

My original posts in Ethics LEAD 645. These are the posts that were the initial response to the instructor's questions. –by Janine Lim.

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Post #1: Introduction and Moral History

- i) **Introduction** of yourself. Be confidential but share what you can: Name, Position, family life, work (short resume of your experiences), religious heritage/persuasion (if any), and the two ethical values you consider BIG in your life and that guide your work. And give a result you hope to have from this course. **Honesty** counts more than niceties.
- ii) **Moral History:** Provide a short moral history of what has influenced your moral thinking and behavior: culture, family, socioeconomics, early school-church experience, TV, music, or other medial, mentors, teachers, sports-coaches. What is your thinking about ethics and what values do you hold most dearly when thinking about what is right, good, noble, and praise-worthy. The purpose is to get us thinking about what has influenced our moral natures (thinking, being, doing). For those creative individuals, I would say to draw pictures, arrows, and to add a little graphical pizzazz. For the rest of us, words will do.

Introduction

Personal: I'm Janine Lim and I work as an Instructional Technology Consultant at Berrien RESA (see Dennis' post for information about our name change). And yes, Dennis is my immediate supervisor. I am married and I have two cats.

Work: I've been working in instructional technology at Berrien RESA since 1997. I teach online, coordinate distance learning, and generally support the local school districts in using technology in instruction. Before this I taught for a year as a 5th and 6th homeroom, 6-8th language arts, and 9-10 Bible at Griswold Christian Academy in Worthington Ohio.

Faith: I've been a Seventh-day Adventist all my life. I'm a pastor's kid, a missionary's kid, and I was a student missionary in the Marshall Islands for a year. My faith is a pretty important part of my life.

Two ethical values: **Trust and honesty.** I'm a pretty trusting person – trusting of others and I hope that others trust me too. I thrive in relationships built on trust. A big part of building trust is being honest, and being honest kindly. I hope that this class and my work on this competency will clarify and solidify my ideas about ethics and day to day life.

Moral History

I grew up in the Adventist church as the daughter of a pastor and teacher with a pretty clear picture of black and white right and wrong. I feel pretty strongly about right and wrong, yet due to my “third-culture kid” experience, I am very interested, respectful, and open to those who have different understandings than I hold. I suspect that my views are fairly pluralist due to my travel experience, but I'm not sure. I also wonder if my ethical opinions are so strong that it's hard to take them out and examine them to describe them. On the other hand, there are some ethical issues I never think about and am never confronted with, so I'm not sure where I stand. I vaguely remember an undergrad ethics class, discussing euthanasia and other topics. I'm sure my teachers along my journey in Adventist education have also impacted my moral history. I trust this class will help me understand the scope of ethics and how it applies to my life and leadership.

I'm thrilled to be able to work on this competency in community and discussion with all of you and I can see already that my understanding will be richer due to the interaction!

Janine

Post #2: Describe the way you make ethical decisions and would process each Case. Describe the way you make ethical decisions. How do you process moral issues? Which ones are the hardest for you to handle? What do you do in processing these difficult decisions? How do you simplify your choices by fostering clear values? Then show how you would have decided on ONE of the ethical cases related to decision-making and what values and processes you would have used.

How I Make Ethical Decisions

This is a really good question, because I feel like I'm just learning to even identify ethical issues in my work and life. I tend to look at a scenario and have a quick judgment on it – yes, no, or I don't know. As I more closely examine why I selected yes or no on the various cases, I find that the values behind them are: people, honesty, and fairness.

For example, on in Johnson (2nd Edition 2005), the following cases are described:

- Scenario A p. 209. As a camp counselor, would you take clothing that was intended for the needy children you're working with. To me this is an obvious no. I don't even see where the dilemma is! The clothes are for the kids. Period.
- Scenario C p. 210. As a male owner, would I hire a female for a job when she might be harassed. I said yes. But really, I'm not sure I can honestly put myself in this position! Probably what I'd really want to do is change the environment for the better so we can hire the good talent we need. That, or leave and work somewhere else.
- Scenario E. p. 211. I'm the sales manager, and find out that a company that's about to buy our product has really inflated views of what the product can do. Would I sign the contract? I said, absolutely no way! I've felt enough pressure from a company that I wouldn't want to get anywhere near it. Now would I be capable of actually getting out of this situation gracefully? I'm not so sure of that. This decision is more based on experience, the desire to be honest with the company, and the knowledge that getting into a relationship with a company with unclear or unrealistic expectations is just asking for trouble and headaches down the road. I guess that's a practical value then – keeping out of trouble?

So, how do I make the decisions? I guess right now it's really a gut reaction. I know that's terrible, but it's where I am right now.

If I'm really stuck on a decision, I talk to people that I know and respect (supervisor, colleagues, husband, parents, not necessarily in that order) to get a wide variety of opinions and to help me think through all the sides of the issue.

Hardest to Handle

In class, the hardest decisions to handle are the ones that I just can't identify with. In reality, the hardest decisions are the ones that I can't see any good option. Sometimes I see both sides of an issue so strongly that I am stuck in the middle. I can't think of one

like that at work recently, so mainly I wonder if I'm able to somehow avoid them. But certainly avoidance isn't good ethical leadership!

