PRACTICING PERSONAL ETHICS IN THE ORGANIZATION

Organizational Systems

Group
Leadership-Followership

Interpersonal

Individual

Global Society
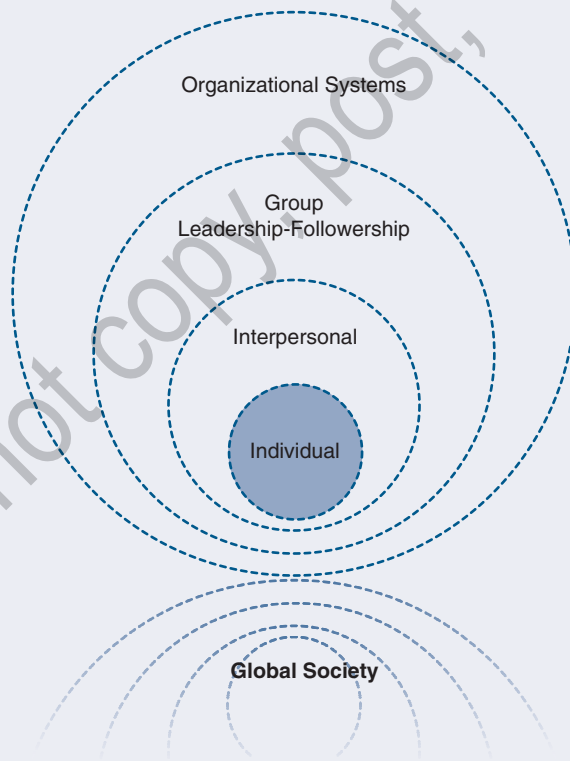
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ETHICAL COMPETENCIES AND PERSPECTIVES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Define organizational ethics.
- Identify ethical competencies.
- Develop a plan for developing ethical competence.
- Summarize the major components of each ethical perspective.
- Name the similarities between the Confucian and Aristotelian ethical approaches.
- Explain the role that altruism plays in each of the major ethical perspectives.
- Assess the advantages and disadvantages of each ethical theory.
- Analyze an ethical dilemma using one or more of the six ethical theories.

CHAPTER PREVIEW

Before we can raise the ethical performance of ourselves and our organizations, we need to be equipped for the task. In this first section of the text we'll focus on the knowledge and tools we need to make better ethical decisions ourselves while encouraging others to do the same. This chapter provides an overview of organizational ethics and introduces ethical competencies and perspectives. Chapter 2 examines how to make and follow through on moral choices. Chapter 3 addresses the components of personal moral development.

DEVELOPING ETHICAL COMPETENCIES

For the study of organizational ethics to make a positive difference to us, to our organizations, and to society as a whole, we must put our knowledge to work. That calls for an applied or practical approach. A practical approach to organizational ethics is founded on the premise that we can develop our ethical expertise or competency just as we develop our abilities to manage, do cost accounting, and oversee operations.

University of Notre Dame psychologist Darcia Narvaez argues that we can master the knowledge and skills that can help us behave more like moral experts. She points out that ethical authorities, like experts in other fields, think differently than novices.[1] First, they know more about the ethical domain. Their networks of moral knowledge are more developed and connected than those of beginners. They note commonalities and differences, are more sensitive to moral cues, and understand the moral standards of the culture and group. Second, they see the world differently than novices. While beginners are often overwhelmed by new data, those with expertise can quickly identify and act on the relevant information. They are able to "think about their thinking" (demonstrate metacognitive ability), knowing what moral knowledge to apply in a particular situation. Moral experts also understand their personal moral standards and use their self-understanding to evaluate their options (e.g., "is this action consistent with my image of myself?"). Third, experts have different skill sets. They are better able to define the moral problem and then match the new dilemma with previous ethical problems they have encountered. As a result, they make better moral decisions faster, sometimes even automatically.

Experts become expert by learning in situations that reward the behaviors that lead to success in that domain, building on the knowledge of previous generations, and putting forth sustained effort. A professional violinist, for example, spends years taking lessons, completing classes in music theory, practicing hours daily, and performing in recitals and concerts. You must follow similar strategies if you want to become less of an ethical novice and more of an ethical expert. Learn in a well-structured environment where correct behaviors are rewarded and where you can interact with mentors and receive feedback and coaching. Master both moral theory and skills. Familiarize yourself with how previous experts have dealt with moral problems and why some choices are better than others. Gain experience so that you'll not only get better at solving ethical problems but be better able to explain your choices. Finally, practice, practice, practice. You will have to put in the necessary time and concentrated effort. Ethical progress takes hours of practice wrestling with moral dilemmas. To get started, complete Self-Assessment 1.1 to determine how you feel about ethical behavior in business and other organizational settings.

Organizational Ethics: A Practical Approach incorporates all of the developmental components just outlined. The book is designed for use in a college or university classroom where ethical knowledge and behaviors are encouraged and professors and classmates

provide feedback. You will be introduced to the insights of ethical experts both past and present and see how some behaviors are more effective than others. The text supplies you with plenty of opportunities to practice your problem-solving abilities and to defend your decisions. You'll be provided with lists of steps or actions you and your organization can take. Cases provide opportunities to apply what you've read, and the self-assessments in each chapter measure your (or your leader's or organization's) performance on an important behavior, skill, or concept. The Takeaways sections at the end of each chapter review important concepts and their implications. The Application Projects sections ask you to engage in further reflection, analysis, and implementation. You can complete some of these activities on your own; others require group participation.

Scholars describe a variety of competencies we need to develop if we hope to become more expert. Sean Hannah and his colleagues believe that, in order to think and act ethically, you must expand your capacities for moral maturation and moral conation.[2] You can use these competencies as a yardstick to measure your ethical progress. *Moral maturation* capacity drives ethical thinking and involves the ability "to elaborate and effectively attend to, store, retrieve, process, and make meaning of morally relevant information." The components of moral maturation are

1. moral complexity: knowledge of a specific domain of ethics (i.e., accounting ethics or medical ethics), which allows for in-depth processing; developing categories to discriminate among types of information; ability to see commonalities and connections in ethical situations; creating prototypes to use in processing ethical problems; knowing what *not* to do; sensitivity to moral cues; understanding of the morality of a culture or social group.

2. metacognitive ability: monitoring and regulating thinking; capacity to reason and solve problems; applying knowledge to specific moral dilemmas; assessing what information to use and its accuracy (i.e., considering all aspects of an ethical dilemma).

3. moral identity: knowledge of self as a moral actor; regulating behavior according to beliefs, values, goals, and social roles; applying the moral self to a variety of situations.

Moral conation capacity describes taking responsibility and then being motivated to do the right thing even when faced with adversity. Moral conation is made up of

1. moral ownership: feeling a sense of responsibility for one's own ethical actions, the ethical behavior of others, and the moral behavior of the organization, group, or society; seeking to do good while refusing to ignore unethical behavior.

2. moral efficacy: belief in one's ability to take ethical action and to persist when faced with challenges; confidence to perform in a given ethical situation; availability of outside support for moral behavior (i.e., whistle-blower protections, peer support).

3. moral courage: willingness to face danger; strength of will to overcome ethical challenges and barriers; maintaining personal principles in the face of outside pressure.

Wright State University business ethics professor emeritus Joseph Petrick outlines three types of competencies that can serve as another measure of your ethical development. *Cognitive decision-making competence* means demonstrating "abilities to recognize, understand, analyze, and make responsible judgments about moral matters" in business and other organizational contexts.[3] *Affective prebehavioral disposition competence* encompasses ethical emotions, attitudes, and motivations. Becoming more of an expert in organizational ethics should not only improve your problem-solving abilities but also prompt you to develop your character and increase your motivation to follow through on your choices. *Context management competence* involves the managerial skills needed to build ethical organizational environments. You need to help create ethical settings that encourage members to demonstrate their cognitive and affective competence. You should also be able to encourage your organizations to meet the needs of stakeholders, protect the environment, honor the rights of overseas workers, and so on.

SELF-ASSESSMENT 1.1
ATTITUDES TOWARD BUSINESS (AND ORGANIZATIONAL) ETHICS

Instructions

Reflect on the following statements. Indicate your position regarding each by selecting your response to the right of each statement.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The only moral of business is making money.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Act according to the law, and you can't go wrong morally.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Moral values are irrelevant to the business world.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The lack of public confidence in the ethics of businesspeople is *not* justified.	1	2	3	4	5
5. As a consumer making an auto insurance claim, I try to get as much as possible regardless of the extent of the damage.	1	2	3	4	5

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. When shopping at the supermarket, it is appropriate to switch price tags on packages.	1	2	3	4	5
7. As an employee, I take office supplies home; it doesn't hurt anyone.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I view sick days as vacation days that I deserve.	1	2	3	4	5
9. In my grocery store every week, I raise the price of a certain product and mark it "on sale." There is nothing wrong with doing this.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The business world has its own rules.	1	2	3	4	5
11. True morality is first and foremost self-interested.	1	2	3	4	5
12. You should *not* consume more than you produce.	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring

If possible, have a classmate, friend, or colleague take this questionnaire and compare your ratings on each item. Explain your responses. Take the assessment again after completing the text and course. Compare your before and after answers and determine how much they have changed and why.

Source: Adapted from Preble, J. F., & Reichel, A. (1988). Attitudes towards business ethics of future managers in the U.S. and Israel. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 7, 947-948.

DEFINING ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS

The first step toward expert mastery is defining the field of study. In the case of organizational ethics, that means identifying the unique characteristics of organizations and determining what sets ethical choices and actions apart from other forms of decision making and behavior. Organizations consist of three or more people engaged in coordinated action in pursuit of a common purpose or goal. They function as socially constructed, structured, interconnected systems.[4] Let's look at the elements of this definition in more detail.

