Building Stronger Business and Professional Ethical Practices
A survey of research that asks the question: Can we teach ethics to young adults or is it too late?
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The question of whether ethics can be taught at all, much less to post-secondary level adults, has haunted philosophers, educators, and scholars for centuries. Educators and professionals continue to ask this question, and no definitive answer has yet come forth. Skeptics feel that morality and ethical standards have been well set by adulthood, and, as many great thinkers of the past have stated, virtue, like morality, is not something that can be taught. Others thinkers, equally qualified, feel that we can teach as well as influence character and behavior and therefore a person's fundamental ethical structure. It is my intention in this paper to explore both sides of this debate and why it more important than ever before to answer this age old question and to seek conclusions as to how a curriculum containing ethics education can be made more effective and relevant to current professional and business needs.

A most important point must be introduced at this point. I draw a distinct separation between the teaching of origins and evolution of ethics as a philosophical concept, one which has been so beautifully developed and taught through the ages by many scholars and professors. These courses can and indeed must be introduced as a fundamental liberal arts core of knowledge to all students. We are in this paper, dealing strictly with the question of whether ethical practices and behavior can be taught in an academic environment to young people whose fundamental moral character has most likely already been largely formed. A moral imperative exists for educators of business and professional students to meet the challenge of dealing with what many feel is a wholesale breakdown in ethical practices, a breakdown that is impacting almost ever sector of our social, political and economic life.

We are bombarded almost daily by newspaper articles, court proceedings, and scholarly journals relating case after case of an ethical breakdown. We see examples of everything from minor indiscretions to outright fraud and the embezzlement of millions of dollars that destroy corporate profits, shareholder trust, and the value of investments and retirement commitments. These examples have left us with an almost total lack of confidence in time-honored capitalistic and

social systems as well as in the checks and balances that have protected those systems for many generations

The New York Times (May 20, 2007) ran an article on the appearance before Congress of Monica Goodling who had recently resigned her position as a Bush administration Justice Department liaison. Testifying under immunity, Ms. Goodling admitted to crossing the line in terms of using political considerations in choosing replacements for fired states attorneys general. She stated that "crossing that line" was business as usual and, as many professional studies following the Enron and WorldCom and other cases revealed, almost all persons involved did not feel as though they were necessarily doing anything wrong, much less breaking long-standing ethical guidelines of their professions. Apparently loyalty, working with the team, or each person's individual sense that "everyone was doing it and that made it right" prevailed.

Professor Samuel Freedman, a faculty member of Columbia University's renowned School of Journalism, teaches a course called Critical Issues in Journalism, which deals specifically with ethical issues confronting journalists. As an examination for the fall 2006 course, the professor assigned two essays on ethics in journalism. The exam was published for student access on the class website. Students were instructed that, once they had downloaded the questions, they were to complete the essays in 90 minutes and discuss their work with no one else. As reported in the New York Times, "a review of the examination revealed that a significant number of the 200 students taking the exam had cheated". (NYT December 2, 2006)

During the first half of 2007 alone, the chief of staff to the vice president of the United States was convicted of lying under oath, investment bankers at several major international banks and investment companies were arrested for insider trading and financial fraud. Medical doctors were arrested for recommending drugs for purposes for which they were not approved. It was charged that pharmaceutical companies had paid the physicians to make the inappropriate recommendations. The IRS is currently investigating drug use in baseball. Almost all professional sports have witnessed some sort of breach in ethical practices, as seen in the most recently revealed cases of doping in horse racing the U.S. and bicycle racing in France. A prominent diocese of the Roman Catholic Church had to pay $85 million to settle suits brought

against them for not properly dealing with known pedophile priests. And these represent only a portion of reported cases of ethical abuse.

The business community alone been rocked with a steady stream of shocking examples of greed, corruption, and what appears to be a major breakdown in ethical practices. In addition, the public sector has also witnessed several arrests, prosecutions, and jailing of elected officials, lobbyists, lawyers, and others who had ostensibly earned the public trust.

It is one thing to ask whether ethics can be taught but an entirely different matter to realize that, given the plethora of ethical lapses we are exposed to almost daily, considerable more attention must be paid to these abuses if we are ever to reduce the incidence of unethical behavior in all sectors. One thing is clear and that is that what we are currently doing to reduce this problem is not working.

What can business, political, and/or religious leaders do address this growing ethical breakdown? How can we restore much-needed confidence on the part of their respective constituents? We need to seek a stronger enough incentive on the part of these leaders and on those who train them if we are to meet this challenge successfully?

What can the academic community do to create a greater urgency among our students about the importance and benefits of a strong, unflappable adherence to professional and business ethical practices? Given the recent disclosure of kickbacks and fraud by lenders and academic advisors of student loans on several American campuses, we now are even forced to question the academic community's commitment to creating a more ethical graduate.

