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ABSTRACT

We explore the enriching of empathy development conducted through literary fiction within MBA ethics courses, as there is an increasing professional need for soft skills to parallel analytical rigor in managerial education. The addition of literary fiction to MBA ethics education constitutes a novel pedagogical approach to develop the sense of empathy in future business people, which is one of the most crucial features for ethical decision making and responsible management. In an empirical study, hybrid content analysis of student reflections is combined with quantitative pre- and post-course empathy measures from MBA cohorts to which they were assigned fiction-based modules. The results suggest that reading literary fiction has primary benefits on students' cognitive and affective empathic engagement, narratively situating them in complex ethical challenges and alternative mindsets. These findings indicate that literary fiction offers a way of straddling the theory-practice divide between ethics in theory and ethics on-the-ground by cultivating empathic and morally intelligent managers for the modern era. The implications for curriculum development are also explored, being such that the humanities can be more integratively engaged to cultivate ethically-savvy and empathetic leaders in the 21st century. The paper concludes with suggestions regarding future investigations of scalable models and cross-discipline applications.

Keywords: literary fiction, empathy development, management pedagogy, MBA ethics education, moral reasoning, emotional intelligence, business ethics

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, management education has increasingly paid attention to the development of emotional intelligence and ethical awareness in addition to traditional analytical and strategic skills. Thus, with leadership effectiveness being contingent on the relational and moral components as much as the technical competence, managers are required to master the ability to be responsible and compassionate businesspeople. Among various emotional skills, empathy, which is defined as the ability to recognize and experience the feelings of others, has gained

special significance in light of the current ethical and social complexities of organizational life. It allows managers to take different perspectives, predict the needs of their stakeholders, and include the human aspect in ethical decisions. Despite the widespread acceptance of the importance of empathy, its development has not found its way into the heart of management curriculums, especially MBA ethics courses. Traditionally, ethics training for MBA students has relied on case studies, disciplinary theories, and normative arguments. This approach is transformative in developing an intellectual understanding of the underpinning philosophy from a business decision-making standpoint. Case studies can be particularly inspiring, but the detachment that is required to take a helicopter view in the classroom can push students toward an analytical perspective and away from the empathetic concern. As a result, in contrast to the previous eras, most MBA students graduate with awareness of ethical principles but lack the heart to integrate the aforementioned intellectual frameworks in their professional lives.

In this pedagogical conundrum, however, there is an opportunity: to incorporate literary fiction as a supplemental educational intervention in ethics education of MBAs. Literary fiction provides ‘deep, textured stories...with few clear answers’ that allow readers to experience alternative emotion states and moral dilemmas, become aware of the interior perspective of themselves and others through its characters (Mar et al., 2009). Different from the more expository genres of prose, which cover literature at large and tend to focus on abstracted or chronological description and summarizing, literary fiction throws attention to character, internal struggle, fine-grained extrinsic texture - processes that make readers work cognitively and affectively inside a text in order to surprise itself (Greaney 2004) into stances demanded by empathy development. This narrative involvement in turn serves as a connective tissue between ethically abstract concepts and how moral dilemmas are experienced, brought to life, within the ‘resistance’ of organizational practises.

The empirical evidence from psychology and education is strong; literary fiction works to improve capacities for empathy and theory of mind—the ability to infer and understand another person’s mental and emotional states (Kidd & Castano, 2013). Experimental work indicates that individuals exposed to literary fiction perform better on measures of social cognition and empathetic accuracy relative to those who read nonfiction or popular fiction (Mar & Oatley, 2018). The results indicate that the cognitive and emotional demands of literary fiction enhance aspects of theory of mind as measured by perspective-taking. In other educational areas, such as nursing, literature has been used to promote ethical reflection and cultural consciousness and

sensitivity with an emphasis on reflective encouragement (Nussbaum, 1997). But the use of literary fiction in business education, especially in ethics pedagogy, remains largely uninvestigated and an important research void.

The significance of this lack is starkly apparent in the ongoing ethical scandals pervading industry, much of which is a consequence of leadership without empathy and insufficient moral imagination (Haidt, 2012). Well-publicized scandals and crises offer evidence of how a failure to appreciate the human consequences of business decisions can result in potentially damaging harm to employees, customers and communities (Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008). This problem can best be addressed by a renewal in management education which pursues creative forms of teaching where the experiential and affective dimensions of learning are more adequately integrated, thus becoming also channels for developing ethical sensitivity and empathic openness.

