” (Plato, 1952 version, p. 309).

It may be difficult for a young man or woman to understand the damaging implications of coexisting with a corrupt group of individuals whose activities are clearly outside of the realm of justice and fair-play. This is not an issue related to competition and foreign policy, two environments in which secrecy exists for valid and necessary reasons. The better analogy is that of organized crime—which may be involved after all. Such is likely a factor in the activity of the secret cabal, which may have descended a considerable distance down the slippery slope of deceit. In the final analysis, what may have appeared to be preposterous and shocking demands from the outset may later seem tame and routine compared with what else is going on. One abiding justification for playing the role of Mephisto is that there is no afterlife—or, at least, the hope of none (T. O. Gephart, personal communication, 1984) in which justice will be served. For people raised to aspire for goodness and fairness, there is no need to wait for the afterlife to appreciate torment of the kind that can be meted out by sinners and liars if they are in charge.

This is a party you can't just quit. The first question with respect to moral de-education for an honest person is how to get out of the situation. The second is whether to disclose the activities of the group to the organization as a whole or to the public. The problem with simply leaving such a confederation of liars and cheaters without ‘blowing the whistle’ is that to the degree that the disaffected individual was shown to have affiliated with the others, that person, having left the cabal, is at risk of being held accountable for any and all actions of the group while they were affiliated—and possibly during other periods. The organization’s activities may

come to light for unrelated reasons—leaving remaining conspirators with opportunities to blame moral, ethical, or illegal activities on the person who left. As Faust was taunted by Mephistopheles,

And yet you work for us alone
 While you for dikes and pens are caring,
 Since now for Neptune you're preparing—
 That Devil of the Sea—a great repast.
 In every way you're lost and lorn;
 To aid us every element is sworn,
 And ruin is the end at last (Goethe, 1952 version, p 281).

In some industries, it may be very difficult to leave the group and establish new relationships. One problem is the nature of market and industry penetration enjoyed by the organization. The unwanted activity may extend to other organizations in that industry.

It is one thing to leave, another to leave the problem unresolved. Berenbiem (2000), Figg (2000), and Kamm (2000) provide advice as to whether any disclosure of the activity is warranted as part of the process of leaving the secret cabal and/or the company in which it is embedded. Berenbiem indicates that whistleblowing, reporting on corruption, is more likely to be looked on in a positive light in the U.S.A. than in other countries, particularly in Europe—but there is growing acceptance of this practice throughout the world. He indicates that corporations often have anti-corruption efforts that include anonymous telephone ‘hotlines’ for recording bribe attempts or other corrupt practices. He adds that there is often an “employee sense that complaints will be a good deal less effective than the reprisals that are likely to be directed against complainants” (Berenbiem, p. 3). Although Figg focuses on whistleblowing from the perspective of the organization, his observations are of significant interest to individuals faced with the decision of whether to take steps to inform others of what they perceive as being misdeeds. He calls attention to a study showing that over three-fourths of employee

whistleblowing cases “were found to be true” (Figg, p. 1) and another study indicating that about 60 percent of fraud cases are identified by internal whistleblowers. All things being equal, whistleblowing charges are not wholly unaccepted.

The real question, as outlined by Figg, is whether to take the complaint to parties outside of the organization. He points out that companies typically have reasons to want to handle cases of misconduct internally, before they become public in any way. He indicates that unless a “chief compliance officer” is appointed by the organizations, complaints should be directed at high levels, often the CEO or officials of the company’s audit committee (Figg, 2000, p. 2). In the case of commercial organizations that turn a blind eye to internal reports of wrongdoing for which public opinion is important, whistleblowing to outside parties can constitute a significant point of leverage for an aggrieved party or for an observer of significant wrongdoing. For that matter, concerns about reprisals on the part of current or former employers can be mitigated by fear that influential parties will discover the misconduct. If an employee elects to leave such a situation, disclosure of the problem to officials, the press, or other outside parties is a matter of concern for their parent organizations and to members of the cabal. Where fears of retribution exist, employees are wise to establish footholds elsewhere. Long-standing relationships with people and participation in groups outside of the organization in question can provide considerable leverage in this regard because credibility of the whistleblower can be enhanced through such affiliations, countervailing power and resource structures of other members can be brought into play, and additional opportunities for employment and support can result. Attempts to gain leverage through knowledge of problematic behavior in organizations into concessions from employers can be successful (Figg), but is a strategy rife with risk. Resulting settlement negotiations can convey ethical problems in their own right—particularly when lack of