Three or more people. The presence of three or more persons sets the stage for the formation of an organization, allowing for the development of structure, coalitions, shared meanings, and so forth. Organizational membership is generally voluntary, which sets organizations apart from families. We choose which organizations we want to join; we don't have a choice about which family we are born into. Organizations are generally more stable than small groups due to substitution of personnel. Members leave—retire, quit, pass away—but the organization continues as new people take their places.

Coordination of activities. Completion of any complex project, whether it be making a film, repairing a highway, or starting a health club, requires the coordination of people and units that carry out specialized tasks. Coordination, in turn, produces synergy. Synergy describes the way in which organizations are greater than the sum of their parts. The achievements of an organization as a whole are much greater than could be reached by a collection of individuals working on their own.

Goal directed. Organizations don't form by chance. Instead, they are intentionally formed to meet specific needs and to serve specific purposes like educating elementary school children, producing and selling automobiles, passing legislation, and combating crime. These objectives focus the collective energies of members.

Socially constructed. Organizations are human creations shaped through the collective decisions and actions of their members. These creations then shape the thoughts and behaviors of their makers. For example, those who make a policy, such as one forbidding romantic relationships between superiors and subordinates, are bound by this rule. The socially constructed nature of organizations is particularly apparent in their cultures. No two organizations are exactly alike. Every group has its unique way of seeing the world or culture developed through shared meaning and experiences. New employees often undergo a form of culture shock as they move into an organization with a different language, customs, and attitudes about work and people.

Structured interaction. The word *organization* frequently conjures up images of organizational charts, policy manuals, discipline policies, articles of incorporation, and other official documents. Bureaucratic organizations in particular do their best to leave nothing to chance, spelling out everything from how to apply for sick leave and retirement benefits to the size of office cubicles. They also carefully detail how tasks like processing auto insurance payments and registering students are to be managed. However, some of the most important elements of structure aren't formalized. Communication scholars, for instance, study communication networks, which are patterns of messages sent between individuals and organizational units. These networks may have little resemblance to the flow of information outlined in the official organizational chart.

Roles and hierarchy are two particularly important aspects of structure. *Roles* are sets of expectations, responsibilities, and duties associated with organizational positions. Failure to meet role expectations generates sanctions in the form of criticism, reprimands, lower wages, and termination. *Hierarchy* grants certain individuals and groups more power, status, and privileges, and there are one or more centers of power that review and direct organizational performance. Differences in status and power are part of every interaction between organizational members. The degree of structure helps

set organizations apart from groups. Groups also have three or more members, may be goal directed, and delegate various roles. Nonetheless, they lack many of the formal elements—written policies, job descriptions, job titles—common to organizations.

Interconnectedness (systems). Organizations function as interconnected systems. Consider all the departments involved in the introduction of a new product, for instance: research and development, design, purchasing, production, marketing, finance, human resources. The success of a product introduction depends on each division doing its part. Marketing can do an effective job of promoting the new item, but first purchasing must secure the necessary components at the right cost and production must meet manufacturing deadlines. Because organizations function as systems, a change in any one component will influence all the others. A new accounting system, for example, will change the way that every department records expenses, books revenue, and determines profits.

Ethics involves judgments about the rightness or wrongness of human behavior. To illustrate this point, I've collected definitions of the term from a variety of sources. Notice how each highlights the evaluative nature of ethical study and practice.

"Ethics is concerned with how we should live our lives. It focuses on questions about what is right or wrong, fair or unfair, caring or uncaring, good or bad, responsible or irresponsible, and the like."[5]

"Ethics deals with individual character and with the moral rules that govern and limit our conduct. It investigates questions of right and wrong, fairness and unfairness, good and bad, duty and obligation, and justice and injustice, as well as moral responsibility and the values that should guide our actions."[6]

"[Ethics comprises] the principles, norms, and standards of conduct governing an individual or group."[7]

"Ethical judgments focus . . . on degrees of rightness and wrongness, virtue and vice, and obligation in human behavior."[8]

"Ethics guide us in identifying right from wrong, good from bad, and just from unjust."[9]

"Ethics basically refers to issues of right, wrong, fairness, and justice."[10]

"[An ethical act or decision] is something judged as proper or acceptable based on some standard of right and wrong."[11]

There are some scholars who make a distinction between ethics and morals, drawing in part on the origins of each word.[12] *Ethics* comes from the Greek term *ethos*, which refers to "custom" or "usage" or "character." *Moral* is derived from the Latin *mos* or *moris*, which refers to "conduct" or "way of life." From this perspective, ethics has to do with the systematic study of general principles of right and wrong behavior. Morality and morals, on the other hand, describe specific, culturally transmitted standards of right and wrong ("Thou shalt not steal"; "Treat your elders with respect"). Maintaining this distinction is becoming more difficult, however. Both ethics and morality involve decisions about right and wrong. When we make such evaluations, we draw upon universal principles as well as upon our

cultural standards. Further, scholars from a number of fields appear to use the terms *ethics* and *morals* interchangeably. Philosophers interested in ethics study moral philosophy, for example, while psychologists examine moral reasoning and educators promote moral education. For these reasons, I will use the terms synonymously in the remainder of this text. You, of course, are free to disagree. You may want to engage in a class discussion about whether these two concepts should be integrated or treated separately.

Organizational ethics applies moral standards and principles to the organizational context. Organizations are well suited for ethical analysis because, as we've seen, they are the products of conscious, goal-directed behavior. Whatever form they take (small, family-owned restaurants; community-based nonprofits; large multinational corporations; international relief agencies), all employers share the common features described earlier. These shared elements mean that members in every type of organization face some common ethical temptations and dilemmas. Further, a common body of theory, principles, strategies, and skills can be used to address these moral challenges.

I am convinced there is much to be gained in looking at ethical problems and solutions across organizational boundaries. No matter what particular type of organization we belong to, we can learn from the experiences of others in different settings. Knowing how corporate managers communicate important values, for instance, can be useful to those of us working in the federal government. If we work in business, we can gain important insights into how to empower employees from watching how nonprofit executives recruit and motivate volunteers.

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Ethical theories are critical to developing our ethical competence. Ethical perspectives are tools that help us identify and define problems, force us to think systematically, encourage us to view issues from many different vantage points, and provide us with decision-making guidelines. We'll return to them again and again throughout the rest of this text. In this section, I'll briefly summarize each perspective and then offer an evaluation based on the theory's advantages and disadvantages.

Resist the temptation to choose your favorite approach and ignore the rest. Use a variety of theories when possible. Applying all six approaches to the same problem (practicing ethical pluralism) is a good way to generate new insights about the issue. You can discover the value of ethical pluralism by using each theory to analyze the case studies at the end of the chapter (see Application Project 9). You may find that some perspectives are more suited to these problems than others. Combining insights from more than one theory might help you come up with a better solution. At the very least, drawing from several perspectives should give you more confidence in your choice and better prepare you to defend your conclusions.

Utilitarianism: Do the Greatest Good for the Greatest Number

Many people weigh the advantages and disadvantages of alternatives when making significant decisions. They create mental balance sheets listing the pluses and minuses of each course of action. When it's a particularly important choice, such as deciding which job offer to accept or where to earn a graduate degree, they may commit their lists to paper to make it easier to identify the relative merits of their options.

Utilitarianism is based on the premise that our ethical choices, like other types of decisions, should be based on their outcomes.[13] It is the best-known example of *consequentialism*, a branch of moral philosophy that argues that the rightness or wrongness of an action is dependent on its consequences. The goal is to maximize the good effects or outcomes of decisions. English philosophers and reformers Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) believed that the best decisions (1) generate the most benefits relative to their disadvantages, and (2) benefit the largest number of people. In other words, utilitarianism is attempting to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people. *Utility* can be defined as what is best in a specific case (act utilitarianism) or as what is generally preferred in most contexts (rule utilitarianism). We can decide, for example, that telling a specific lie is justified in one situation (to protect a trade secret) but, as a general rule, believe that lying is wrong because it causes more harm than good.

Utilitarians consider both short- and long-term consequences when making ethical determinations. If the immediate benefits of a decision don't outweigh its possible future costs, this alternative is rejected. However, if the immediate good is sure and the future good is uncertain, decision makers generally select the option that produces the short-term benefit. Utilitarians are also more concerned about the ratio of harm to benefit than the absolute amount of happiness or unhappiness produced by a choice. In other words, a decision that produces a great amount of good but an equal amount of harm would be rejected in favor of an alternative that produces a moderate amount of good at very little cost. Further, utilitarian decision makers keep their own interests in mind but give them no more weight than anyone else's.

Making a choice according to utilitarian principles is a three-step process. First, identify all the possible courses of action. Second, estimate the direct as well as the indirect costs and benefits for each option. Finally, select the alternative that produces the greatest amount of good based on the cost-benefit ratios generated in step two. Government officials frequently follow this process when deciding whether to impose or loosen regulations. Take decisions about mandatory motorcycle helmet laws, for example. The benefits of requiring helmet use for all riders include a reduction in head and neck injuries and crash fatalities. (Taxpayers pick up the bill when underinsured or noninsured riders are injured.) The costs include infringement on personal freedom, an important value to motorcycle owners, and a false sense of security that encourages riders to drive more aggressively, putting them in more danger. After balancing the costs and benefits, 19 states require that all riders wear helmets while the rest do not.[14]

Evaluation

Few could argue with the ultimate goal of utilitarianism, which is to promote human welfare by maximizing benefits to as many people as possible. We're used to weighing the outcomes of all types of decisions, and the utilitarian decision-making rule covers every conceivable type of choice, which makes it a popular approach to moral reasoning. Utilitarian calculations typically drive public policy decisions, such as whether to legalize marijuana or to give tax breaks to attract business. In fact, Bentham and Mills introduced utilitarianism to provide a rational basis for making political, administrative, and judicial choices, which they felt previously had been based on feelings and irrational prejudices. They campaigned for legal and political reforms, including the creation of a more humane penal system and more rights for women. Utilitarian reasoning is also applied in emergency situations, such as in the wake of earthquakes and tsunamis. In the midst of such widespread devastation,

many medical personnel believe they ought to give top priority to those who are most likely to survive. They argue it does little good to spend time with a terminal patient while a person who would benefit from treatment dies.