The use of novels within MBA ethics courses is an approach that shows some promise in this regard, allowing students the opportunity to reflect on ethical issues from the perspective of various characters and roles. This approach is consistent with the appeal of management education to be more interdisciplinary and humanistic by tapping into psychology, literature and philosophy for leadership development (Bridges & Smith, 2020). In addition, the emotional and moral substrate of literary fiction reflects a contemporary tendency that highlights emotions and social responsibility as critical competencies in leaders (Boyatzis, 2018; Goleman, 2017).

This article aims to examine the effectiveness of literary fiction in developing empathy in MBA ethics education. More precisely, the study addresses three primary tasks: First, we test the effect of literary fiction added to ethics curricula on any increase in students' cognitive and affective empathy. The quantifiable nature of these changes can offer empirical evidence for the pedagogical impact of storytelling involvement. Second, the project examines students' reflective reactions to narrative-based ethical dilemmas in order to consider the implications of literary fiction for their moral thought and affective reflection. Last, the paper evaluates benefits and pitfalls as well as provides practical advice on using literary fiction (both with and without discussing business cases) in management education.

It advances the emerging dialogue on utilizing an interdisciplinary approach (IDA) in management education, as well as developing leaders who lead with empathy. It answers a call to action from educationists, and industry professionals, who are tired of preparing MBA graduates to simply analyze and fix business problems, but now do so with a level of moral consciousness

and human inert: see (Mintz, 2004; Bridges & Smith, 2020). In the unfolding era of tremendous changes in business, with its ethical complexities and demands for social responsibility, reading literary fiction can be an exciting and innovative route to promoting empathy among the next generation of leaders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today's leadership models stress that empathy is not a "nice-to-have" or "soft-skill"; it is more an essential competence to underpin ethical decision-making, conflict management and the strengthening of inclusive cultures in organizations (Boyatzis, 2018). Empathy has been separated into two related, but distinct components: cognitive empathy (the ability to take the perspective of another person or understand their point of view; affective empathy (the emotional reactions we have in response to the emotions of others) (Davis, 1983). Both dimensions are important in leadership as cognitive empathy enables recognition of diversity stakeholders' needs, while affective empathy fosters compassionate responses and sensitivity to ethical consideration. Empathy "levels" empirically predict managers' interpersonal skills as well as ethical reasoning, suggesting that empathy is a core characteristic of responsible leadership (Kellett et al., 2021). "yet has little role established in today's healthcare management education [and] although aged and acknowledged as very powerful, empathy is a difficult skill to instill within the context of the conventional management curriculum that stresses rational analysis, quantitative reasoning and normative ethical arguments which can indirectly sideline its emotional imperative" (2004). The standard pedagogical approach in this context--relying on examples and general frameworks--often does not provide the engagement to the experiential and affective learning that is necessary for genuine empathy.

Within these constraints of pedagogy, therefore, literary fiction has provided a neglected but powerful means by which to cultivate empathy. There is good psychological evidence that reading literary fiction does a better job of fostering Theory of Mind (the capacity to read mental states, beliefs and intentions in others) than reading nonfiction or other genres of popular fiction does (Kidd & Castano, 2013). This is important, because ToM is part of the cognitive empathy and gives individuals the ability to handle complex social situations with understanding and sloped insight. LLF's effectiveness in this regard has to do with the complex narrative designs characteristic of literary fiction that often feature multi-dimensional characters wrestling with ambiguous moral issues and mixed motives (Mar, Oatley, & Peterson, 2006). The depth of interiority and emotional complexity in these stories calls for readers to do work by way of

imagined simulation, perspective taking and affective mirroring. Unlike plain, non-fiction accounts, literature provides a reflective space in which empathy can emerge through the creative reconstitution of experience. Educational psychology has also found that narrative immersion fosters critical thinking, emotional literacy, and moral introspection across the curriculum (Nussbaum, 1997), suggesting the literature's proven track record in fostering empathy extends beyond the arts to address far-reaching pedagogical issues. These findings are consonant with the argument for more integrated, interdisciplinary models of education that bring cognitive and affective learning together to cultivate well-integrated ethical dispositions.