disclosure is a condition of the offending party and the activities in question harm others. In such cases, disclosure may be necessary in lieu of a settlement that would make an aggrieved party whole in a financial sense while allowing the immoral or illegal cabal to continue. In the public sector, regulations dating to the Civil War provide public sector employees with 10 to 15 percent of the proceeds from recovery of ill-gotten gains through “qui tam” actions (Figg, p. 4).

According to Figg, employees should engage in considerable study to understand the reputation and the overall record of compliance of their employer organizations before determining whether they should blow the whistle on perceived misconduct.

Kamm (2000) offers some practical advice to would-be whistleblowers. He recommends the use of free-anonymous email accounts to send incriminating messages to CEOs, board members, deans, or other authorities. He also recommends that attention not be drawn toward individuals, but to groups: “If you defame an identifiable individual, and your identity is revealed, you can be sued, although proof is your defense. But if you defame a group, such as ‘the accounting department,’ it isn’t libel” (Kamm, p. 2).

Business India (“Whistle-blowing,” 2000) provides useful advice for senior managers concerned about countering the effects of possible fraud and moral de-education within their organizations. To encourage disclosure by honest employees, companies should (1) document that all complaints are investigated, (2) make sure that there is a clear means of reporting complaints to someone with “enormous credibility,” and (3) hire a “specialized consulting agency” to handle the reporting process if an internal reporting structure is not practical (“Whistle-blowing,” p. 2). Employees should be taught to look for such structures, but their existence shouldn’t be held as a definitive sign of concern for integrity of the organization—as it might be established by and for the ‘bad guys’ as a means of keeping reform at bay.

Educational Implications

The study has focused to this point on the moral de-education phenomenon and its characteristics. This subject has many implications with respect to education—including issues that relate education as liberation, education as preparation, education as moral development, education as socialization, and education as reform instrument. These broad connotations result from the pervasive nature of the problem. Arriving at a basic understanding the moral de-education process could assist educators to prepare their students for more productive, satisfying careers. In addition, understanding of the techniques and bargaining structures used by moral de-education cabals to unravel the effects of a good education will assist educators to understand how to negotiate more favorable positions within the ideological and political environments in which they operate.

Moral de-education emphasizes process over content. In fact, by using preposterous suggestions to disarm targeted neophytes, moral de-educators remove content itself—the larger part of what is taught in schools—from the proceedings and overwhelm their subjects with bargaining tactics for which they are seldom equipped. Preparing students in this way should not be thought replace, but to supplement traditional curricula in ethics and morality. Without education and training in the development of discernment and judgment, students wouldn't even be in position to understand what actions would be generally considered by moral, ethical, law-abiding people to be inappropriate—let alone preposterous. Students prepared to stave off the corrupting influence of the moral de-education process would be better prepared to develop meaningful, secure, and contributory careers regardless of their interests and their fields of endeavor. Such would be a liberating outcome—as it would reinforce their efforts to exercise moral behavior with confidence, while also acting in a reform capacity as appropriate.

Schooling in how to recognize and overcome the moral de-education process would also help students to be more effective negotiators in other situations. I am not aware of the degree to which negotiation is included in elementary or secondary curricula. Schultz (1998) makes no specific mention negotiation as a part of the general curriculum. Dewey, as reported by McCarthy (1999), was concerned about the means by which morality and ethics be taught in the schools—proposing a methodology or a science, “a process of evaluating values,” (McCarthy, p. 356). Dewey, as described by McCarthy, makes no mention of a need to understand the dynamics of how unwholesome propositions are presented to neophytes by secret cabals or in any other way.