Despite its popularity, utilitarianism suffers from serious deficiencies, starting with defining and measuring "the greatest good."[15] Economists define utility in monetary terms and use such measures as the gross national product to determine the greatest benefit. But the theory's originators, Bentham and Mills, define the greatest good as the total amount of pleasure or utility, abstract concepts that are hard to quantify. Sometimes identifying possible consequences can be difficult or impossible as well. Many different groups may be affected, unforeseen consequences may develop, and so on. Even when consequences are clear, evaluating their relative merits can be challenging. Being objective is difficult because we humans tend to downplay long-term risks in favor of immediate rewards and to favor ourselves when making decisions. Take efforts to reduce the use of fossil fuels, for example. Few seem willing to pay higher prices for energy now in order to reduce the effects of climate change in the future.

Due to the difficulty of identifying and evaluating potential costs and benefits, utilitarian decision makers may reach different conclusions when faced with the same dilemma, as in the case of motorcycle helmet laws or facial recognition technology (see Case Study 1.1). Ironically, one of the greatest strengths of utilitarian theory—its concern for collective human welfare—is also one of its greatest weaknesses. In focusing on what's best for the group as a whole, utilitarianism discounts the worth of the individual. The needs of the person are subjugated to the needs of the group or organization. This type of reasoning can justify all kinds of abuse. For example, in the past, many college and professional football players immediately returned to the field after suffering concussions. They did so, in part, for the good of the team or the school, but 40% of former National Football League players suffer from brain injuries as a result.[16] Then, too, by focusing solely on consequences, utilitarianism seems to say that the ends justify the means. Most of us are convinced that there are certain principles—justice, freedom, integrity—that should never be violated.

Kant's Categorical Imperative: Do What's Right Despite the Consequences

Like the utilitarians, German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) developed a simple set of rules that could be applied to every type of ethical decision. However, he reached a very different conclusion about what those principles should be. Kant argued that moral duties or imperatives are *categorical*—they should be obeyed without exception. Individuals should do what is morally right no matter what the consequences are.[17] His approach to moral reasoning falls under the category of deontological ethics. Deontological ethicists argue that we ought to make choices based on our duty to follow universal truths, which we sense intuitively or identify through reason (*deon* is the Greek word for "duty"). Moral acts arise out of our will or intention to follow our duty, not in response to circumstances. Based on this criterion, an electric utility that is forced into reducing its rates is not acting morally; a utility that lowers its rates to help its customers is.

According to Kant, "what is right for one is right for all." We need to ask ourselves if the principle we are following is one that we could logically conclude should be made into a universal law. Based on this reasoning, certain behaviors, like honoring our commitments and being kind, are always right. Other acts, like cheating and murder, are always wrong. Kant

cited borrowing money that we never intend to repay as one behavior that violates what he called the *categorical imperative.* If enough people made such false promises, the banking industry would break down because lenders would refuse to provide funds.[18] That's what happened during the collapse of the U.S. housing market. A number of borrowers never intended to pay their home loans back, which helped generate a wave of foreclosures. Home loans then became much harder to get. Deliberate idleness is another violation of Kant's principles, because no one would exercise their talents in a culture where everyone sought to rest and enjoy themselves.

Kant also argued for the importance of "treating humanity as an end," or respect for persons, which has become one of the foundational principles of Western moral philosophy. Others can help us reach our objectives, but they should never be considered solely as a means to an end. We should, instead, encourage the capacity of others to choose for themselves. It is wrong, under this standard, for manufacturing companies to expose nearby residents to hazardous chemicals without their consent or knowledge. Managers shouldn't coerce or threaten employees, because such tactics violate freedom of choice. Coworkers who refuse to help one another are behaving unethically because ignoring the needs of others limits their options. Concern for persons extends across international borders. Multinational corporations have a duty to ensure that their subcontractors and suppliers follow local labor laws, refrain from coercion, follow minimum safety standards, and provide a living wage for workers.[19]

Respect for persons underlies the notion of moral rights. Fundamental moral or human rights are granted to individuals based solely on their status as equal persons. Such rights protect the inherent dignity of every individual regardless of culture or social or economic background. Rights violations are unethical because they are disrespectful and deny human value and potential. The rights to life, free speech, and religious affiliation are universal (always available to everyone everywhere), are equal (no one has a greater right to free speech than anyone else, for instance), and cannot be given up or taken away.[20] (I provide one list of universal human rights in Chapter 12.)

Evaluation

Kant's imperative is a simple yet powerful ethical tool. Not only is the principle easy to remember, but making sure that we conform to a universal standard should also prevent a number of ethical miscues. (Turn to Case Study 1.2 to see the damage that can come from violating Kant's categorical principle.) Emphasis on duty builds moral courage. Those driven by the conviction that certain behaviors are either right or wrong no matter the situation are more likely to blow the whistle on unethical behavior (see Chapter 8), to resist group pressure to compromise personal ethical standards, to follow through on their choices (see Chapter 2), and so on. Recognizing that people are intrinsically valuable is another significant ethical principle. This standard encourages us to protect the rights of employees, to act courteously, to demonstrate concern for others, and to share information. At the same time, it condemns deceptive and coercive tactics. (Respect for persons is a key component of the humanistic approach to business described in Contemporary Issues in Organizational Ethics 1.1.)

Critiques of Kant's system of reasoning often center on his assertion that there are universal principles that should be followed in every situation. In almost every case, we can think of exceptions. For instance, many of us agree that killing is wrong yet support

capital punishment for serial murderers. We value our privacy but routinely provide confidential information to secure car loans and to order products online. Then, too, how do we account for those who honestly believe they are doing the right thing even when they are engaged in evil? White supremacists, for instance, are convinced that Caucasians are superior to other racial groups. They believe that preserving racial purity is their duty.

Conflicting duties also pose a challenge to deontological thinking. Complex ethical dilemmas often involve competing obligations. For example, we should be loyal both to our bosses and to our coworkers. Yet being loyal to a supervisor may mean breaking loyalty with peers, such as when a supervisor asks us to reveal the source of a complaint when we've promised to keep the identity of that coworker secret. How do we determine which duty has priority? Kant's imperative offers little guidance in such situations.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS 1.1
HUMANISTIC MANAGEMENT

Most scholars and practitioners think of business in economic terms. From this economic perspective, profits (maximizing shareholder value) are the ultimate goal of a company. Those who hold this view often proclaim "business is business," signaling that ethics and values should take a back seat to the bottom line. Employees are a means to an end—profitability.

Proponents of humanistic management take issue with the popular understanding of business. They argue that people, not economics, should be the focus of companies. They encourage leaders, first of all, to recognize the intrinsic worth or dignity of both organizational members and outsiders. Employees should be seen as ends, not means, and should have the freedom to make decisions and to direct their career paths. Leaders ought to dialogue with followers about important policies and decisions as well as with stakeholders who are impacted by the firm's actions. Ethics needs to be integrated into managerial decision making to ensure justice and to reflect important values.

Second, humanistic theorists encourage managers to focus on helping employees reach their full potential, including helping them develop their moral character. According to University of Navarra (Spain) business professor Domènec Melé, humanistic management is "a management that emphasizes the human condition and is oriented to the development of human virtue, in all its forms, to its fullest extent."

Strategies for helping employees to flourish include, for instance, job redesign and enrichment, ensuring that new hires fit with the organization's mission and values, fostering engagement, participative management, and promoting moral character and virtues. Leaders need to recognize that community plays a critical role in personal development and treat their businesses as communities of persons. They can foster community through communicating frequently with members; providing trustworthy, relevant information; empowering workers to participate in decisions that impact their lives; and pursuing common goals that benefit the entire organization. The firm, in turn, functions as a community embedded in larger communities—town, state, nation. Corporate decisions need to be made in light of their impact on these larger collectives.

Third, those advocating for humanistic management highlight the importance of benevolence and care. Recognizing the dignity and uniqueness of every person means caring for individuals based on their needs, cultural background, interests, organizational role, and so on. They encourage businesses to express caring through helping employees who have personal and family needs, paying generous salaries and offering generous benefits, addressing work-family issues, fostering inclusion, and building long-term relationships with their workers.

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Rawls's Justice as Fairness: Balancing Freedom and Equality

Limited organizational resources make conflicts inevitable. There are never enough jobs, raises, corner offices, travel funds, laptop computers, iPads, and other benefits to go around. As a result, disputes arise over how to distribute these goods. Departments battle over the relative size of their budgets, for example, and employees compete for performance bonuses, promotions, and job titles. Participants in these conflicts often complain that they have been the victims of discrimination or favoritism.

Over the last third of the 20th century, Harvard philosopher John Rawls developed a set of guidelines for justly resolving disputes like these that involve the distribution of resources.[21] His principles are designed to foster cooperation in democracies. In democratic societies, all citizens are free and equal before the law. However, at the same time, citizens are unequal because they vary in status, economic standing, talents, and abilities. Rawls's standards honor individual freedom—the foundation of democratic cultures—but also encourage more equitable distribution of societal benefits. Rawls offered a political theory focused on the underlying structure of society as a whole. Nevertheless, I hope to demonstrate that his principles also apply to organizations and institutions that function within this societal framework.

Rawls rejected the use of utilitarian principles to allocate resources. He believed that individuals have rights that should never be violated no matter the outcome. In addition, he asserted that seeking the greatest good for the greatest number can seriously disadvantage particular groups and individuals. This can be seen in decisions to outsource goods and services to independent contractors. Outsourcing reduces costs and helps firms stay competitive. Remaining employees enjoy greater job security, but some employees lose their jobs to outsiders.