In management education, ethical reasoning is predominantly based on case studies that recreate mundane dilemmas with descriptive situations which intend to provoke analytic discussion and normative judgment (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell; 2015). Case-based approaches have been widely used to show examples of ethical principles and frameworks in practice, yet they tend to promote a kind of detached problem solving that can downplay the experiential or relational aspects of ethical struggles. Such a limitation has prompted calls for richer pedagogical approaches that involve the humanities, and literature, philosophy, and the arts in particular as a means of preparing prospective managers for the ethical ambiguity they are bound to encounter (Bridges & Smith, 2020). Methods inspired by the humanities can enable us to develop moral imagination, which refers to "our capacity to envision a range of possibilities in a situation and respond attentively and sensitively" (Werhane, 1999). Moral imagination is important for ethical leadership, as it allows managers to transcend rigid rule-following and engage in nuanced, context-dependent judgment. Studies that are just starting to include literature in management programs reveal encouraging results in terms of students developing higher levels of reflective thought, empathy and ethical consciousness after reading literary texts (Gautam, 2018). These are qualitative enhancements that suggest reading literature can foster a level of moral sensibility in students that more traditional case-based pedagogy might be hard-pressed to achieve.

While the theoretical and practical implications for integrating humanities into management education are strong, there is a gap in the literature about how exactly to incorporate literary fiction intentionally into MBA ethics courses. Some researchers have investigated applications of more wide-ranging ethical education using narrative elements or storytelling (Brady & Lawrence, 1989) but few assess the impact of literary fiction on the development of empathy among MBA students nor consider how engaging in reflective ways with literary narratives also influences their ethical reasoning (Arjoon, 2015). This is ironic, given the continuing issues of ethical

misconduct and moral disengagement in business and related failures in using empathetic leadership (Haidt 2012). Filling this gap will demand careful examination into how narrative engagement through literary fiction might develop and enrich current ethics teaching, helping stitch together lived human experience with the abstract language of ethical theory.

In addition, literary fiction is consistent with the trend toward greater emphasis on emotional intelligence and leadership development in higher education more generally. Modern management education is gradually acknowledging the demand to foster leaders who have a capacity for empathetic and ethical response in the presence of organizational and societal complexity (Boyatzis, 2018; Goleman, 2017). The emotionally and morally complex situations presented in works of literary fiction can be used to provide a simulation of ethical dilemmas found in the real world that is far more engaging than the scenarios typically provided through case-based or textbook teaching and thus help train students to navigate these issues with emotional bandwidth and understanding. Literary Fiction Also critical to the development of knowledge in leadership is literary fiction, which promotes cultural awareness and inclusivity by exposing readers to different voices and experiences, both of which are necessary for leaders working within a globalized, pluralistic business world (Mar & Oatley, 2018). These cross-disciplinary contributions highlight the potential for literary fiction to transform management education.

With that said, the construct of empathy is widely celebrated as a critical capability for ethical leadership yet it is largely under-prioritized and underserved in mainstream MBA ethics education. Psychological and educational studies have already emphasized the specific role of literary fiction in the promotion of cognitive and affective empathy through emotionally engaging narrative. Although the trend of incorporating humanities into business education has been steadily increasing, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of literature in building empathy for MBA students is limited. There is a need to fill this research gap in order to move pedagogy forward and prepare future business leaders who are attune with ethical insight, moral imagination, and empathetic responsiveness in an increasingly complex world.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

Empathy before and after exposure to literary fiction.

Interpreting student reflective engagement within the qualitative data.

Exploring implications for curriculum design.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the effect of exposure to literary fiction in ethical decision-making courses — specifically, ethics classes within MBA programs — on cognitive and affective empathy?

Which themes surface in the students' reflections on literary-fiction-based ethical dilemmas?

What are the pedagogical advantages and obstacles for inserting literary fiction in management education?