Almost as many voices ring out that we can teach ethics as those who loudly proclaim that ethics, like virtue itself, simply cannot be taught. As an academic, I feel that it is our responsibility to devise effective pedagogical tools to address what many feel has become a total destruction of ethical practices in many sectors of our society. The question at the base of this article indicates that some professionals feel that by the time an educator gets to young adults, ethical behavior and patterns are already set and precious little can be done to make someone

fundamentally more ethical, other than setting a good example. That assumption, of course, puts the entire responsibility of creating ethical adults on parents and families. Few professionals would argue against the importance of early childhood value setting and moral training, however, the rapid, almost phenomenal growth of ethics courses in almost all sectors and levels of academia reveals a quite widespread belief that we in the teaching profession feel that we indeed do have something to contribute in this area.

The historical evolution behind the argument about whether ethics can be taught:

The question "Can ethics or virtue be taught?" reaches as far back as 500BCE. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, each asked this question of themselves and of their followers. Plato who is credited with founding The Academy, long considered the oldest of the ancient Athenian schools might be the most quoted of the ancients in this area. It was at The Academy that many of Plato's Dialogues were written. It was also there that the seventeen-year-old Aristotle spent some twenty of his adult years as a student of Plato. Many scholars have stated that the genesis of Aristotle's seminal work "Nicomachean Ethics" can also be traced to his time at The Academy. Clearly ethics was very much on the minds of these great thinkers.

In his fourth-century BCE dialogues "Protagoras" and "Meno," Plato states that Socrates felt he knew nothing of "virtue" beyond its existence as a concept. He did accept the notion that if virtue could be classified as knowledge, it could indeed be taught. If however, virtue is something else and not knowledge, then it was the opinion of Socrates that as a concept alone it could not be taught. Socrates was strongly convinced that all that is or can be taught is "knowledge." He qualified his conclusion however, by accepting the notion that, while there clearly is a concept called teaching, there is no teaching without learning, a dilemma educators continue to wrestle with today.

Both of these great thinkers, as did Aristotle, tried to define and understand an ethical standard for all to live by. Using justice and/or virtue as a base, they sought what might best be defined as an "absolute basis for ethical values which could lead to what they defined as a 'Good Life,' achievable through the teaching of a set of "practical rules for the successful conduct of life'".

Navia and Kelly (1980) recognized that Aristotle and Plato agreed on precious little, but they did share a mutual quest for a better understanding of "virtue" and the means to teach others how to create a set of values under which we call all live (Navia and Kelly, 1980)

Guided by the genius of Socrates and following Plato, Aristotle founded The Lyceum in Athens, dedicated primarily to the understanding of many of life's mysteries, none more perplexing or elusive than the attempt to define such noble goals as a just life, virtue, and ethics. All three of these great thinkers, like many of their students, sought the means through which these values could best be understood and lived.

Aristotle's interests ranged far beyond that of pure philosophical thinking. He wrote on medicine and sports, and he was an avid botanist, zoologist, and astronomer. Economic historians credit Aristotle with being the first to recognize the existence of a business cycle. He also state that money was barren and void of intrinsic value a concept that has survived to modern times. Aristotle through his search for the best of common denominators to define human nature has given us one of the strongest planks in our ethical platform.

Looking to the natural world for answers, Aristotle defined three primary components inherent in an ethical person. Accepting the many differences in culture, habits, customs, etc., he defined "happiness" as measured within the context of a healthy mind and body and concluded that this well-being of a person is a fundamental condition for building an ethical person. Second, again recognizing our inherent pluralism and diversified knowledge base, he felt that we must have a capacity to think for ourselves. We need to be able to see a situation for what it is and not what history, custom, authority figures, or blind prejudice might want us to see. The ability to order priorities, sort things out, and eschew fuzzy thinking helps us to organize situations and set things right. We cannot act like a starving creature hell-bent on satiation or what might be considered the expected thing to do.   We must therefore, react to situations with reason and clarity of purpose. Thirdly and maybe most important, Aristotle implored us to be civic people. We must both respect and care for our fellow creatures if there is any hope of creating a moral society.

Like many schools of philosophic thought that followed him, Aristotle believed that when a child is injured we all bleed. We need to approach every situation and person with full respect for the differences that make them "not us" and seek solutions that can both meet and embrace those differences. Aristotle has left us a framework that helps us act on the principles we accept without necessarily adhering to a standard or thinking process that is set by others. We need to have the courage to think for ourselves.