In the Post-Cold War Era, there is no more relevant curriculum issue than an explicit understanding of negotiation. At the macro level, negotiation over rights, responsibilities, and economic issues is the only relevant means of maintaining the peace. Negotiation is indeed the prime doctrine of the post-Cold War era (Ruggie, 1998, 1994). Indeed, the “Educational Triangle”, with the sides representing the schools, ideology, and the political economy (M. Whitaker, personal communication, 2000, August 30) provides a graphic illustration of the importance of skill in negotiating for educators—as such is implied due to the nature of the triangle. If there can be said to be any elixir to the problems of educational administration and direction—as competition is widely accepted as the *sine qua non* in commerce—it is effective negotiation. What is the solution to funding inequities? Negotiation. . . . the only effective means of attaining equity in gender relations? Negotiation. Disability issues, multicultural reform, economic rewards, racial equality, and virtually every vexing educational issue in our era could be materially improved through more effective use of negotiating skill. In this, the tactics of moral de-educationalists should be of great interest to educators—possibly a window into the

workings of the political economy in general.

Critical theorists indicate that knowledge connotes forms of power, but such knowledge cannot be declared if there is a lack of understanding of how conditions might be translated into gains in economic, social, or political arenas (Wax, 1995). Bless their hearts, educators stand to be reprimanded in this area. They are not effective negotiators. When educators traditionally have attempted to apply bargaining pressure, it is my observation that it has been conducted in the most crude and ineffective manner—through strikes and other unimaginative vehicles that have not framed their issues in ways that would inure to their benefit within the framework of the political economy.

Thus, there is a dual level of failure on the part of educators—that of a lack of appropriate focus to prepare students to stand up for the values and norms of ethical behavior that they were taught and that they had at one time accepted coupled with a failure to understand negotiating issues such that educators themselves can frame favorable bargaining structures to get what they want. If moral de-education is a common phenomenon—as I suppose, but cannot say that I know—many decision makers within the structure of the political economy are friends and associates in the cult of Mephistopheles. This being the case, they cannot have very high regard for much of what the educational system represents—if students can be easily diverted from the path that educators thought they had laid out. In this, it can be said that educators have a direct vested interest in turning the tide on the moral de-education process. In the parlance of trade, the quality of their product is not very high if the moral paths of their students can be overturned ‘in an afternoon.’

A increased emphasis on negotiating may be a difficult stance for educators, who have established a high ethical standard in part attached to a pragmatic attitude in favor of ‘making do’

with limited resources and not holding out for higher budgets, increased salaries, etc., for the common good. I hold out the possibility that—while useful and beneficial elements of an educational paradigm during periods of need and as part of developmental economies—such norms of practice may in fact be counter-productive in an advanced industrial society. Truly, understanding of bargaining structures and negotiating tactics are central elements of multi-dimensional societies and cultures (Ruben & Brown, 1975; Ruggie, 1998). Skilled negotiators in large part are successful due to a higher level of understanding generally—understanding more possible options in a situation. Skilled negotiators are much more adept at recognizing possibilities for common ground between parties as less-skilled bargainers, and skilled negotiators are considerably more aware of long-term implications of various alternative outcomes. (J. C. Scott, personal communication, November 1, 2000). There is surely nothing to be ashamed about in developing such skills on the part of educators. Following advice of Smith to “be . . . as wise as serpents and yet without sin” (Smith, 1835/1979, p. 230) educators could achieve both curricular and administrative goals by becoming more effective negotiators and students of bargaining issues and structures.