What do you do in processing these difficult decisions? How do you simplify your choices by fostering clear values? Yes, good questions! Now that I'm learning about all this, I will try to "foster clear values" to process difficult decisions using methods described in the class.

Picking a Case

So, I may as well tackle one of the hard ones and use one of the processes in the book. Since Barbara gave such a compelling solution to the bookstore, I don't think I can think of anything better. So I'm going with Scenario D: The Terminal Patient p. 210-211. The scenario is that patients can get better if they believe they are getting better; yet isn't it important to tell them the truth? So you are the chief surgeon, and an accident victim is going into surgery with not very good chances that he will live. He says to you, "will I make it?" and what will you say to him and to his family?

I'm going to examine this problem with Kidder's Ethical Checkpoints.

1. Recognize that there is a problem. The problem is, do I choose telling the brutal truth or do I choose giving the patient hope? Do I choose a person or truth?

2. Determine the actor. It's me. I'm the surgeon who has to say something to the patient and the family.

3. Gather the relevant facts. I know that the patient has slim chances to live. I know that the power of belief is strong. But I can't really ask the patient if he'd rather know the truth. Nor can I ask the family they feel they would rather be encouraged or know the truth. I can't think of any other relevant facts to gather.

4. Test for right vs. wrong. Do I have a negative gut level reaction to not telling him the truth? Yes a bit. Would I be uncomfortable if the front page of the newspaper said that I lied to the victim? Yes. Would it violate the moral code of someone I care a lot about? Probably.

5. Test for right-versus-right. Truth telling vs. keeping alive hope in the family? Is giving false hope right? I'm not sure that it is.

6. Apply the ethical standards/perspectives.

Utilitarianism: What are the consequences? This makes me think of Ben Carson's *Take the Risk* book. (I know, not a book based on research). Using his method:

What's the worst that could happen if I tell the truth? The patient would die and the family would be sad.

What's the best that could happen if I tell the truth? The patient and the family might have a little time to prepare for the possibility of death; and maybe the patient would actually live.

What's the worst that could happen if I don't tell the truth? The patient could die and the family could be very upset because I said that he wouldn't die.

What's the best that could happen if I don't tell the truth? That patient could live because he had hope.

Kant's Categorical Imperative: Tell the truth no matter what.

Justice Vs. Fairness doesn't seem to apply.

Communitarianism: Hmm. What is the common good? It's harder to define in this situation. This perspective doesn't help me on this scenario

Altruism: Love Your Neighbor. This one doesn't help me either – is it loving him to tell the truth or loving him to soften or avoid the truth?

7. Look for a third way. Maybe I could tell him that the chances are slim, but would you like me to pray with you? If he chose, prayer could help him place his trust in God no matter the outcome.

8. Make a decision. So I would choose the third way. I wouldn't say "you're going to die" but I would explain the chances and the seriousness of the situation – to both the patient and the family. I would also offer to pray with them if they so chose.

Is that a copout?? I don't know. I think it's what I would do.

Reflecting on the process

I really liked using Kidder's checkpoints on this scenario. It was very helpful! I realized that as I stopped to think about the scenario, I did think through many of these steps – just not in an articulated fashion. Slowing the decision down makes it easier to examine it and the reasons behind it.

Thanks for your thoughts & comments.

Janine

Post 3: Balancing Professional Relationships and Firing Someone.

Explain how you balance your professional relationships. How do you set limits on each group? How does your primary relationship with God frame and guide these others? Which relationship do you respond most to in your daily work? How? Why? What values guide those relationships? How does that impact your other relations? Explain how you would manage the bad teacher.

Explain how you balance your professional relationships. How do you set limits on each group? How does your primary relationship with God frame and guide these others?

This was an interesting topic to consider. I didn't really think of "balance" as ethics, but I guess it is!

First, let me consider the limits I put on the various groups. Generally, in the individual category, I keep very strict lines between work and home time and try to keep balance there. There are only a couple of projects that I believe in so strongly that I will allow to spill over into my home time. In this case, then, I sacrifice self, trying not to sacrifice family too much.

In the organizational category, I think that my professional organization (TWICE) tends to get more time than my coworkers. I think my work for TWICE helps my work for clients and my employer, so it's a mutually beneficial relationship.

In the societal level relations, I'm not sure. I don't think about these too often, other than trying to do what is right in each area. I don't see any conflict there, but I may be missing it for having too small of a view.

My relationship with God definitely provides the framework. I want to serve my family and have time for my relationship with God. Sabbath is a wonderful way to bring this balance weekly to my life. I see serving my clients as the best way to also serve my employer, and God wants us to do our work "as unto the Lord." "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." Ecclesiastes 9:10. "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3:17.

When I look at the threats to legitimacy, in the professional relations table, the only one that I think is of concern is the "detachment and aloofness" for co-workers. I think I have better relationships with my colleagues who are at a distance and who I work with much more often than those who are in my office with me. I see this as an area that I could improve on. Sometimes my office door is shut all day with videoconference after videoconference that I don't have time to connect with what's happening in the office and I miss important things.