SIGNIFICANCE

Probing into these queries has rich implications for educators who wish to foster more profound ethical sensibilities among the business leaders of tomorrow. In demonstrating how literary fiction can be used to promote empathy in MBA ethics training, this study contributes to the cultivation of an integrated pedagogy that stretches beyond primarily case-based teaching. This approach is consistent with recent demands for socially responsible management education which highlight the importance of emotional intelligence, moral imagination and engaged ethics. Finally, the paper contributes to preparing leaders who are more competent in dealing with complex ethical dilemmas, creating inclusive organizational cultures as well as managing sustainable business practices based on empathy and social responsibility.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a mixed-methods research design, blending quantitative and qualitative methods to gain insight into the influence of literary fiction in promoting empathy as part of MBA ethics course work. The mixed-methods design was appropriate for the current study because empathy is a complex multi-dimensional construct that can be operationalized both quantitatively and qualitatively. This method also permits us a fine-grained understanding of how literary fiction may make an impact – not just in a measurable increase in empathy – but the depth and quality of students' ethical reflections. Mixed-methods research designs are more and more encouraged in educational research, especially for investigating complex psychological and social phenomena that quantitative data offer breadth, while qualitative data provide depth and context (Bryman, 2016).

Sixty-two MBA students taking a compulsory ethics course at a prestigious business school in North America served as participants in the current investigation. The class was varied in terms of professional experience, age and cultural background – exactly the kind of diversity you'd expect from a graduate business programme. The syllabus included a separate module consisting of excerpts from literary fiction, chosen to represent nuanced ethical dilemmas and moral gray areas. The texts were works by well-known authors, including Harper Lee's *To Kill a*

Mockingbird on justice, prejudice and moral courage and Kazuo Ishiguro whose narratives often touch on topics such as memory, identity and ethical responsibility. These readings were chosen purposefully in an attempt to stimulate students intellectually and viscerally around ethical problems, without resorting to the traditional case study.

Data was obtained through two main channels. First, empathy was quantitatively measured by the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) as developed by Davis (1983). The IRI is a psychometrically sound self-report measure for empathy research that was validated across different samples (Hojat et al., 2002), including the general and professional populations. The IRI includes four subscales, and we focused on the cognitive empathy subscale (Perspective Taking) and the affective empathy subscale (Empathic Concern). Subjects took the IRI at two points: pre training as well as post teaching of ethics. This pre-post design allowed the measurement of any statistically significant increase in empathy due to exposure to literary fiction.

Second, qualitative data were obtained through reflection essays that students submitted as part of a course work. These essays asked students to unpack the literary narratives thematically and to respond to directed prompts during the examination on moral themes, character motivations and personal reflection on moral grey areas. The reflective task generated rich narrative data that illustrated how students thought and felt about complex ethical concerns, enabling an understanding of both the cognitive and affective dimensions of empathy in an educational setting.

The qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis, which is a flexible and systematic approach to identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We performed a stepwise analysis in which early coding emphasized themes that emerged involving empathy, moral reasoning and ethical sensitivity. Further cycles of coding developed these themes so as to enable interpretation around the ways in which students expressed themselves empathetically involved and moral competence. Authors of this study Entered by To ensure consistency, coding was performed independently by two researchers, with disagreements subject to discussion in order to reach agreement.

Quantitatively, paired sample t-tests were used to compare pre- and post-module IRI scores for cognitive and affective empathy subscales. This statistic procedure is frequently applied in educational intervention studies where change over time is investigated within the same subject pool (Smith et al., 2018). The practical implication of the changes was also assessed by effect

size.

Moral aspects were taken into account throughout the research. Participation was completely optional and informed consent was given by all respondents before any data collection. The study framework was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the host university. For reasons of confidentiality, no identifying details are given and data was stored securely according to university data protection guidelines. Participants received a guarantee of nonattribution to course grades or status in the academic system (e.g., “your involvement or position will not be disadvantageous with respect to your studies”) that encouraged them to engage fully and honestly and reflectively.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

The findings of this study offer a convincing proof for the positive impact of using literary fiction in MBA ethics courses with an exposure of two weeks on cognitive and emotive empathic capacities among students. Results The quantitative results, involving pre- and post-module assessment on the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), revealed statistically significant increases in empathy scores in literary fiction module.

More specifically, paired-samples t-tests revealed a strong increase in cognitive empathy, or perspective-taking, from pre-module ($M = 3.48$; $SD = 0.42$) to post-module ($M = 3.85$; $SD = 0.39$), $t(61) = 4.32$, $p < .001$. This could mean that, after reading complex stories presenting situations of conflicting concerns and motives (multiple-ethical-dilemma problems), students learned to understand more the points of view and mental states of others. Affective empathy, which is emotional contagion and empathic concern, also had significantly increased at post-module ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.45$) when compared with pre-module ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.47$), $t(61) = 3.75$ $p < .001$. These results closely parallel previous psychological research showing that literary fiction reading is particularly effective at promoting Theory of Mind — arguably a kind of foundation for empathy (Kidd & Castano, 2013; Mar et al.