As an alternative to basing decisions on cost-benefit ratios, Rawls argued that we should follow these two principles of justice[22]:

Principle 1: Each person has an equal right to the same basic liberties that are compatible with similar liberties for all.

> *Principle 2:* Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: (a) they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity, and (b) they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society.

The first principle, the *principle of equal liberty*, has priority. It states that certain rights are protected and must be equally applied to all. These liberties include the right to vote, freedom of speech and thought, freedom to own personal property, and freedom from arbitrary arrest. Invading employee privacy and pressuring managers to contribute to particular political candidates would be unethical according to this standard. So would failing to honor contracts, since such behavior would reduce our freedom to enter into agreements for fear of being defrauded.

Principle 2a, the *equal opportunity principle*, asserts that everyone should have the same chance to qualify for offices and jobs. Job discrimination based on race, gender, or ethnic origin is forbidden. Further, all citizens ought to have access to the training and education needed to prepare for these positions. (Case Study 1.3 demonstrates how access to higher education is anything but equal.) Principle 2b, the *difference principle*, recognizes that inequalities exist but that priority should be given to meeting the needs of the disadvantaged.

Rawls introduced the concept of the *veil of ignorance* to support his claim that these principles should guide decision making in democratic societies like Great Britain, the United States, and Canada. Imagine, he said, a group of people who are asked to come up with a set of guidelines that will govern their interactions. Group members are ignorant of their own characteristics or societal position—they may be privileged or poor, employed or unemployed, healthy or sick, and so on. Faced with such uncertainty, these individuals will likely base their choices on the *maximin rule*. This rule states that the best option is the one whose worst outcome is better than the worst outcomes of all the other options. Or, to put it another way, the best choice is the one that guarantees everyone a minimum level of benefits.

Rawls argued that individuals standing behind the veil of ignorance would adopt his moral guidelines because they would ensure the best outcomes even in the worst of circumstances. Citizens would select (1) equal liberty, because they would be guaranteed freedom even if they occupied the lowest rungs of society; (2) equal opportunity, because if they turned out to be the most talented societal members, they would not be held back by low social standing or lack of opportunity; and (3) the difference principle, because they would want to be sure they were cared for if they ended up disadvantaged.

Evaluation

Rawls became one of the most influential philosophers of his time because he offered a way to reconcile the long-standing tension between individual freedom and social justice. His system for distributing resources and benefits encompasses personal liberty as well as the common good. Individual rights are protected. Moreover, talented, skilled, or fortunate people are free to pursue their goals, but the fruits of their labor must also benefit their less fortunate neighbors. Applying Rawls's principles would have a significant positive impact on the moral behavior of organizations. High achievers would continue to be rewarded for their efforts, but not, as is too often the case, at the expense of their coworkers. All of an organization's members (including those, for example, employed in low-income jobs in the fast-food industry) would be guaranteed a minimum level of benefits, such as a living wage

and health insurance. Everyone would have equal opportunity for training, promotion, and advancement. The growing gap in compensation between the top and bottom layers of the organization would shrink.

Rawls's theory addresses some of the weaknesses of utilitarianism outlined earlier. In his system, individuals have intrinsic value and are not to be treated as means to some greater end. Certain rights should always be protected. The interests of the organization as a whole do not justify extreme harm to particular groups and individuals.

Stepping behind a veil of ignorance does more than provide a justification for Rawls's model; it can also serve as a useful technique to use when making moral choices. Status and power differences are an integral part of organizational life. Nonetheless, if we can set these inequities aside temporarily, we are likely to make more just decisions. The least advantaged usually benefit when status differences are excluded from the decision-making process. We need to ask ourselves if we are treating everyone fairly or if we are being unduly influenced by someone's position or relationship to us. Classical orchestras provide one example of how factoring out differences can improve the lot of marginalized groups. Orchestras began to hire a much higher percentage of female musicians after they erected screens that prevented judges from seeing the gender of players during auditions.[23]

Rawls's influence has not spared his theory from intense criticism. Skeptics note that the theory's abstractness limits its usefulness. Rawls offered only broad guidelines, which can be interpreted in a number of different ways. Definitions of justice and fairness vary widely, a fact that undermines the usefulness of his principles. What seems fair to one group or individual often appears grossly unjust to others. Take, for instance, programs that reserve a certain percentage of federal contracts for minority contractors. Giving preferential treatment to minorities can be defended based on the equal opportunity and difference principles. Members of these groups claim that they should be favored in the bidding process to redress past discrimination and to achieve equal footing with whites. On the other hand, such policies can be seen as impinging upon the equal liberty principle because they limit the freedom of Caucasians to pursue their goals. White contractors feel that these requirements unfairly restrict their options. They are denied the opportunity to compete for work based on the criteria of quality and cost.

By trying to reconcile the tension between liberty and equality, Rawls left himself open to attack from advocates of both values. Some complain that he would distribute too much to the have-nots; others believe that his concern for liberty means that he wouldn't give enough. Further, philosophers point out that there is no guarantee that parties who step behind the veil of ignorance would come up with the same set of principles as Rawls. They might not use the maximin rule to guide their decisions. Rather than emphasizing fairness, these individuals might decide to emphasize certain rights, such as freedom from coercion. Or they might believe that benefits should be distributed based on the contributions each person makes to the group, arguing that helping out the less advantaged rewards laziness while discouraging productive people from doing their best. Because decision makers may reach different conclusions behind the veil, critics contend that Rawls's guidelines lack moral force and that other approaches to distributing resources are just as valid as the notion of fairness.

Aristotelian Ethics: Live Well

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) would appear on any list of the most influential thinkers in history. Here are just some of the topics he wrote about: logic, philosophy, ethics, zoology, biology, chemistry, astronomy, botany, language, rhetoric, psychology, the arts, and

politics. One biographer summed up his achievements this way: "He bestrode antiquity like an intellectual colossus. No man before him had contributed so much to learning. No man [or woman] could hope to rival his achievements."[24] A student of Plato, Aristotle founded a school for young scholars (the Lyceum) in Athens and served as an advisor to Alexander the Great. His surviving works are not in polished book form but consist of collections of lectures and teaching notes.

Bentham, Mills, Kant, Rawls, and most other moral philosophers argue that we make the right choices by following rules or principles. Not so Aristotle. He contends that we will make ethical decisions if we develop character traits or virtues.[25] These virtues are both intellectual (prudence and wisdom that give us insight) and moral (e.g., courage, generosity, justice, wisdom). To make ethical determinations, virtuous people find the mean or middle ground between the extremes of too little (deficit) and too much (excess) in a given context, which some refer to as the "Golden Mean." For instance, the entrepreneur who refuses to invest in any project, fearing loss, is cowardly. But the overoptimistic entrepreneur who ignores risks is foolish. The courageous entrepreneur recognizes the risks but invests when appropriate. Aristotle admits that finding this balance is difficult:

> Hence also it is no easy task to be good. For in everything it is no easy task to find the middle . . . anyone can get angry—that is easy—or give or spend money; but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right aim, and in the right way, *that* is not for everyone, nor is it easy; that is why goodness is both rare and laudable and noble.[26]

According to Aristotle, we cannot separate character from action: "Men [and women] become builders by building, and lyre-players by playing the lyre, so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts."[27] Good habits are voluntary routines or practices designed to foster virtuous behavior. Every time we engage in a habit—telling the truth, giving credit to others, giving to the less fortunate— it leaves a trace. Over time, these residual effects become part of our personality, and the habit becomes "second nature." In other words, by doing better, we become better. We also become more skilled in demonstrating the virtue. Practicing self-restraint, for instance, improves the ability to demonstrate self-restraint under pressure. (I'll have more to say about character-building habits in Chapter 3.) Conversely, practicing bad habits encourages the development of vices that stunt character development. Lying once makes it easier to lie again, helping to undermine our integrity.

For Aristotle, the exercise of virtues is designed to serve a higher purpose. To describe this purpose, he uses the term *eudemonia*, which has been variously translated as "happiness," "success," and "flourishing." Eudemonia is the ultimate goal in life for which we strive through our actions and choices. We are happiest when living well—effectively using our abilities to achieve our purpose. Aristotle rejects the notion that happiness comes from pleasure—food, wine, entertainment—and is critical of those who pursue wealth solely to purchase these items. In fact, fixating on pleasure puts us at the level of animals. It is our ability to reason and to apply reason to higher goals that sets us apart from other creatures. Aristotle urges us to focus more on goods of the soul that include the mind (knowledge, contemplation) as well as our relationships with others (love, friendship). Because people are social or political in nature, we flourish when working together in community. Good (high-character) individuals create a good society.

Evaluation

Aristotle's enduring popularity can be traced, in large part, to the fact that he addresses some of humankind's most important concerns: What is my purpose in life? What is success? What does it mean to be human? What kind of person do I want to become, and how can I become that person? How can I live my life in the most satisfying manner possible? Modern scholars are still wrestling with these timeless questions. Happiness remains an important topic of investigation, for example, and many researchers and organizations are dedicated to determining what makes people satisfied with their lives. Aristotle's emphasis on the goods of the soul is more relevant than ever in modern materialistic societies that equate wealth with success and are driven by consumer spending on clothing, automobiles, cars, cosmetics, fine dining, and other pleasures. Aristotle contends that flourishing or living well rests not on external goods (though he agreed that we need some of these) but on developing high character and working with others to create a healthy society. He seems to take direct aim at businesspeople who excuse immoral behavior by saying "business is business" and care only about generating profits. Business ethicist Robert Solomon summarized Aristotle's message to businesspeople this way:

> The bottom line of the Aristotelian approach to business ethics is that we have to get away from "bottom line" thinking and conceive of business as an essential part of the good life, living well, getting along with others, having a sense of self-respect, and being part of something one can be proud of.[28]

Virtue ethicists who follow Aristotle's lead recognize that ethical decisions are often made under time pressures in uncertain conditions.[29] Individuals in these situations don't have time to apply rules-based approaches by weighing possible consequences or selecting an abstract guideline to apply. Instead, they respond based on their character. Those with virtuous character will immediately react in ways that benefit themselves, others, and the greater good. They will quickly turn down bribes, reach out to help others, and so on. Character is shaped through repeated actions or habits. Patterns of behavior (good or bad) tend to continue over time and are hard to break.