Navia and Kelly (1980) systematically take us from these august BCE beginnings through the exalted works of an incalculably important second generation of thinkers whose works date from the early 1500's through the emergence of the twentieth century. Navia and Kelly explore in depth the likes of Spinoza and especially, Immanuel Kant, for whom we can all be grateful for creating our most important linkage between the origins of ethical thinking and the questions we continue to struggle with today. Time and space prevent me from giving fair and just representation of these great Post-Athenian thinkers and the incredible legacies of the likes of ; Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, John Dewey and so many others. We must thank the contribution and efforts of each of these great minds for having created, for us, a much better understanding of what it means to be an ethical professional. Without these invaluable contributions to ethical thought, we would be no better off today than was the hapless Diogenes who wandered the earth with his legendary lamp searching for "one honest man." [1]

There could not, of course, be any meaningful discussion about the topic of teaching ethical values if we did not stand on the shoulders of those giants who came before us and whose genius laid such a strong and informed foundation upon which we can begin to build an equally sound superstructure.

The question persists: a third generation.

 A third generation of researchers emerged with the dawn of the twentieth century. This group systematically addressed the question of whether ethics can be taught. The availability of

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[1] I refer the reader to Navia and Kelly's "Ethics and the Search for Values." They have, in my less than fully objective opinion, offered a very clear and most useful treatment of the development of these schools of thought.

revolutionary new empirical tools combined with the somewhat different perspective of these relatively more contemporary thinkers provided us with a legacy of knowledge like that which no previous generation of analysts had been able to do.

Industrialization, enhanced telecommunications, the new media, the continually emerging technologies and what we now call globalization have all contributed to bringing together an enormous diversity of cultures, languages, religions, and peoples as never before in the history of mankind. Science also created a new set of tools to help us look at how we can develop a practical and more workable definition of ethical standards. With that rise in our capacity to better measure our hypotheses comes, however, a significantly greater need to address more aggressively our basic question. As the world becomes more "Flat" as Thomas Friedman (2005) has shown us, we now face many new and very serious threats in that our significantly more interdependent world, the potential consequences of each ethical breakdown to civilization becomes ever more costly to all of us.

Changing times and the development of empirical skills and techniques; the computerization of analytical systems along with the tremendous growth in data compiling, storage and retrieval capabilities greatly expanded our ability to think more quantitatively. In addition sophisticated survey and quantitative tools all significantly enhanced our ability both to question and test ever more complex questions and social issues.

An important additional factor directly affecting the subject of this paper is the multi-disciplinary expansion beyond pure philosophy that began to seriously think about ethical practices. Biologists, economists, sociologists, psychologists, lawyers, military analysts, and many other scholars now view ethical practices and behavior as an integral part of their separate professional development and survival. The primary benefit of this enhanced corps of researchers is that we each now have many additional professional opinions and a much broader knowledge base with which to work.

Centuries of thought and debate about the basic question addressed in this paper by some of the most serious philosophical minds has led to a recognition that merely teaching a traditional,

textbook ethics course may not be sufficient to create a stronger benchmark for dealing with the complex moral dilemmas any business or professional person currently face. It is rapidly becoming more acceptable for educators to expand on traditional techniques by developing a greater awareness of what it is to "think" ethically. We need to teach our students how to use an enhanced awareness and understanding in any morally challenging dilemma that might test ones' chosen ethical boundaries.

Among the most respected and earliest studies in the latest genre of research was the work done in the1960's by the late Harvard psychologist, Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg dealt specifically with the teaching of ethics and ethical training by creating what he called "the stages of moral development"(1969). Kohlberg did not specifically try to measure the success or failure of ethical training per se. He did, however, establish what he felt were the natural stages of moral development as a person moved through life and experienced ever more complex and mature ethical dilemmas. Kohlberg defined three distinct levels of character development: Level 1, Preconventional Level, which in early youth is defined as a Self-Orientation stage; Level 2, Conventional Level, typically occurring during adolescence or early adulthood, in which the individual is becoming more "others oriented"; and finally Level 3, Postconventional Level, in which the person has become more principled in terms of the social contract while still recognizing the importance of the individual.

Each of Kohlberg's Levels contains what he referred to as "stages," six in all, some obtained in specific cases, others never obtained. While this was a fairly comprehensive 20-year study, one major and often-cited limitation was the fact that the sample set was
confined to males. Some researchers have, however, concluded that there is no inherent reason to feel that women would show significantly different patterns than those established by Kohlberg's restricted sample. Kohlberg subsequently considered additional stages in which he had to deal with a recognized regression in moral behavior, as well as the impact of what he called Transcendental Morality or Morality of Cosmic Orientation, which led directly to the impact of religious influences on his research.

Kohlberg only flirted with survey or empirical analysis specifically directed at business and professional ethics. However, many subsequent researchers have incorporated the basic philosophy of Kohlberg's Levels and Stages in their individual studies that were directly focused on the professions. Most notable was James Rest, whose work at the University of Minnesota's Center for the Study of Ethical Development, which he founded, is firmly based on Kohlberg's research. Rest (1979), who worked closely with Kohlberg, created his Defining Issues Test (DIT), which takes off from Kohlberg's postconventional level to establish what has become an accepted model for moral development. Rest labeled his approach to moral development Neo-Kohlbergian, and like Kohlberg, he also traced how moral development moved from adolescence into adulthood. An improved version of this test, DIT-2, has replaced the relatively more cumbersome original version.