As indicated by Plato (1952 version), there is a constant struggle between the proponents of fairness and ethics and individuals that have made purposeful decisions to eschew morality and goodness for power and gain. In fact, this is a form of negotiation—as outlined by John earlier—over the “souls of men” (Revelation 18: 13), their ethical, moral, and legal selves. Preparation in this sense by educators—introducing the moral de-education paradigm in the context of a broader understanding of power and negotiation—would help in meeting more diverse educational objectives. For example, understanding of characteristics of the moral de-education process—conceivably enlivened with role-plays and artistic and literary renditions—

would assist students to recognize power-altering and other fundamental negotiation environments that would better prepare them to know how to bargain their way through other discriminatory and de-equalizing situations—gender, race, disability, and class. Preparation in negotiation techniques and strategies would allow educators and their students to recognize bargaining opportunities—including means of enlarging the bargaining arena to include third parties, changing venue and physical arrangements, understanding means of recognizing and utilizing intangibles, and decomposing elements of the bargaining structure for analysis and revision (Rubin & Brown, 1975).

In preparing students to recognize when moral de-education is practiced on them, while arming them with techniques and perspectives to counter the process, educators are adopting an activist agenda, but one that has a specious collection of opponents. Surely this is an area in which educators of sometimes opposing camps can agree—at least in principle. There would be sparse public support at least for the idea of cowing to the moral de-education process—ignoring the issue and coaching students to give in to the inevitable when they are confronted with the situation in reality.

Thus, consideration of issues relating to moral de-education should be of great interest to educators. There is a decided focus in the literature on beneficial means of supporting moral and ethical decision-making in the workplace—assuring that such decisions result in moral, ethical, and legal outcomes. The strategy and structure of moral de-education programs as disclosed herein flies in the face of such logic—forcing decidedly unethical, immoral, and possibly illegal outcomes. By establishing a setting of grossly imbalanced power and presenting underhanded ultimatums to younger, less established individuals, proponents of corruption fight in an entirely different dimension than is covered in traditional education programs—even curricula that are

intended to prepare students to function as ethical, moral, right-minded managers and executives.

Preparing students to deal with the tactics of anti-moralists is a critical factor in allowing them to be a force for good and not be forced—or tricked into supporting or participating in activities that are compromised in legal, ethical, and moral ways. Such measures would help to prepare students for citizenship in a modern, capitalist society—surely an important objective for educators. Also important is success educating students to understand and agree that joining secret perpetrators in wrong-headed activities is not in their own interests nor to the benefit of their loved ones, their communities, and society overall. Lochrie (1998) provides insight into an additional dimension of the issue, concentrating on the background and characteristics of teachers themselves, particularly business educators. There are also educational implications with respect to current managers and executives that find themselves embroiled in such a process—or in fact even playing the role of Mephisto. Confronting damage that may have occurred—facing implications and risks of the ongoing activity, individuals ensnared in such compromised leadership patterns may be able to identify the phenomenon themselves and mend their ways with appropriate assistance. If educators in continuing education programs, educators in general, and business and government leaders understand and are prepared to counter the moral de-education phenomenon, there are many benefits to be enjoyed by individuals, organizations, and society. To assist, protagonists of fairness and openness need to be aware of the moral de-education phenomenon, they must understand the many issues related to recruitment of new members into these cabals, and they must be knowledgeable about how to counter the process with countering strategies and negotiation.

In my opinion, providing students with a mature understanding of negotiation and an array of behavioral tools that will allow them to counter the moral de-education process and

other pertinent issues with respect to rights and opportunities would be a better use of time than shadow boxing against the idea of capitalism and markets as insisted upon by McLaren (1998), Freire (1964/1998), and Macedo (Freire & Macedo, 1987/1998). Such skills would allow students to function effectively in the work force in spite of bad will on the part of potential oppressors, but with an ability to recognize and create negotiating opportunities, rather than becoming dysfunctionally cynical—a likely result of operating without understanding of possible bargaining and experience in negotiation.