On such changes, their scale is remarkable. Although effect sizes were modest, robust significant improvements emerged in both empathy subscales. The results imply that literary fiction functions as a promising experiential-learning method for enhancing ethical sensitivity of tomorrow’s business leaders. This finding is especially relevant considering that it empirically validates the difficulties of fostering empathy through traditional, analytical-focused management education, which typically has upheld cognitive rationality over emotional involvement (Mintz 2004; Kellett et al.

Supplementary to these quantitative findings, thematic analysis of student reflective essays provided qualitative insight into how literary fiction influenced ethical perception. Three major themes are revealed that, together, demonstrate the complex role of narrative engagement in the cultivation of empathy.

The first theme, Perspective-Taking, emphasized the increase in students' capacity to understand how others perceived situations. Common themes in the reflections included a deepened understanding of why people make ethical choices out of fear or from incentivized obligations. For instance, many students remarked about how the characters complicated their first impressions, causing them to rethink a “good vs. evil” mentality and replacing it with a more nuanced view of right and wrong. These results are consistent with those of Nussbaum (1997), who maintained that literature fosters moral imagination, allowing readers to understand the experiences of others from within, an ability important for ethical leadership in a globalized and diverse organizational environment.

The second theme, Emotive Engagement, demonstrated that students empathically understood other viewpoints and felt an emotional connection with characters' problems. Students commonly expressed that the adversities and injustices experienced by the heroes of literature had any effect on their moral sensibility as well as increased personal associations with ethical matters. This emotional commitment is crucial because in leadership empathy refers not just to cognitive comprehension but also to actual concern, compassion that can drive moral action (Boyatzis, 2018). The reflective essays indicated that the narrative immersion of literary fiction provides the potential for inducing empathy as part of these affective responses, a finding consistent with existing educational research highlighting storytelling as facilitating emotional learning (Bridges & Smith, 2020).

Ethical Complexity The third theme, Ethical Complexity ("It's Not Black and White," "No Right Answers for all"), demonstrated students' understanding of the ambiguous – even convoluted – nature of ethical choices. Numerous essays expressed the difficulty of navigating among conflicting values and interests beyond normative stereotypes. This issue is particularly interesting in that it represents a movement from black-and-white ethical decision-making to the appreciation of nuance, which is a key competence for action situations where little is clear-cut in managing (Ferrell, Fraedrich & Ferrell, 2015). Students should consider how characters' stories prompt them to tolerate ambiguity, and develop a sense of moral humility, one of the most important traits in effective and compassionate leadership.

Collectively, these results strongly support the inclusion of literary fiction in management ethics education. The joint contribution of quantitatively measured empathy increases and qualitatively observed enhanced moral reflection indicate that literary fiction is an effective means to foster distinct cognitive and emotional dimensions of empathy. Such findings are in line with past interdisciplinary endeavours to understand the impact of literature on ethical insight and social cognition (Mar et al., 2009; Kidd & Castano, 2013), as well as shedding light on a significant void in the management education literature related to the actual effects of humanities-based interventions (Arjoon, 2015).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study are consistent with and build upon previous research on the potential of literary fiction to promote empathy, including in a management education context. Building on the seminal work of Kidd and Castano (2013), who found that reading literary fiction fuels Theory of Mind (the capacity to understand others' mental state), this study provides evidence, albeit indirectly, about the fostering effect of literary narratives on both cognitive and affective empathy among MBA students. These significant changes, which both indicate increases in perspective taking and empathic concern tendencies, further confirm that literary narratives cultivate cognitive and affective qualities necessary for ethical decision making. Although Kidd and Castano focused on general population samples, the current study locates literary engagement in a specific professional setting—MBA ethics education—and provides a novel lens that connects literary psychology to management pedagogy (Bridges & Smith, 2020).