Rest died in 1999, the same year another study based on Kohlberg's work was published in the Journal of Business Ethics. In itself, a powerful testament to the ever increasing quest for business ethics knowledge, JBE has been publishing continually since 1982 and has even spun off several special editions to meet the rising demand for information and accommodate the growing supply of scholarly articles on ethics. In 1997, JBE launched the Journal of Teaching Ethics.

Trevior, Weaver, and Cochran, (1999)using Kohlberg's "Others Orientation Level," found interesting differences between the ethical behavior of employees and management in large corporations and the behavior of people in relatively smaller entrepreneurial firms. As a business expands, they found, employees tend to become more and more isolated from other aspects of the business's operations and from its decision making process. This isolation seems to lead to a reduced adherence to standard moral reasoning. In smaller firms, with their relatively more concentrated exposure to managers and one another as well as the firm's decision making processes, all employees tend to exhibit a significantly higher attachment to basic social and moral standards. This finding has been borne out by other researchers who have concluded that as more layers exist between an employee and the firm's final products or services, there is a higher probability that unethical practices will occur.

The more directly an employee is identified with the final good or service, the lower the chance of an ethical breakdown. Engineers, architects, and researchers who sign off on their drawings, proposals, or completed projects tend to watch for unwanted indiscretions significantly more carefully than do professionals whose individual contribution to any given product or service is hard to identify.

Can ethics be taught?

This is the 2000-year-old question. In fact it is closer to 2,500 years ago when history records that it was first asked. Much has been learned in the interim, but the fact that we still have to ask the question at all lends credence to its timelessness as well as its importance to all of us as social creatures. The presence of ethical values is increasingly important as we become more globally, socially, politically and economically interdependent regarding so much of what we think of as our basic needs. Each and every breakdown in ethical practices cost us more and directly impacts many more people and institutions than ever before.

We continue to ask this question despite the rapidly rising number of academic and private-sector ethics centers, as well as in scholarly journals, text books, and publications in the US and throughout all sectors of the international academic community. Furthermore, surveys have shown that courses in professional and business ethics are the fastest-growing additions to the business curricula at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. The problem is that, despite this growth, we are not witnessing any appreciable decline in incidences of ethical breakdown in any business or professionally related field. Clearly, we must now ask ourselves; are we failing, despite our heroic efforts?

Noted Indiana University and Poynter Center for Ethic professor and researcher David H. Smith in his 2003 retirement speech quoted Max Weber as one who felt that "students should not look to faculty for social and political leadership, (2003)." Smith took issue with Weber's assumption, stating that ethics education is in fact, an integral part of the scholar's vocation and is indeed the responsibility of an educator. Basing his conclusions on almost four decades of ethics research and teaching, Smith stated that "American citizens look to higher education for

the training of professionals" and that ethical practices must be a part of that educational experience. He stated further in his talk that it is hypocritical to deny that there exists "compelling reason for academic attention to ethics." Smith goes on to say that education, by design, inevitably alters the way people understand the world in which they live. Smith believes that to educate is to alter the character of a student. Smith also recognizes however, that the teaching of ethics is extremely complicated and cannot be categorized within a typical cognitive educational experience.

Unlike most learning processes where a student has a defined starting point, one never enters an ethical training or learning experience from the beginning. No matter what our age, we are all first introduced to the formal study of ethical practices somewhere in or around the middle of our own ethical development, and that variable mid-level learning space will never be the same for any two people. This statement of fact does not, however, absolve us as educators from the task of solidifying ethics standards education, but does dramatically complicate it.

Smith addresses this point by stating that the teaching of ethics must deal with two important considerations. First, through cognitive skills, we must help the student develop an understanding of what Smith refers to as "moral discernment and moral logic," which, in his opinion, can best be accomplished by studying the classics. Secondly, he accepts that some degree of moral virtue does exist in all students before he or she walks into the classroom. It is therefore the responsibility of the university to enhance those existing virtues through the development of a morality that includes and hones honesty, candor, justice, and even a love or compassion within the community. Smith concludes that "we might not be able to dramatically alter "character" but we can change "temperament" and that is how we can make a positive contribution to the experience students will bring to any moral dilemma they might encounter."

Socrates might have said it best when he taught us that ethics consists of knowing what we "ought" to do, and that such knowledge, (if not virtue itself), can be taught. Some psychologists accept the notion that our character and standards are pretty well defined and set by the time we are five or six years old. Others from that same profession feel just the opposite and cite numerous examples, where, through therapy and counseling, they have been able to achieve

significant alterations in a patient's behavior, changes that have actually resulted in modifying their fundamental moral and social standards and character. Change character and you can change perceived ethical behavior, assuming, of course, that the patient recognizes and accepts the need to make those changes and has the decision-making tools to carry them out.