Those looking for specific guidance from Aristotle will be disappointed. He offers only general thoughts about what it means to "live well," leaving us to define happiness for ourselves. Since Aristotle provides no rules to follow when making ethical choices, we must determine what is right based on our character. Further complicating matters is the fact that the exercise of virtue is determined by the specifics of the situation. Finding the middle ground or mean is difficult (as Aristotle himself points out) and varies between contexts. Individuals will likely disagree as to the correct course of action. What is courageous to one person may appear rash to another.

Aristotle privileges reason as humankind's highest achievement and treats emotion with suspicion. As we'll see in Chapter 2, modern researchers are discovering that feelings play an important role in making wise ethical choices. Finally, it should be noted that some people would never be able to live well according to Aristotle. Certain individuals lack reasoning ability, for example. Others (like many around the world who live on a dollar a day) must put all their efforts into acquiring external goods like food, shelter, and water. They have little time and energy to engage their minds in the reflection and contemplation Aristotle considered so essential to eudemonia.

Confucianism: Building Healthy Relationships

China's emergence as an economic superpower has focused the attention of Western scholars on Chinese culture and thought. Ethicists have been particularly interested in Confucianism. Confucius (551–479 BCE), the son of a low-level official, was born into a turbulent period of Chinese history. Wars, palace coups, and power struggles were common as the ruling Zhou dynasty collapsed into competing states. Confucius wanted to restore order and good government. He believed that the ideal society is based on a series of harmonious, hierarchical relationships (starting in the family and extending all the way up to the pinnacle of government) marked by trust and mutual concern. Ideal citizens are individuals of high character who engage in lifelong learning and always strive to improve their ethical performance. Ideal leaders govern by setting a moral example.[30]

Confucius apparently served a brief period as a government minister but spent most of his life working outside the political system, offering his ideas to various rulers. After his death, a number of his disciples, most notably Mencius, spread his ideas; Confucianism gained a foothold in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. The philosophy's most important guidebook, *The Analects*, is a collection of the founder's (Master's) sayings. Confucianism was adopted as the official state doctrine of the Han dynasty, but throughout Chinese history Confucian thought has undergone periodic attack, most recently during Mao's Cultural Revolution of the 1970s. However, since that time Confucius has regained his popularity. Chinese universities host Confucian study centers, and Chinese children spend their weekends memorizing Confucian texts in private schools. Some 480 Confucius institutes have been established on six continents, including North America. Several highly successful businesses in mainland China, Taiwan, and Korea operate according to Confucian principles, including Sinyi Realty, financial services conglomerate Ping An Insurance, and electronics giant LG.

Several key components of Confucianism are particularly relevant for modern business and organizational ethics, starting with the philosophy's emphasis on relationships.[31] Confucius argued that humans don't exist in isolation but are social creatures connected to others through networks of relationships. Because organizations consist of webs of relationships, it is critical that these connections be based on trust and benefit all parties. Organizations must also establish relationships with other organizations, as in the case of a firm that moves into a new foreign market. This company must enter into agreements with shippers, suppliers, local distributors, banks, and other business partners in the new country. The firm's expansion plans will fail if its relational partners don't live up to their responsibilities.

Confucianism emphasizes that rituals, policies, norms, and procedures—referred to as etiquette, or *li*—maintain relationships within and between organizations. These practices also prevent ethical misbehavior. It is easier to trust others if we operate under the same guidelines, and we are less likely to cheat or steal if there are clearly stated rules against such activities. (We'll take a closer look at the formal and informal elements of ethical culture in Chapter 9.) However, Confucius was quick to point out that rules and codes are not enough, by themselves, to maintain good relationships and ethical behavior. Individuals have a moral duty to take their roles and duties seriously. They should follow the Golden Rule ("Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you") in all of their dealings.

Confucius, like Aristotle, puts a high priority on personal virtues or character.[32] That's because virtuous behavior is essential to maintaining healthy relationships and fulfilling organizational duties. The most important Confucian virtue is that of humaneness or

benevolence. Benevolence goes beyond displaying compassion. It also means treating others with respect and promoting their development through education and other means. In addition to benevolence, the key virtues of Confucianism are honesty, trust, kindness, and tolerance. Virtuous people put the needs of others above their own. They seek the good of the organization as a whole and of the larger society. Consider profit making, for instance. While they do not condemn profit, Confucian thinkers argue that profit should never take precedence over moral behavior or concern for others. The ideal person strives first for virtue, then for profits. In instructing the king, Mencius emphasized that commercial activities should serve the needs of society:

> Your majesty . . . What is the point of mentioning the word "profit"? All that matters is that there should be benevolence and rightness . . . If the mulberry is planted in every homestead, then those who are fifty can wear silk; if chickens, pigs and dogs do not miss their breeding season, then those who are seventy can eat meat; if each field is not deprived of labor during the busy season then families with several mouths to feed will not go hungry . . . When those who are seventy wear silk and eat meat and the masses are neither cold nor hungry, it is impossible for the prince not to be a true king. (Mencius I, 3, I, A, 1, 1, A, 3)[33]

Finally, Confucians recognize the reality of status and power differences in society as well as in organizations. Individuals occupy various roles and levels in the organizational hierarchy, and humaneness demands that we treat every person, whatever their position, with love and concern. At the same time, Confucius recognized the important role played by those at the top of the hierarchy. Executive-level management plays a key role in establishing moral organizational climates by setting an ethical example and expecting ethical behavior from followers. For example,[34]

> The Master said, "When a prince's personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without issuing orders. If his personal conduct is not correct, he may issue orders, but they will not be followed." (*Analects*, XIII, vi)

> The Master said, "The superior man seeks to perfect the admirable qualities of men, and does not *seek to* perfect their bad qualities." (*Analects*, XII, xvi)

Evaluation

Confucianism highlights the fundamental truth that organizations, economies, and societies are built on relationships. As the global economy grows, fostering ethical relationships will become even more important. People who never meet each other in person now conduct much of the world's business. Confucius offers a blueprint for fostering trusting, healthy relationships that we can put into practice. We need to institute rules and procedures that create ethical organizational climates. However, codes and policies are not enough. We have to develop personal character to equip us to take our duties seriously and follow the Golden Rule. Every person, no matter their status, is worthy of our respect and should be treated as we would want to be treated. Putting the interests of others ahead of our own concerns can keep us from taking advantage of them or pursuing profit above people. Confucian thought also recognizes that the leader shapes the ethical climate of the organization by setting a moral example.

The strengths of Confucianism can become weaknesses if taken too far.[35] Consider the philosophy's emphasis on social connections, for example. Placing too much importance on relationships can undermine justice or fairness. Jobs and promotions in China often go to family members, friends, and associates instead of the most qualified individuals. In China, *guanxi*, which is the practice of favoring those with social connections, has led to corruption. Local and foreign firms try to establish *guanxi* through bribes to win public works contracts, commercial deals, and bank loans. Placing too much emphasis on hierarchy and submission to the collective good can foster authoritarian leadership where leaders impose their will and employees have little freedom but blindly submit to authority. Critics also point out that pursuing harmony at any cost can suppress individual rights and silence dissent. Many Confucian thinkers have been reluctant to endorse the existence of universal human rights like those described earlier.[36]

Altruism: Concern for Others

Altruism is based on the principle that we should help others regardless of whether or not we profit from doing so.[37] Assisting those in need may be rewarding—we may feel good about ourselves or receive public recognition, for example. Nevertheless, altruistic behavior seeks to benefit the other person, not the self. The most notable cases of altruism are those that involve significant self-sacrifice, as when a soldier jumps on a grenade to save the rest of the platoon or when an employee donates a kidney to another worker in need of a transplant. The word *altruism* comes from the Latin root *alter*, which means "other." Advocates of altruism argue that love of one's neighbor is the ultimate ethical standard.

Some philosophers argue that altruism doesn't deserve to be treated as a separate ethical perspective because altruistic behavior is promoted in other moral theories. Utilitarians seek the good of others, Kant urges us to treat others with respect, and Confucius identifies compassion as a key element in maintaining proper social relations. However, I believe that altruism deserves to be considered on its own merits and demerits. To begin with, altruism often calls for self-sacrificial behavior, whereas utilitarianism and the categorical imperative do not. Kant warns us never to treat people as a means to an end. Altruism goes a step further and urges us to treat people as if they *are* the ends. Then, too, there is significant debate over the existence of prosocial. One group of evolutionary biologists believe that humans are conduits of "selfish genes."[38] For instance, they believe that anything we do on behalf of family members is motivated by the desire to transmit our genetic code. Some skeptical philosophers argue that people are egoists. Every act, no matter how altruistic on the surface, always serves our needs, such as helping others because we expect to get paid back at some later time.