In addition, this contribution extends the nascent conversation on interdisciplinary business ethics by showing how literary fiction can help to sharpen ethical acumen in a manner that might not be accomplished while using cases more conventionally. Whereas traditional case-based approaches tend to focus on the application of rational analysis and normative structures, literary fiction engages students with thick material that can evoke emotional or moral senses. This emotional and intellectual involvement pushes students to confront moral ambiguity, inculcating a sense of moral complexity rather than of some simple black-and-white divide. These results are important in developing future leaders that will be faced with ethically complex decisions within today's organizations (Ferrell et al., 2015). These findings reinforce previous appeals for management scholars and educators to advocate for changes in business education that will further blend "soft skills" (e.g., empathy, emotional intelligence, moral reasoning) with traditional analytical competencies (Goleman 2017; Kellett et al.

From a practical standpoint, the study suggests that MBA ethics classes might consider integrating works of literary fiction as an adjunct pedagogical tool. The stories of the courses were immersive ethical conundrums, that forced students to question their own preconceptions and reflect on them. This sense of being “immersed” is one of the great values of literary fiction – a space which is safe yet emotionally engaging in which students can explore alternative perspectives and grapple with tricky moral questions. If these narratives can be added to existing cases and theoretical material, the ethics curriculum might seem more balanced and complete. Not only does this approach do more to teach students about ethical issues cognitively, it further helps the affective structure of empathy that is necessary for genuine ethical leadership. With businesses wanting leaders who are not only emotionally intelligent and have a good sense of social responsibility, I suspect programs with those sorts of touch points will help create better managers who have these skills (Boyatzis, 2018; Goleman, 2017).

However, this study has several limitations that deserve discussion. First, the data were gathered from MBA students in only one school, which may pose limitations to this study’s generalizability to 2 other contexts (e.g. cultural settings or undergraduate business studies). The similarity in demographics and education of the sample may have been a factor affecting the range and kind of development in empathy. Second, the use of self-report measures such as the Interpersonal Reactivity Index may be subjected to bias and social desirability biases whereby students over report gains in empathy to match perceived expectations. Although qualitative reflections provided useful supportive evidence, participants would ideally have completed behavioral checks or peer evaluations to triangulate the self-report data. Lastly, the design of this study kept track of changes in empathy over a relatively brief period after the module on literary fiction; thus, it is not known whether these effects are lasting.

These limitations should be avoided in future research through the use of longitudinal studies to determine whether long-term development of empathy exists and can lead to ethical attitudes with professional practice. A study of the effect of literary fiction on empathy in other cultural and institutional settings would also help to clarify its generalizability. Research into different kinds of narrative, such as poetry, drama and digital narratives, might show known effects on empathy or ethical thinking. In addition, the inclusion of technology-based innovations (e.g., interactive storytelling platforms, or virtual reality) into enhanced contexts can further improve immersive learning and must deserve to be investigated. And there is great potential for interdisciplinary collaboration among psychologists, educators and the management scholars that

may enhance knowledge about how narrative-based pedagogy works in different contexts (Mar & Oatley, 2018).

Alnot, 1989), this work also reaffirms the general case for humanities integration within a business education framework. And by focussing on how literary fiction enhances moral perception, it foregrounds the possibility of cross-fertilization between fields whereby learnings from literature, psychology and philosophy can enrich and advance management pedagogy. This kind of integration speaks to an important lack of humanistic orientation in much business education, with its focus on quantitative analysis and technical skills at the expense of moral and emotional growth.

CONCLUSION

The research confirms the important pedagogical value of literary fiction as a novel method for developing empathy in MBA ethics courses. By putting readers inside rich, morally ambiguous narratives, literary fiction trains us in cognitive empathy — the skill of grasping points of view different from one’s own — and affective empathy: feelings like “tenderness” or “care.” These twin imperatives of empathy are essential to a complex and genuine ethical understanding, going well beyond case study approaches common in the tradition that have tended to privilege analytical reason at the expense of emotional and moral student engagement.

The results suggest that literary fiction can be a potent supplement for traditional business ethics instruction in stimulating students to struggle with ethical complexity and cultivate moral imagination. This application of experiential learning is in keeping with the dynamic needs of modern management education that focuses more and more on emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and socially responsible decision-making (Goleman, 2017; Kellett et al., 2021). As organizations increasingly confront the demands of diversity, stake-holder accountability and global complexity, it is crucial to nurture empathic leaders who will negotiate these challenges. As the education philosopher William Hare notes, literary fiction – which has the power to humanize ethical dilemmas and promote moral reflection – provides a promising means of satisfying this educational need.

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