James Rest, (1979) in his extensive survey-based research found that young adults can and do in fact make dramatic changes in problem-solving skills even in those cases that involve ethical issues. He found that these observed changes are affected by the number of years of education his subjects accumulated, whether or not the education happened at a college or at a professional school. He further concluded that a deliberate and formal curriculum that attempted to make students more aware of ethical issues and how they might be dealt with was the most effective and successful.

Summarizing the general impressions of most relatively more recent scholars who have investigated the pros and cons of teaching young adults how to be ethical persons, we must conclude that it is without a doubt, a sensitive and most complicated subject. Students come into a classroom environment with many different opinions and practices regarding that which constitutes ethics or morality. Opinions rooted in culture, religion, family values, life's experience, and possibly even the influence of previous teachers, advisors, leaders, or any other person of authority or influence in the student's life tend to leave lasting impressions on young minds. Students enter every classroom with there own unique and distinct set of goals, perspectives, and objectives and do so with a varied intellect, all of which impacts their ability to accumulate knowledge, especially in the study of values sensitive fields, such as economics, politics, or history and ethics. Some students confront education with nothing in mind beyond the desire to learn as much as they can. Others come equally dedicated to challenging, confronting, and arguing their way through each class.

Educators concerned with creating a more ethically aware business or professional person should accept that, to accomplish that goal, it is not necessarily incumbent upon us to challenge pre-conceived ethical notions our students might have. We need only create a higher, more practical level of awareness for our students so that they can learn to better deal with dilemmas. We need

only show students how they can – indeed how they should – continue to rely on the fundamental values they bring into the classroom. The educator's goal is to expand students' capacity and enhance their deliberative and cognitive skills so that they can confront life's ethical problems from a stronger, better informed knowledge base.

While not impossible, it is, however, unlikely and extremely rare that a student's basic character and strongly held beliefs will be dramatically altered by what we do in the classroom. A course in, say, contract law, or the conjugation of French verbs, or learning how to play chess or bridge all might possibly taught void of any ethical, moral or even philosophical challenges to the willing student. The truth is however, that almost every course, especially at the university level, will somehow, by its very nature, find its way into the moral fabric of students' minds. It is hoped that process would create questions and doubt in the minds of our students as to how they feel about life's decisions, and how they might choose to behave in any given situation. A course in, say, philosophy, economics, or ethics, however it is organized or presented, will by its very nature force the committed student to walk out of each class with a very different perspective on what was taught and, more important, what was learned. That is and always has been the nature of education, and that is not something we could or ought to change.

How knowledge and information are accumulated, stored and eventually retrieved forms a root towards a thoughtful, respectful, creative and responsible society filled with new ideas and the means needed to best meet all challenges. Socrates put this issue best when he pondered the role of teaching. He decided that teaching ought not be the focus of the educator, "Remembering" is what we should try to accomplish. As long as the student is curious and willing to seek out knowledge and as long as there are educators out there to respond to that curiosity, learning and remembering will happen. That is the very root of our job. It certainly takes courage to teach, but it is significantly braver to take on the challenge of learning and remembering.

OK, so we can, sort of teach ethics; maybe

Having reviewed a massive amount of professional commentary by people with a proven record of researching the teaching of ethics in one form or another to post-secondary level students, it is

clear that the emphasis has gradually moved away from a focus on the ageless and penetrating philosophical question, toward one that seeks to understand what ethics, morality and virtue are from a more practical and applicable point of view. If we accept the logic of Toner, (1998) who is convinced that, for the most part students are able to know "right from wrong, honor from shame, virtue from vice". Accepting this premise, we can then shift the "can we teach ethics" debate to a different plane.

Toner, who has been teaching ethics for the U.S. Air Force for many years, feels that we tend to underestimate the knowledge students bring to our classes. Accepting a possible statistical bias in that his sample set is taken from the military, he thinks it is a big mistake to assume that our students "have no power of ethical judgment". We do not, according to Toner, have to reinvent the ethical wheel." Most adults have a sense of fairness," however or wherever they learned it. They need only acquire experience and knowledge about how they might apply that "fairness" to any given dilemma. Helping them acquire that experience and knowledge is the job of the contemporary educator. It is not our primary responsibility to create character. We can shape it, we can influence it, but rarely do we actually change or create character in a student.

