

The Good Project

Newsletter: March 2014

Dear Friend of The Good Project,

We hope that this newsletter finds you well! In this issue, we look at research and teaching related to Good Work. In a story on Howard Gardner's course at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, "GoodWork in Education: When Excellence, Ethics, and Engagement Meet", we highlight student perspectives on what the course meant to them. For our "Good Idea of the Month", we look at Neighborly Morality vs. Ethics of Role. Additionally, we showcase the recent poster presentations on Good Work made by Bloomsburg University at the Eastern Psychological Association conference in Boston. We have also included recent blogs from the Good Project's website. If you have ideas for future newsletters or would like your work to be highlighted, please email Paromita De at paromita_de@harvard.edu. Thank you and we hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter!

Sincerely,
The Good Team

Student Perspectives on Howard Gardner's Good Work course



At the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), Howard Gardner has been teaching a course titled "GoodWork in Education: When Excellence, Ethics, and Engagement Meet" for over a decade. We asked some of the graduate students who are currently taking the course to share their thoughts with us.

"The main purpose of the GoodWork course is to look at what it means to do good work in the professions – how it can be achieved, and how it can be compromised. The course provides a roadmap to evaluate good work supported by frameworks and key concepts," said Marina Chan. "....This includes discussions on ethics and morality, professionalization, responsibility at work, and disinterestedness. Much of the dialogue draws upon the rich diversity of workplace experiences among the cohort, so it has been interesting to learn and be challenged by the array of perspectives on Good Work." When students are in class, they find the opportunity to delve in discussions on what work means to them:

"We made comparisons between vocations, determining whether they could be considered true professions, and discussed the factors that indicate a true profession," said Liz Drury. "My experience of being in class has been one of deepening understandings about the topics we discuss, but there is a hidden dimension of development that I have also really enjoyed. Through our work together we have become a little community where we ask one another thoughtful questions and work with those questions throughout our week. The weekly response to reading with Howard was a highlight of my week. It felt like a time where I could quietly explore my own personal thinking while exploring new thinking through my correspondence with the professor." The structure of the course provided

students with meaningful and challenging exercises that not only exposed them to the different aspects of Good Work but also allowed them to hone important skills:

“Coursework includes weekly memos which are very helpful, individualized, written dialogue with Howard,” said Paul Yoo. “The ‘center piece’ of the class is the empirical research where students can apply the GoodWork framework to a problem of their interest. My experience has been a continuing undulation of intensity and calm, but it has been a linear rise in relief and gratitude for being a part of the course. I started with a painful deliberation of staying with the course because at what was once and remains to be a daunting workload, but now, I can say that I have a joyful conviction to understanding my research better and to join to ranks of ‘survivors’ of the course.” Students found that Professor Gardner and the Teaching Fellows, Alexis Brooke Redding, James Noonan, and Barbara Hou, to be excellent resources on their exploration of Good Work:

“Professor Howard Gardner and the Teaching Fellows provide guidance to scaffold the process into manageable tasks throughout the term,” said Marina Chan. “To help students better access the GoodWork literature, the teaching team facilitates interactive dialogues and group activities in class that explore the Good Work framework and concepts introduced. A highlight of this course is the student memo to Professor Gardner representing our reflection of the readings. The opportunity to engage in a weekly dialogue with him has been an invaluable experience that, in essence, has helped me rethink the way I think.” Overall the students derived great benefits from their experience in the course:

“Beyond content learning on Good Work, what I value most are the meta-cognitive skills weaved into this course,” said Marina Chan. Perspective taking is brought to the surface. From looking at an issue in both emic and etic perspectives, to wearing different “hats”, Professor Gardner helps us develop the awareness and the ability to address issues from different lenses. He also emphasizes the importance of asking good questions to develop critical thinking and in making more effective decisions. These are crucial skills to takeaway that will influence my future work in whatever capacity.” Further, the course leaves a lasting impression on the students:

“I very much enjoy working on my project for this course. It is illuminating to really see the problem space through the good work lens,” said Paul Yoo. “What I appreciate most is the support I received from Howard and James, my TF, to carry the project forward to places that I couldn’t have on my own. I was met with genuine interest, genuine support, and genuine good. The simple answer to the last question is the following: do “good work.” If things are misaligned, take steps to correct it. If nothing changes ever even after I speak up and act, then leave. There’s always a choice.”

Good Idea of the Month: Neighborly Morality vs. Ethics of Role

After Miami Herald photojournalist Al Diaz stopped on the highway to help a mother whose infant was not breathing, he faced an ethical dilemma. When the infant's aunt administered CPR, Diaz needed to make a choice: whether or not to take a picture of the crisis scene. As Diaz recounts in an [ethics piece](#) for the Miami Herald, "My heart did not want to inflict more stress on this traumatized woman. I did not want her seeing me taking pictures, but I know that history demonstrates that compelling images can produce unforeseen and often beneficial



results." Diaz took the picture, leading to what Diaz noted as increased awareness in the media and beyond of the importance of CPR. Diaz's decision wavered between his desire to be considerate of this family's privacy as a "neighbor" and his sense of duty to inform the public as a journalism professional. One may argue that, in fulfilling his responsibility by taking a picture of the scene and sharing it with the world, Diaz has helped many individuals who could be in such a crisis in the future. However, it is worth noting that before taking out his camera, Diaz made sure to help the mother first in any way he could, such as attracting the attention of emergency vehicles. In situation where we are faced with such an ethical dilemma, how do we decide where are the boundaries for us to act – either for people who we know on a personal level, or for people who are part of the greater public?