In response to the skeptics, a growing body of research in sociology, neuroscience, political science, economics, social psychology, and other fields establishes that true altruism does exist and is an integral part of the human experience.[39] In fact, altruistic behavior is common in everyday life:

> We humans spend much of our time and energy helping others. We stay up all night to comfort a friend who has suffered a broken relationship. We send money to rescue famine victims halfway round the world, or to save whales, or to support public television. We spend millions of hours per week helping as volunteers in hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, fire departments, rescue squads, shelters, halfway houses, peer-counseling programs, and the like. We stop on a busy highway to help a stranded motorist change a flat tire, or spend an hour in the cold to push a friend's—even a stranger's—car out of a snowdrift.[40]

Care for others appears to be a universal value, one promoted by religions the world over. Representatives from a variety of religious groups agree that every person deserves humane treatment, no matter their ethnic background, language, skin color, political beliefs, or social standing.[41] Western thought has been greatly influenced by the altruistic emphasis of Judaism and Christianity. The command to love God and to love others as we love ourselves is the most important obligation in Judeo-Christian ethics. Since humans are made in the image of God, and God is love, we have an obligation to love others no matter who they are and no matter what their relationship is to us. Jesus drove home this point in the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this tale, a generous businessman stops,—at great risk to himself and his reputation,—to befriend a wounded Jewish traveler—a person he could have considered his enemy. (Complete Self-Assessment 1.2 to determine your level of altruism.)

Concern for others promotes healthy relationships like those described by Confucius. Society functions more effectively when individuals help one another in their daily inter-actions. This is particularly apparent in organizations. Many productive management prac-tices, like empowerment, mentoring, and team building, have an altruistic component. Researchers use the term *organizational citizenship behavior* to describe routine altruistic acts that increase productivity and build trusting relationships.[42] Examples of organizational citizenship behavior include an experienced machine operator helping a newcomer master the equipment, a professor teaching a class for a colleague on jury duty, and an administrative assistant working over break to help a coworker meet a deadline. Such acts play an important if underrecognized role in organizational success. Much less work would get done if members refused to help out. Take the case of a new machine operator. Without guidance, this person may flounder for weeks, producing a number of defective parts and slowing the production process. Caring behaviors also break down barriers of antagonism between individuals and departments. Communication and coordination increase, leading to better overall results.

SELF-ASSESSMENT 1.2
THE SELF-REPORT ALTRUISM SCALE

Instructions

Circle the number on the right that conforms to the frequency with which you have carried out the fol-lowing acts. Scores range from 20 to 100. The higher the score, the more you believe you engage in altruistic behavior.

	Never	Once	More than once	Often	Very often
1. I have helped push a stranger's car out of the snow.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have given directions to a stranger.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I have made change for a stranger.	1	2	3	4	5

(*Continued*)

(Continued)

	Never	Once	More than once	Often	Very often
4. I have given money to a charity.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have given money to a stranger who needed it (or asked me for it).	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have donated goods or clothes to a charity.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have done volunteer work for a charity.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have donated blood.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have helped carry a stranger's belongings (books, parcels, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have delayed an elevator and held the door open for a stranger.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I have allowed someone to go ahead of me in a line (at photocopy machine, in the supermarket).	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have given a stranger a lift in my car.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I have pointed out a clerk's error (in a bank, at the supermarket) in undercharging me for an item.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I have let a neighbour whom I didn't know too well borrow an item of some value to me (e.g., a dish, tools, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
15. I have bought "charity" Christmas cards deliberately because I knew it was a good cause.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I have helped a classmate who[m] I did not know that well with a homework assignment when my knowledge was greater than his or hers.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I have, before being asked, voluntarily looked after a neighbour's pets or children without being paid for it.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I have offered to help a handicapped or elderly stranger across a street.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I have offered my seat on a bus or train to a stranger who was standing.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I have helped an acquaintance to move households.	1	2	3	4	5

The Ethic of Care

Altruism provides the foundation for the *ethic of care*, which developed as an alternative to what feminists deem the traditional, male-oriented approach to ethics.[43] The categorical imperative and justice-as-fairness theories, for example, emphasize the importance of acting on abstract moral principles, being impartial, and treating others fairly. Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, and others initially argued that women take a different approach (a "different voice") to moral decision making that is based on caring for others. Instead of expressing concern for people in abstract terms, women care for others through their relationships and tailor their responses to the particular needs of the other individual. Subsequent research has revealed that the ethic of care serves as a moral standard for many men as well as for many (but not all) women.[44]

The ethic of care incorporates both attitude and action.[45] Caring individuals are alert to the needs of others. They value those who demonstrate care and concern as well as groups and societies that tend to the needs of their members. Care is also an activity.[46] To practice care, we must first recognize or be attentive to the needs of others. We then have to take responsibility for meeting those needs. Providing good care depends on having the right skills, such as listening, counseling abilities, and medical training. As caregivers, we should recognize that receivers of care are in a vulnerable position, and we must not take advantage of that fact.

Philosopher Virginia Held identifies five key components of the care ethic that separate it from other moral philosophies.[47]

1. *Focuses on the importance of noting and meeting the needs of those we are responsible for.* Most people are dependent for much of their existence, including during childhood, during illness, and near the end of life. Morality built on rights and autonomy overlooks this fact. The ethic of care makes concern for others central to human experience and puts the needs of specific individuals—a child, a coworker—first.

2. *Values emotions.* Sympathy, sensitivity, empathy, and responsiveness are moral emotions that need to be cultivated. This stands in sharp contrast to ethical approaches that urge decision makers to set aside their feelings to make rational determinations. However, emotions need to be carefully monitored and evaluated to make sure they are appropriate. For example, caregivers caught up in empathy can deny their own needs or end up dominating the recipients of their care.

3. *Gives priority to specific needs and relationships over universal principles.* The ethic of care rejects the notion of impartiality and believes that particular relationships are more important than universal moral principles like rights and freedom. For instance, the needs of our immediate coworkers should take precedence over the needs of distant employees or society as a whole (though we should be concerned for members of those groups as well). Most moral theories see ethical problems as conflicts between two extremes: the selfish individual and universal moral principles. The care ethic falls somewhere in between. Persons in caring relationships aren't out to promote their personal interests or the interests of humanity; instead, they want to foster ethical relationships with specific individuals. These relationships benefit both parties. Family and friendships have great moral value in the ethic of care, and caregiving is a critical moral responsibility.

4. *Breaks down the barriers between the public and private spheres.* In the past, men were dominant in the public sphere while relegating women to the "private" sphere. Men largely made decisions about the exercise of political and economic power while women were marginalized. As a result, women were often economically dependent and suffered domestic violence, cut off from outside help. Previous moral theories focused on public life and ignored families and friendships, but the ethic of care addresses the moral issues that arise in the private domain. It recognizes that problems faced in the private sphere, such as inequality and dependency, also arise in the public sphere.

5. *Views persons as both relational and interdependent.* Each of us starts life depending on others, and we depend on our webs of interpersonal relationships throughout our time on Earth. These relationships help create our identity. Unlike liberal political theory, which views persons as rational, self-interested individuals, in the ethic of care individuals are seen as "embedded" in particular families, cultures, and historical periods. Embeddedness means that we need to take responsibility for others, not merely leave them alone to exercise their individual rights.

Adopting the ethic of care would significantly change organizational priorities. Employers would use caring as a selection criterion, hiring those who demonstrate relational understanding and skills.[48] Managers would be evaluated based on how well they demonstrated concern for employees. Organizations would help members strike a better balance between work and home responsibilities, provide more generous family leave policies, expand employee assistance programs, and so on. Those directly involved in caregiving—assisted-living attendants, nursery school teachers, hospice workers, home health caregivers—would receive more money, recognition, and status.

Evaluation

Altruism has much to offer. First, concern for others is a powerful force for good. It drives people to volunteer to care for the dying, to teach prisoners, to act as Big Brothers and Sisters, to provide medical relief, and to answer crisis calls. Every year CNN television honors "ordinary heroes"—those devoted to helping others and the environment.[49] Recent honorees include a Nigerian woman who helps girls learn tech skills, a Mumbai lawyer who organized a volunteer movement to remove 60 million pounds of garbage from area waterways, a Colorado man who refits RVs to house wildfire victims, and a former Texas prisoner who helps those who have been incarcerated transition back into society. (Turn to Ethical Checkpoint 1.1 to see how suffering can encourage victims to reach out to others.)

Second, following the principle of caring helps prevent ethical abuses. We're much less likely to take advantage of others through accounting fraud, stealing, cheating, and other means if we put their needs first. (We'll return to this theme in our discussion of servant leadership in Chapter 7.) Third, altruistic behavior, as we've seen, promotes healthy relationships and organizations. There are practical benefits to acting in a caring manner.

Fourth, altruism lays the foundation for high moral character. Many personal virtues, like compassion, hospitality, generosity, and empathy, reflect concern for other people. Fifth, adopting an ethic of care would make our workplaces more humane and provide caregivers with the rewards they so richly deserve. Finally, altruism is inspiring. When we hear of the selfless acts of Desmond Tutu, the Rwandans who risked their lives to save their neighbors from genocide, and health workers battling COVID-19, we are moved to follow their example.

While compelling, altruism suffers from serious deficiencies. All too often, our concern for others extends only to our immediate families, neighbors, or communities.[50] On the other hand, it may be possible to take altruism too far. Extreme altruists put the needs of others above their own needs and the needs of their families, risking their health and comfort and putting their loved ones in danger.[51] Sadly, well-intentioned attempts to help others can backfire. They fail to meet the need, have unintended negative consequences, or make the problem worse. A large proportion of the money donated to some charities pays for fund-raising expenses rather than for client services. Government agencies can create dependence by providing welfare assistance.