Toner states that the job of the professional teacher is to find creative ways to instill a solid working knowledge base that will help guide future leaders toward that which will help them become a better decision maker. Leaders might not always make the perfect or even the best decision in a given situation, but they must have the tools to be able to make a reasonably informed decision. That skill can come from having been exposed to situations, either through training, education or life's experience, that help them gather the tools they need to guide them when the time comes. It is incumbent upon ethics teachers to put together a solid, creative, effective, relevant, and understandable curriculum so that the course can meet its goals. Toner warns us that while "good teachers create good curricula good curricula, of themselves cannot make good teachers (1998)."

Toner concludes his paper with a warning to all of us that "In a situation of moral ambiguity, there is no manual, there are no checklists, there is no consultant to resolve the difficulty, One is left with one's religious, and philosophical convictions, with one's education, with one's service,

culture and character, with one's sense of honor and shame and of right and wrong to do what must be done….. Such people are not produced quickly or easily or even commonly…(1998)."

Mark Carter, Senior Project Officer, New South Wales Department of Education and Training, (2005) has given the question of teaching ethics considerable thought. While his research is directed more towards training programs than degree-granting programs, his approach and observations are applicable to our quest. Carter agrees very strongly with Toner and insists that it is critical to have professional teachers develop curricula and do the teaching in ethics courses. Carter takes his argument on ethics education a bit farther however, by concluding that corporate codes of conduct, something many firms are prone to create, are not unto themselves adequate to create an ethical environment. Codes of conduct can "mandate specific behaviours in particular situations but do not promote *individual adherence to ethical principles*" *(*emphasis mine). Management can and must dictate and set a moral tone through both its own behavior and through the establishment of ethical principles. Both elements might be deemed necessary components but neither will ever be sufficient to establish that all-too-important ethical environment within a workplace. It is impossible to ask a code of conduct, however well written, to be broad enough to deal with every situation that will surely arise. Establishing by example and practice, an appreciated and workable set of ethical principles for all employees (or students) will however, represent a significant, perhaps even final step in that direction of creating an ethical environment within the workplace.

Carter supports the use of case studies to help accomplish this goal. He believes that cases provide an impartial and non-competitive method of learning in that they tend to promote a higher degree of dialogue, especially within a group or classroom environment. Unlike some investigators, Carter does not like to rely on "the facts" alone as many cases tend to do. His experience has shown him that "the facts", like the eye witness, are often contested.

Carter defines the "factual" ethical decision-making approach as the intersection of three key components**,** (2005). He sets up a condition where a body of laws, rules and regulations which define established codes of conduct must also consider values and cultural differences that exist

in each society, these then combine to create an ethical decision making format, all of which then defines how individuals interact with each other.

The facts as stated are certainly important but Carter prefers to focus more on the need to look at the "normative set." He states that should we simply accept the "facts as stated," that might help us describe that which "is" in any particular situation, but it will not help in the decision as to what one "ought" to do in that same situation. He concludes his paper with a series of very clever and useful cases along with targeted questions for discussion that directly involve a teacher/student situation.

Jeffrey MacDonald, (2007) published the findings of a 2007 survey by the Journal of Business Ethics that took a close look at the attitude toward ethics teaching at 50 top ranked U.S. schools of business. He reports that the JBE study found that one out of every three schools surveyed required course work in ethics, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility, and that 39 of the 50 business schools in the study had established centers specifically dedicated to at least one of the same areas. The study also found that the number of ethics related courses in the MBA curricula had increased by 500% since 1988.

MacDonald (2007) discussed the JBE findings with several informed and credible sources. He interviewed John Fernandes, president and CEO of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, (The AACSB is generally considered the premier accreditation association of business schools). Mr. Fernandes felt that the primary benefit of ethics education might not be in changing the moral fiber of business students but in reducing "lying, stealing, and other forms of malfeasance" in the future. Mr. Fernandes stated that, like the entrepreneurship education that sprung up in the late 1970's and left an indelible mark on business education, the relatively newer focus on ethics education will eventually do the same.

Dr. Michael Hoffman, executive director of the Center for Business Ethics at Bentley College in Massachusetts, who participated in the JBE study, was also interviewed by MacDonald. Dr. Hoffman felt that the increase in ethics education is a direct result of greater regulation and scrutiny from the press. These pressures have also contributed directly to the rise in compliance

departments and ethics officers in businesses as well as a much more "ethics-savvy" business-school graduate. (MacDonald, 2007)

Almost everyone associated with the JBE survey had strong albeit varying opinions about the efficacy of ethics courses. Individual opinions were highly dependent on how well the courses are structured and on the expectations of both professors and students. One aspect, however, about which all members of the study were in full agreement related to the need on the part of the business community for upper management to assume the responsibility for setting the ethical practices tone throughout the organization. Once again this is a recognized, necessary but far from sufficient, condition for setting a viable ethical standard for all to follow.