This story illustrates a conflict of Neighborly Morality vs. Ethics of Role. In *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness*, Howard Gardner describes Neighborly Morality vs. Ethics of Role in the following way:

"When in the sphere of neighborly morality, one thinks of oneself as simply an individual ...and one thinks of others by name...In the sphere of ethics, by contrast, one thinks of oneself in terms of roles. Thinking of oneself as the occupant of a role requires the capacity to step outside of one's skin and one's quotidian interactions, so to speak, and instead to conceptualize oneself as a Worker and as a Citizen" (p.83-84).

One can not say that following one's Neighborly Morality over one's Ethics of Role, or vice versa, is always favorable. Just as each ethical dilemma is unique, the circumstances in which one may side more with either Neighborly Morality or Ethics of Role is unique as well. One needs to take into account many factors - such as who is involved, what impact a situation has on those individuals, etc. For instance, a lawyer whose friend is acquainted with someone they once prosecuted for criminal charges may have different personal and professional responsibilities to consider than a parent who is asked by a doctor to approve of medical treatments for their child that goes against his own religious beliefs. Regardless of how we make decisions, when we are able to see how our ethical decisions impact both our personal and professional lives, we are giving ourselves pertinent perspectives to consider when making those decisions.

Bloomsburg University Faculty and Students Present on Student Values and Perceptions on Good Work at 2014 Eastern Psychological Association Conference

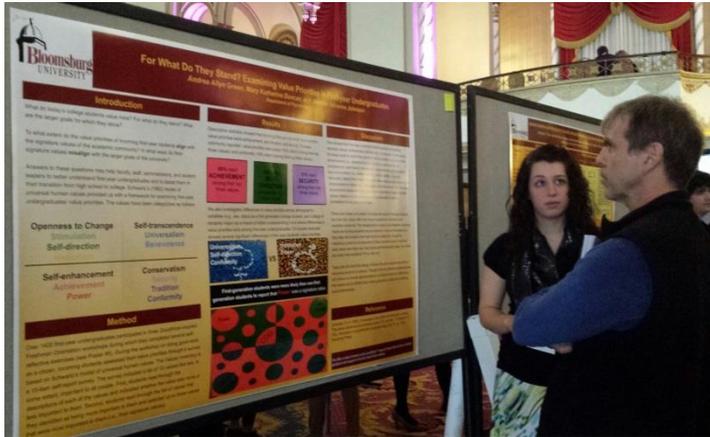


Figure 1: Bloomsburg Undergraduate Andrea Green shares her findings on incoming students' values with an attendee of the Eastern Psychological Association Conference

On March 14, 2014, a group of faculty members and students from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania presented four posters at the Eastern Psychological Association Conference in Boston, MA. The four posters captured a wide range of findings on college student's thinking on good work. For the poster "GoodWork: Marking Undergraduates' Path to Success as Students, Persons, and Citizens", the team presented on the Good Work workshops that were conducted for incoming freshmen. The poster "What Would You Do? An Analysis of Situational Ethics in First Year Students" showcased the teams analysis of students' responses to a situation involving cheating on an exam; they found that students stated that

they were "more likely to cheat in the high school scenario versus college" and that "they were more likely to share information with a friend and when a teacher did not care or was unfair" (Rompilla et al., 2014). In the poster "For What Do They Stand? Examining Value Priorities in First Year Undergraduates", the team reported on findings from a values inventory given to over 1400 incoming students - including "valuing self-enhancement and conservatism whereas the University's stated values favor self-transcendence and openness to change" (Green et al., 2014). Using Schwartz's Model of Universal Values and Color Theory, one member of the team made a visual representation (with different values being assigned color codes) of the findings to show how values aligned or misaligned across various demographics. Finally, in a poster titled "Understanding Undergraduate Students' Pre-Existing Views of GoodWork Across Two Campuses", the Bloomsburg group discussed their cross-campus analysis of students' perceptions of Good Work and excellence, ethics, and engagement at both Canisius College and Bloomsburg University. Of the opportunity to do research on Good Work and present at a conference, Bloomsburg undergraduate Andrea Green said "Specifically with the Good Work data I was really working with the ethical decisions as citizens and students, and what sorts of values they prioritized.... I think it's really important, the work that the Good Work Project is doing, in asking questions that really inspire the minds of young adults."

Recent Blogs

[Indian Values in an Era of Change: Can The Good Project Have an Influence?](#) (February 21, 2014)
Paromita De discusses diverse approaches to embracing Good Work employed by tGELF schools in greater Delhi.

[The Fourth Grade Project](#) (March 10, 2014)

Judy Gelles, photographer and activist, describes her pursuit to spread social awareness through the portraits and stories of fourth graders.