Altruism is not an easy principle to put into practice. For every time we stop to help a stranded motorist, we probably pass by several others who need assistance. Our urge to help out a coworker is often suppressed by our need to get our own work done or to meet a pressing deadline. Common excuses for ignoring needs include the following: (1) "Somebody else will do it, so I don't need to help"; (2) "I didn't know there was a problem" (deliberately ignoring a coworker's emotional upset or someone's unfair treatment); (3) "I don't have the time or energy"; (4) "I don't know enough to help"; (5) "People deserve what they get" (disdain for those who need help); (6) "It won't matter anyway, because one person can't make much of a difference"; and (7) "What's in it for me?" (looking for personal benefit in every act).[52] Even when we do help, it can be out of suspect motives. We may be driven by peer pressure, guilt, or the desire to maintain a good image. In some cases, we may hope that our good deeds can atone for our past bad behavior. There's also disagreement about what constitutes loving behavior. For example, firing someone can be seen as cruel or as caring. This act may appear punitive to outsiders. However, terminating an employee may be in that person's best interests. For someone who is not a good fit for an organization, being fired can open the door to a more productive career.

The ethic of care often conflicts with the ethic of justice. Take the allocation of jobs and resources, for instance. The ethic of care suggests that job openings and organizational funds should go to those closest to us—family, friends, acquaintances, coworkers. The ethic of justice holds that such determinations should be impartial, based on qualifications, not relationships (see our earlier discussion of Confucianism). Care and justice often clash in the legal system as well. Some advocate that jails should focus on rehabilitation; others argue that the prison system should focus on punishment, seeing that criminals get the treatment they deserve. Norway is one nation that takes a caring rather than a punitive approach to incarceration, housing inmates in beautiful facilities and treating them with respect. While Norwegians argue that their system reduces the number of prisoners who return to jail, many in the United States and Britain believe that Norway's compassionate prison system is unjust to the victims of crime.[53]

ETHICAL CHECKPOINT 1.1

Altruism Born of Suffering

Suffering seems an unlikely place to find altruism. After all, many victims of traumatic events (i.e., natural disasters, wars, terrorism) and personal adversity (i.e., illness, abuse, discrimination) suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and other negative symptoms. They often react with aggression and violence, inflicting suffering on others. Nonetheless, a significant number of sufferers respond with compassion instead of hate. They engage in altruism, not in spite of but *because of* these adverse experiences.

University of Massachusetts psychologists Ervin Staub and Johanna Vollhardt introduce the altruism born of suffering (ABS) concept to explain the response of victims who reach out to others in caring, helpful ways.[1] Examples of ABS include experienced female executives who were the targets of sex discrimination mentoring young female managers, children in war zones sharing toys and candies after air raids, alcoholics serving as sponsors in Alcoholics Anonymous groups, sexual abuse victims joining the mental health profession, and cancer survivors starting local chapters of the American Cancer Society.

Experiences that promote ABS include the following:

1. *Healing and psychological recovery.* Victims generally need to experience healing from the trauma before they can reach out to others. This can occur through finding social support, learning about the causes and impact of violence, therapy, and writing about painful experiences. Targets of mistreatment are more likely to recover when perpetrators assume responsibility for their actions, acknowledging the truth of what happened and the need for justice. It is empowering for victims of mass violence like genocide to understand why offenders acted as they did. They recognize that they are not to blame for their suffering while developing a more favorable view of perpetrators.

2. *Support and guidance from others.* Victims who have loving relationships and social support are more likely to engage in ABS. Early positive experiences with family and community protect individuals from the negative impact of traumatic life events. Receiving help during and immediately after the trauma reduces insecurity and restores faith in humanity. Altruistic role models play an important role too as victims imitate their behaviors.

3. *Personal helping actions.* Those who take effective action during a flood, bombing or other major traumatic event are better equipped to help in the future. Helping others (e.g., rescuing neighbors trapped by floodwaters, treating wounded coworkers) can provide a sense of meaning and promote healing.

Experiences that promote ABS, in turn, bring about the following psychological changes that increase the motivation to help:

1. *Heightened awareness of suffering.* To help, people must recognize that others need assistance. Those who have suffered tend to be more sensitive to the suffering of others. In one study, those who experienced traumatic life events were more aware of news of a tsunami and felt more responsibility to help flood victims.

2. *Greater perspective taking, empathy, and sympathy.* Undergoing suffering can lead to a greater understanding of how other sufferers feel. In the tsunami study, trauma victims were more likely

to spontaneously express empathy for those who lost their homes and lives.

3. *Perceived similarity and identification with other victims.* Those who have suffered are more like to identify with others in need. Their identification with victims can encourage them to reach beyond their immediate group, such as when Israeli victims of violence reach out to help Palestinian victims of violence.

4. *Greater responsibility for the suffering of others.* Those who feel responsibility for the welfare of others are more likely to act on their behalf. Victimization often leads to a greater feeling of responsibility to alleviate the suffering of others.

We can take steps to promote ABS in ourselves and others. We are more likely to practice altruism after the trauma if we begin to help during our victimization. We need to reach out for help and look for role models. At the same time, we can encourage our organizations to help sufferers by providing opportunities for healing, support, and guidance and by letting them know that others have undergone similar trauma.

Note

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Chapter Takeaways

- Developing ethical competencies is essential to taking a practical approach to organizational ethics.

- Ethical experts know more about the ethical domain, see the world differently than novices, and have different skill sets. To become more of an ethical expert, learn in a well-structured environment, master moral theory and skills, and practice, practice, practice.

- In order to think and act ethically, expand your capacity for moral maturation (ethical thinking) and moral conation (motivation).

Build your (1) cognitive decision-making competence—ability to solve moral problems; (2) affective prebehavioral disposition—motivation to follow through on choices; and (3) context management competence—managerial skill to create ethical organizational environments.

- Organizations are made up of three or more persons engaged in coordinated action in pursuit of a common purpose or goal. Ethics is concerned with the rightness or wrongness of human behavior. Organizational ethics applies moral standards to the organizational context.

- Ethical theories or perspectives are critical tools for developing competence. Each ethical perspective has its weaknesses, but each makes a valuable contribution to moral problem solving.

- Utilitarian decisions are based on their consequences. The goal is to select the alternative that achieves the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

- Kant's categorical imperative is based on the premise that decision makers should do what's morally right no matter the consequences. Moral choices flow out of a sense of duty and are those that we would want everyone to make. Always respect the worth of others when making ethical decisions.

- Justice-as-fairness theory provides a set of guidelines for resolving disputes over the distribution of resources. Ensure that everyone in your organization has certain rights, such as freedom of speech and thought; is provided with a minimum level of benefits; and has the same chance at positions and promotions. Try to make decisions without being swayed by personal or status considerations.

- Aristotelian ethics rejects rules-based approaches and urges us to develop virtues that lead to wise moral choices. You'll need to find the middle ground between extremes (not deficiency or excess) and focus your choices and actions on your ultimate purpose, which is happiness or flourishing. Live well by pursuing goods of the soul, which develop the mind and relationships, not wealth or pleasure.

- Confucianism focuses on the importance of creating healthy, trusting relationships. You can help build such connections by establishing ethical organizational practices, taking your responsibilities seriously, following the Golden Rule, demonstrating humanity toward others, and seeking the good of others over your own interests.

- Altruism seeks to benefit the other person, not the self. By making caring for others the ethical standard, you can encourage practices—empowering, mentoring, team building, organizational citizenship behavior—that build trust, reduce pain, and increase productivity. The ethic of care rejects abstract, universal moral principles in favor of meeting the needs of specific individuals.

Application Projects

1. Outline a plan for developing your ethical competence. What skills/abilities do you want to develop? How will you incorporate the components of ethical development described in this chapter into your plan?

2. Reflect on one of your ethical decisions. Which approach(es) did you use when making your determination? Evaluate the effectiveness of the approach(es) as well as

the quality of your choice. What did you learn from this experience?

3. Form a group and develop a list of behaviors that are always right and behaviors that are always wrong. Keep a record of those behaviors that were nominated but rejected by the team and why. Report your final list, as well as your rejected items, to the rest of the class. What do you conclude from this exercise?

4. Join with classmates and imagine that you are behind a veil of ignorance. What principles will you use to govern society and organizations?

5. What does happiness mean to you? How is your education helping you (or not helping you) to flourish and live well?

6. How would your organization operate differently if it were governed by the ethic of care?

7. During a week, make note of all the altruistic behavior you witness in your organization. How would you classify these behaviors? What impact do they have on your organization? How would your organization be different if people didn't engage in organizational citizenship behavior? Write up your findings.

8. Create a case study based on an individual or group you admire for its altruistic motivation. Provide background and outline the lessons we can learn from this person or persons. As an alternative, create a case study based on an organization operating according to Confucian principles.

9. Apply all six ethical perspectives presented in the chapter to the case studies. Keep a record of your deliberations and conclusions using each one. Did you reach different solutions based on the theory you used? Were some of the perspectives more useful in this situation? Are you more confident after looking at the problem from a variety of perspectives? Write up your findings.

CASE STUDY 1.1

FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY: A TOOL FOR PUBLIC SAFETY OR OPPRESSION?

In May 2019, San Francisco became the first major American city to ban the use of facial recognition technology by the police and other government agencies. In facial recognition, police officers and other law enforcement officials identify suspects by submitting facial images from photos or videos and then comparing them to pictures from driver's licenses, mug shots, jail booking records, and other government databases. As the technology continues to advance, police will soon be able to identify individuals in real time from live video footage. Facial recognition has many advantages over DNA evidence, which is costly and takes days to process. Once a facial recognition system is installed, there is little overhead, and results can be generated in minutes.