A plethora of professional and scholarly articles and books make it very clear that ethics cannot be taught. On the other hand, an approximately equal volume of material is readily available that states just as clearly that, handled properly and with reasonable expectations, ethics awareness and practices can indeed be taught. These studies and their findings represent almost twenty five hundred years of published thought, discussion, and debate by some of the finest minds to have ever walked on earth.

Match this well documented historical debate with the now familiar multitude of examples of ethical disintegration and egregious acts on the part of numerous business, religious, political, and professional leaders around the world, and we have a prescription for action that can and must be filled. We must meet the obvious and glaring need for a significantly greater emphasis on effective ethics education program. We may not be able to meet all society's ethical needs in a classroom environment, but we certainly have a huge moral obligation to find a way to do significantly better than we are doing now.

An important contribution in this direction can be found in the work of Rushmore M. Kidder, (2005) founder and president of the Institute for Global Ethics, in Camden, Maine, and a widely published author of many books promoting ethical behavior. Dr. Kidder has been conducting training sessions for many groups on practical applications and procedures designed to foster a more ethical workplace and environment. Dr. Kidder has stepped aside from the challenging

problems associated with the "teaching of ethics" per se and has instead formulated a framework for effectively building on the ethical foundation students bring into the classroom.

Falling back on his many years of survey and empirical work, his many books, and his extensive lecture experience, Dr. Kidder has shaped his approach to help his students and trainees see ethical behavior as an act of "courage." Citing historical patterns, Kidder admits that courage used to be defined as a form of heroism displayed on the battlefield, during the hunt for food, or in the dangerous search for safe havens in which to live. Contemporary courage, however, is more aptly defined as "moral courage" backed up by a working knowledge needed to "do the right thing." Kidder helps us recognize that it takes just as much "courage" in the classical definition of that word to stand up to an unethical boss or leader as it did to face down one's enemy on the battlefield or a wild beast on the hunt.

Kidder, (1995) reduces the ethical decision-making process to a conflict between two fundamental worlds:

Right versus wrong:

> "Ethical issues emerge when a core moral value has been violated or ignored." Kidder 1995) In such cases, it is almost universally clear as to what is the right thing to do. It may not be adhered to, but there is usually no ambiguity about what ought to be the right decision.

Right versus right:

> "Ethical issues also emerge when two of our core values come into conflict with each other " (Kidder 1995). Our dilemma here is that each choice presents a powerful and equally convincing argument. In the end, only one choice can be made, and a choice ultimately must be made. This problem is at the very core of what we call an ethical dilemma.

Kidder continues by pointing out that right-versus-wrong situations tend to be non-controversial. Right-versus-right situations, however, open the proverbial Pandora's Box, forcing us to decide as to "which side has the higher claim to rightness." This often requires some deep ethical reasoning.   Implementing our conclusion-standing up for what our reasoning dictates- can make strong demands on our moral courage." (Kidder 1995) In either case a decision has to be made in such circumstances, and it is our job as educators to help create a workable and reasonable framework for our young professionals to do so.

Kidder, (1995) provides us with that framework by placing all of life's dilemmas of right versus right within what he calls his four primary paradigms.

- **Truth versus loyalty**
- **Individual versus community**
- **Short-term versus long-term**
- **Justice versus mercy**

While the actual names of these points are not important to Dr. Kidder, each primary paradigm does appear to him as "so fundamental to the 'right versus right' choices all of us face that they can rightly be called *dilemma paradigms."*(Kidder1995)**.**   Kidder devotes considerable time to the development of his paradigms and how each can be used in almost any learning environment, thereby helping the student more readily place complicated problems and reasonable decisions well within reach.   I believe that close adherence to this paradigm approach will offer an extremely efficient and effective pattern for building an ethics course that can successfully reach a business or professional student.

Creating a responsible contemporary ethics course for students of business and the professions

Our conclusion therefore is that an effective ethics course can be put together and that we would be well advised to recognize that:

1. The conditions we face in this increasingly interdependent world leave us with no choice but to recognize and confront what appears to be a wholesale breakdown in ethical practices and the incalculable costs that breakdown incurs upon all of us, and that:

2. 2500 years of thought, debate, research, and scholarship have given us more than enough tools to meet that challenge head on in the classroom and beyond.

Leaving aside for the moment the very real fact that in any given situation or person, we will find cases, hopefully few in number, that simply never will fall within the purview of "rational," "good," "fair-minded" or "normal" behavioral patterns, we can then design a structure that will most certainly fall within the acceptable confines for the vast majority of situations, people, and. more specifically, the students, we will encounter.