Which relationship do you respond most to in your daily work? How? Why?

I think the relationship that predominates in my work is the client. In my case, that means the teachers that I serve throughout Berrien and Cass counties, as well as the videoconference coordinators in 70 schools. My primary work is to support them and assist them & their schools in using videoconferencing for the benefit of students. This keeps me very busy and leaves little time for anything else. It bothers me a lot when teachers and students are disappointed when technology doesn't work or other problems arise. I do whatever possible within the timeframe and resources that I have to alleviate these problems and try not to beat myself up when connections don't work.

What values guide those relationships? How does that impact your other relations?

I think prompt service is a huge value for me. It seems to overarch everything else. I wonder if sometimes my priorities are not what someone else might choose... what do you think, Dennis?!

Explain how you would manage the bad teacher.

This one is really hard. It's hard because as an Adventist and not a principal, I can't imagine having a worker who has an alcohol problem. This bothers me a lot. I don't like how the new principal was trying to "bait" him into making a mistake that he could be fired for. So what are the other options?

I've been in situations, all with student workers, both when I was in college and my current work, where someone needed to be fired. In one case, we documented and documented until we had a good case and were able to fire the person. In the other case, I wasn't directly responsible and watched as the person was allowed to keep working and doing a poor job. Now one of my current student workers has been very challenging, with one co-worker suggesting that I fire her. But my sense was that she was redeemable and teachable, and she is making great progress recently. So in that case I feel that investing in the person was worth my time.

Certainly there must be a line where you can't "redeem" the person anymore - or they choose not to be redeemed. Then the firing needs to happen. I don't know enough about the union situation and requirements for firing to know what would be an appropriate course of action. I can think of a third way though. I know an educator in our county who was less than competent who was shuffled to a non-teaching job - media aide. Maybe this person could be moved out of the classroom so as not to harm the students (a high priority of mine too), and from there continue the documentation process until the case can be made in line with the union and other requirements. In the meantime, as an Adventist Christian, I would be praying for this person often. If he so chose, God could work in His life to bring about reform. I realize, though, that people have a choice!

Tough for sure. I am very interested in hearing from those of you with more experience than I!

Post 4: How have groups or organizations helped you behave well or poorly? How have they paralyzed you with group think and lead you to be immoral? What aspects of organizations do you think have had the most influence on your thinking and behaving? Describe and explain some in detail. How have you improved organizations to be more ethical? What resistance did you encounter and what did you do to still move forward?

Being new to thinking about ethics, this question is hard for me, but one I wanted to tackle this week.

How have groups or organizations helped you behave well or poorly?

Mostly there hasn't been a lot of friction, conflict, or obvious challenging choices in my organizations.... As I'm in the middle of an experience right now that's too raw to tell you about.... I'm starting to wonder if groupthink and everyone being "at peace" can cause behaving poorly. I'm thinking so.

I would say that when I've been given freedom to make choices and run my programs, this has helped me behave well.... but I do find that sometimes I need to bounce issues off of others to figure out what I should be doing.

I also scored VERY low on the argumentative scale in the book, and in the experience I'm in right now - I'm realizing that when I'm unable to articulate my argument and hold on to it, and the group or organization is acting in ways I disagree with or are very uncomfortable with, I can behave quite poorly! If I "give in" but haven't really changed my opinion, it's not pretty! :)

How have they paralyzed you with group think and lead you to be immoral?

I'm not sure on this one. I feel like when I've had to fight for my views then I tend towards the not-so-moral. I can't think of a time when I felt "paralyzed" with group think. But maybe it's happened and I didn't recognize it. I will try to be more attentive and observant.

What aspects of organizations do you think have had the most influence on your thinking and behaving? Describe and explain some in detail.

I don't know on this one. I can't think of anything. Does that mean I'm not influenced? Probably not. I'm probably influenced and don't realize it. Ok these are tough questions.

How have you improved organizations to be more ethical? What resistance did you encounter and what did you do to still move forward?

I do have one scenario that really sticks out in my mind. I participate in a collaborative workshop that meets via videoconference across various sites. It's pretty cool how we all work together from a distance, and in many cases haven't met each other. Last summer,

we decided to use a particular organization (content provider) to do an hour demo of one of their science programs. The program involved sending us a kit with actual Madagascar hissing cockroaches. They were actually in the mail before we all understood the ramifications (except the person who organized it). The content provider said we had to send the kits back afterwards, and that we should use UPS but not tell them what was in the box because they don't ship live animals/insects.

I seriously objected and raised quite a fuss about the procedure etc. They finally came back and modified their instructions to us so that we could ship them back ethically (Fedex was the solution I think).

I didn't get any resistance from raising this flag - everyone was really happy that I said something and told me so.

The resistance was from the content provider who thought we were being unreasonable, but then later the gal's boss called me and they have since modified their procedures and notifications.

I found the two chapters in Johnson VERY useful this week as I was thinking/working on a particular conflict. I hope to be able to apply and assimilate more of what I've just begun to scratch the surface of in this class....

Janine