There are particular challenges to be met with respect to moral de-education and minorities. In a way, they might be at increased risk of being placed in compromised situations due to perceptions on the part of ill-meaning associates and superiors of their desire to progress. The easy thing for educator/adherents of the concepts of Baldwin (1963/1998), Freire (1964/1998), and McLaren (1998) to do might be to interpret the moral de-education phenomenon as simply additional evidence capitalism is corrupt, etc. Such an attitude is not likely to be beneficial to students, prospective and current managers, and executives. The point isn't to be jaded, but to be informed and aware of moral de-education issues as part of an overall philosophy of management and work.

There are several suggestions for how these objectives may be achieved that I include from the literature and from my experience.

1. Educators would be well served to expose their students to a wide range of behavioral examples and their consequences—good and bad—from literature, entertainment, history, and other study. As cautioned by Plato, however, direct knowledge of and participation in questionable activity from a moral, ethical, or legal standpoint is likely to be counter-productive. According to Plato, knowledge of good vs. evil is beneficial; knowledge of good and evil in early

years is not (Plato, 1952 version). Such elements are not out of harmony with underlying concepts brought on by Hirsch (1987/1998), Adler (1982/1998), Dewey (1916/1998), Kilpatrick (1918/1998), progressive educators in general, those in favor of contextualized experience (Dick, 1995), and proponents of “new school” philosophies (Rugg & Shumaker, 1928/1998). There are precedents for this kind of pedagogical strategy (Clayton, 1998).

2. Understanding of the structures, tactics, and characteristics of moral de-education cabals is likely to be of great benefit to youth and young adults in their last years of preparation. Such education should likely be presented in conjunction with and in a manner that will supplement traditional moral and ethical decision models. These kinds of activities would be in line in my view with the highly engaged approaches to education by Montessori (1912/1998) and Hooks (1994/1998). In my view, role-playing and readers theater presentations of the issues and situations would be particularly effective.

3. The most basic objective of the unbalanced negotiation that underscores the moral de-education process is to put initiates off-guard, leaving them to feel alone, disoriented, and insecure. Students should be encouraged to maintain active relationships outside of their organizations through memberships in professional, community, religious, and social organizations. Ongoing contact with mentors and others outside of the organization should also be maintained. Such relationships provide important opportunities—particularly for new, young professionals—for moral and emotional support, for wide-ranging relationships with individuals that might provide advice and assistance, and for possibilities that unforeseen options and alternatives may present themselves if transfer to another employer is considered to be the best course of action. Educators could assist students to build their careers around participation in professional and community organizations and by helping them to join such associations while

they are students when possible.

4. Educators should assist students to formulate reasonable perspectives and philosophies about integrity, morality, and ethics—specifically with respect to the activity of moral de-education groups. Upon discovering the pernicious nature of such a cabal, the best thing that an individual might do for himself/herself, the community, and society is simply to leave. Because of natural feelings of having been cheated, abandoned, and betrayed—and from a desire to look out for the best interests of their employer organizations, other colleagues, customers, the public and even the perpetrators—individuals may want to take steps to stop the bad behavior, to bring the perpetrators to justice, or to otherwise ‘get even.’ In reality, the scope and power of the group in question may make such moves extremely risky—even impossible, given the youth and limited capabilities of the intended recruit. Students need to be prepared to deal with psychological, emotional, financial, and social fallout from leaving the group—even if no disclosure or retribution is attempted.

5. Students should learn about the full range of resources and available options as they take steps to leave or attempt to reform an environment in which moral de-education is taking place. They need to have a moral and ethical compass to understand differences between bad and good behavior. They need to be able to discern when they have been placed in compromised positions—along with an ability to evaluate their options for extracting themselves and reversing the thrust of the resulting negotiations in a positive direction. Specifically, they need to know how to extract themselves from a bad environment when no viable remedial options are available. In so doing, they need to understand how to protect themselves from retribution from others in the group and how to evaluate the scope of their potential outreach. Furthermore, if there are activities that they judge to be of an illegal, criminal, or perniciously immoral character,

they need to know of the kinds of remedies that might be called upon to help to correct the situation while protecting themselves.

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