Law enforcement officials from all around the country point to cases solved through the use of facial recognition. (At last count, one in four police departments employ the software with the number expected to increase rapidly.) Police have used facial recognition to convict those committing property crimes, credit card scams, rapes, robberies, car thefts, and bank robberies. Border patrol agents use the software to identify those trying to enter the country illegally. According to a constitutional law expert at George Washington University: "It is ridiculous to deny the value of this technology in

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securing airports and border installations. It is hard to deny that there is a public safety value to this technology."[1]

Facial recognition opponents argue that the potential costs of the technology outweigh any public safety benefits. Civil liberties advocates cite studies demonstrating that systems produced by Amazon, IBM, and Microsoft fail to recognize dark-skinned subjects. They worry that facial recognition will lead to false arrests and convictions, particularly among people of color. Former congressional representative Elijah Cummings (D-MD) noted: "If you're black, you're more likely to be subjected to this technology, and the technology is more likely to be wrong. That's a hell of a combination."[2]

Critics point out that there is currently no oversight of how police use facial recognition technology. The American Civil Liberties Union, congressional representatives from both parties, and other groups worry that facial recognition can become a tool for oppression. They point out that China uses facial recognition to control its Uighur Muslim minority and to ensure that its citizens don't jaywalk or use too much toilet paper. China's leaders are creating a national integrated system that will use the nation's 200 million surveillance cameras to track every move of residents in public spaces. Alvaro Bedoya, the director of Georgetown University's Center on Privacy and Technology, calls facial recognition "the most pervasive and risky surveillance technology of the 21st century."[3]

While proponents and opponents reach different conclusions about whether the benefits of facial recognition outweigh the costs, there may be middle ground. Some have suggested a temporary pause in the use of the technology until it can be examined more closely. Others suggest restricting its use instead of banning it outright. For example, police could be required to get a warrant from a judge before running a facial search, just as they must get a warrant before conducting a property search.

Discussion Probes

1. Can you think of other possible benefits or costs to the use of facial recognition technology in law enforcement?

2. Do the benefits of facial recognition technology outweigh the costs?

3. What limitations, if any, should be put on the use of facial recognition technology in law enforcement?

4. Is facial recognition software a tool for public safety, for oppression, or for both?

5. Do you support San Francisco's ban on facial recognition software? Why or why not?

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CASE STUDY 1.2
PETS ON PLANES

The next time you fly, you may find yourself seated next to a dog, cat, rabbit, duck, or other creature. That's because more Americans are bringing animals into the passenger cabin. United Airlines reports that 200,000 animals travel on board its planes every year, and Delta Air Lines recorded a 150% increase in passenger animals in one year. Many are classified as service animals or emotional support animals (ESAs). According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, service animals are specially trained to do tasks for people with disabilities—for example, pulling a wheelchair, alerting or protecting someone who is having a seizure, or calming an individual with post-traumatic stress syndrome. They are considered working animals, not pets, and serve a function directly related to the person's disability. Federal regulations require that airlines accommodate individuals with disabilities who are accompanied by service animals.

ESAs serve as companions to individuals diagnosed with a disability like depression, anxiety, or panic disorder. Airlines can require that passengers supply written documentation that the animal provides emotional support. (Airlines may not require such proof for service animals.) Air carriers also have the right to limit the types of ESAs on board, such as snakes, reptiles, ferrets, rodents, and spiders. They also have latitude to ban animals if they would threaten health and safety of other passengers and disrupt the flight.

Complaints to the U.S. Department of Transportation have surged along with the number of traveling service animals and ESAs, up 500% over a five-year period. A series of high-profile incidents focused public attention on the controversy surrounding animals on planes. In one case, a dog mauled a Delta passenger, resulting in 28 stitches. (Dog attacks have also been reported by other airlines.) In another case, a squirrel got loose, causing the passengers to deplane. In a third instance, a performance artist tried to board a United flight with a peacock. Many problems stem from the fact that flyers are passing off their pets as service animals or ESAs, which allows pets to fly for free and keeps them out of cargo holds and close to their owners (who often consider their pets to be family members).

Selling fake service vests and emotional support certificates is a booming online business. For $19.99, pet owners can buy official-looking service vests from Amazon. Another online site charges $99 to "certify" a pet as an ESA by answering "yes" to any one of six questions, including "I have been under high levels of stress" and "I turn to alcohol, food or drugs to comfort me in my current life circumstances." As a result, many untrained, misbehaving pets are allowed on board. One observer argues that falsifying a service animal is comparable to faking a disability to claim a good parking space: "What is the difference between 'faking' a service animal and pretending to be disabled to secure a prized parking spot reserved only for people officially designated with a disability?"[1]

Disability advocates are particularly upset with sham service animals. They resent being treated with suspicion after fighting for years for the right to travel with their trained companions. Sharon Giovinazzo, president and CEO of World Services for the Blind, calls ESAs "four-legged terrorists," reporting that her service dog was attacked by another dog that the owner falsely claimed was a support animal. Travelers with legitimate service assistants can be kept from flying because airlines can only accommodate a limited number of animals per flight.

State legislatures and the federal government are taking action to tighten animal requirements. A growing number of states make it a crime to dress a pet as a service dog or to lie to a mental health professional about the need for a service animal. The U.S. Department of

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Transportation is moving to ban ESAs, requiring them to be transported like any other household pet, which would mean that they would have to fit on a lap or under the seat. Only trained dogs would be considered service animals, and owners would have to certify that their dogs were in good health and well behaved.

Some private organizations have proposed creating a national registry to crack down on fake service animals and ESAs. However, a number of disability advocates worry that this might make life more difficult for those who have legitimate disabilities. According to one disability attorney: "Is it [the current honor system for service animals and ESAs] ripe for abuse? Yes. Do people abuse it? Absolutely. But anything that makes it more difficult for people with disabilities to be able to exercise their . . . rights is a bad idea."[2]

Discussion Probes

1. How do you feel about traveling with animals on planes? Does it depend on the type of animal?

2. What should be the penalty for bringing a sham service dog on board an airplane?

3. How do dishonest pet owners violate Kant's categorical imperative and respect for persons?

4. Do you agree that ESAs should be banned from flights and treated as pets instead? Why or why not?

5. Should the federal government or other organization establish a national registry for service animals?

Notes

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CASE STUDY 1.3

ENTERING THROUGH THE SIDE DOOR: THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS BRIBERY SCANDAL

The largest-ever college admissions scandal confirmed what many Americans suspected: the college entrance system is rigged to favor the wealthy. Federal prosecutors charged 50 people, including actresses Lori Loughlin and Felicity Huffman and private equity firm partner William McGlashan, in an elaborate conspiracy designed to help the children of rich parents get admitted to the University of Southern California (USC), Yale, Stanford, Wake Forest, Georgetown, and other prestigious colleges.

College preparation consultant William Singer orchestrated the bribery scheme. The system worked by falsifying test scores or by fabricating athletic prowess. Parents paid between $15,000 and $75,000 to boost ACT or SAT scores. Singer hired test takers to take the exams for some teens. He also bribed proctors to point students to the right answers or to change their incorrect answers after they completed the exams.

In addition to falsifying test scores, Singer bribed athletic coaches to secure spots for applicants who may not have even played non-revenue-producing sports. (Coaches, as well as those overseeing other extracurricular activities, have discretion to recommend students who otherwise wouldn't qualify for admission.) Lori Laughlin and her husband, fashion designer Mossimo Giannulli, pled guilty to paying $500,000 to have their two daughters designated as members of the rowing team, even though neither daughter had participated in crew. In another case, to establish that his son was a water polo player, a father reportedly bought water polo equipment and staged pictures of his son in a pool.

Singer bragged that he used athletics to create a "side door" for his clients who couldn't qualify on their own merits or when their family couldn't afford to donate millions to build new campus buildings. "There is a front door which means you get in on your own," said Singer. "The back door is through institutional advancement, which is ten times as much money. And I've created this side door in."[1] The 33 parents charged by authorities paid Singer $25 million between 2011 and 2018. (The largest payment of $6.5 million was made by a Chinese businessman.) Bribes were often disguised as donations to Singer's nonprofit Key Worldwide Foundation, which allowed the parents to claim them as a tax deduction.

Singer pled guilty to charges of racketeering, money laundering, conspiracy to defraud, and obstruction of justice. He assisted the FBI in bringing indictments against the other defendants in the case. Coaches and athletic administrators at USC, Yale, Stanford, Georgetown, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of California, Los Angeles were fired and face trial. For the most part, colleges will determine what punishments, if any, should be levied on the students who benefited from the scheme, though prosecutors may also charge some students. These decisions are complicated by the fact that, in some cases, the teens didn't know their scores were being altered. However, those who submitted doctored applications will find it harder to plead ignorance. So far, several students have been kicked out of school for providing false information.

More deserving applicants believe that they were denied entrance because cheaters took some slots. It's particularly galling that at least one student who benefited from the fraud apparently isn't that interested in academics. Olivia Jade Giannulli posted a video just before entering USC on which she declared, "I do want the experience of game days and partying. I don't really care about school . . . as you guys all know."[2] (Giannulli quickly retracted her post but lost her job as social media spokesperson for Sephora.)

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Concerns about the fairness of the admissions process extend beyond the bribery scandal. Many elite colleges reserve slots for the children of alumni ("legacies"), believing that doing so will encourage their parents to give to the school. Not only does giving preference to legacies reduce the chances that more deserving students will be admitted, but legacy families are generally white and wealthy. As a result, a fourth of the country's richest students attend a selective, elite college. At the top 38 colleges, there are more students from families in the top 1% of income than in the bottom 60%. Only 22% of students at top schools receive Pell grants, which generally go to students whose families earn less than $50,000. This compares to 38% at other schools. Then, too, the "back door" to admissions—giving to guarantee that a child will be accepted—appears similar to bribery. As one student noted, "Clearly, it is illegal to bribe school officials through faked charitable donations. However, is donating a building entirely different?"[3]

Discussion Probes

1. Do you think the college admissions system at elite schools is rigged? Is it rigged at your college or university?

2. What should happen to students admitted under the bribery scheme?

3. Should admissions standards for athletes (or for those with special talents in music, drama, or other fields) be lower?

4. Should colleges discontinue legacy admissions?

5. Is donating a building to secure admission a form of bribery? Why or why not?

6. How can the college admissions process be made fairer?

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