Each generation of thinkers has left us with an invaluable contribution that fits neatly into the foundation of contemporary ethical training. Centuries of ethical thought have been bequeathed to us by philosophers who built upon the legacy of the classics as so eloquently set forth by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. They each helped better formulate what it means to be an ethical person. Later, Kant postulated his Categorical Imperative, David Hume inquired into what value and morality mean and whether a real distinction exists between good and evil. Adam Smith, captured the third condition of Aristotle and believed we are all capable of being sympathetic towards others and furthermore, he believed that it is in our nature, and our self interest, to be benevolent. Bentham's utilitarian theories created a world in which we can look at life's experience as either pleasure or pain. He considered it within the "nature" of rational, clear thinking people to seek pleasure and avoid pain, and that very tendency contributes to an ethical standard for both private and public affairs.

The period from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries left us with volumes of scholarship about ethical practices and thinking that formed the foundation for the empiricists of the twentieth century. Technology, enhanced quantitative analysis, tools and capabilities along

with the expansion of ethical thinking beyond philosophers and philosophical schools of thought, all combined with the explosion of abuse, cruelty, deceit, and outright greed on the part of so many leaders and colleagues whose morality we depend on, moved our question of whether ethics can be taught into an entirely new domain.

Standing on the shoulder of giants who came before us, those of us charged with bringing a workable body of ethical decision-making and thinking to the business and professional leaders of tomorrow now face a considerably easier task. We need to condense and compile the multitude of theories and thinking of each major generation of ethical debate and reduce the issues as developed to deal exclusively with our contemporary needs, namely it is our responsibility to create a set of standards, a high level of awareness and most of all, reasonable guidelines to help the leaders of tomorrow avoid the ethical pitfalls that currently pervade almost all sectors of our societies and cultures. Finally we now have a fairly deep body of empirical research that can only help us better define and enhance character, behavior, and decision-making across a wide range of disciplines, topics, situations, and conditions.

A preliminary outline for "Business and Professional Ethical Practices".

A primary component of an ethics course should involve the establishment of a center for business and professional ethics to act as an ongoing resource. This is especially critical if the course will also be serving multiple schools or disciplines. The center can provide ongoing and updated ethics training, library, research, and seminar services to instructors, as well as the surrounding business and public sector communities. The primary purpose of the center however, will be to serve as an informational repository for students and professors of all departments and disciplines.

One major benefit to educators currently interested in ethics education is that the phenomenal growth and interest in the topic has spawned numerous center, institutes, and courses, not only in academic institutions but also in concerned corporate, foundation, and professional sectors. These varied resources were begun to create vehicles to meet their unique and specific needs. Virtually all have active Web sites, conferences, workshops, publications, and help centers with

which one can establish formal linkages. To the extent possible, these resources will be available to students, faculty, administration, and guests through the proposed on-campus center for business and professional ethics For those who will be teaching the business and professional ethics course or for those who choose to add specific ethical cases or sections to our own courses, the center will be their primary resource for compiling information, a necessary component to keeping the course contemporary, relevant, and interesting to instructors and students alike.

While a completed syllabus for this course has yet to be produced, I would like herein to provide my thinking about a roughly outlined structure and format based on what I have learned to date. One consideration when constructing an ethics course for college or graduate level business and professional students is that it cannot be built around what I will call a traditional format – a set syllabus and textbook with prescribed weekly homework assignments, etc. The proposed Business and Professional Ethics course will be contain primary decision-making considerations in addition to creative materials that meet the teaching and learning challenges we have introduced in this paper.

The proposed ethics course will first start with a brief introduction to some basic ethics literature that defines the major schools of thought, the Classics, as well as for instance, Kant, Mill, Hume, and Bentham. This segment would be no more than a one- or two- week cursory review of these primary works and would introduce and in some cases be a review to the basic subject matter. Secondly, an extensive compilation of well-known, typical business and professional cases will be made available by the center. As proposed, there will only be time within the semester to present and consider three or four such cases. The exact choice of cases would be made after the enrolled students' experience and major interests have been identified. Our primary purpose is again to provoke debate and the exchange of ideas, so choosing cases that would spike their particular interest is more important than having specific cases pre-programmed for presentation. Course materials must meet the goal of creating that awareness, informed decision making and that knowledge based toolbox we have been constructing. This is a goal that can best be met by tailoring materials to the interests and needs of each class. This format will clearly mean more

preparation and ongoing work for instructors, but the payoff in measurable output and value to the student will surely make it worth the effort.

Thirdly, the course will review and discuss selected corporate codes of conduct, to introduce students to what might be expected of them as they enter the business and professional world. Reviewing the selected codes, chosen from the center's data base and derived from a cross section of companies and professions, will enable us to discuss both the limitations and the benefits of having such a code.

Finally a major component of the course, also subject to continual change, represents an approach designed to best capture the students' interest and provide that critical, awareness-based tool box . Clearly a host of classic business cases and examples have become standard, as seen in published syllabi from various institutions. Our choice of cases will as stated above, depend on the composition of the class. Empirical evidence has shown that cases do have tremendous merit in that they are impartial and impersonal and therefore can be treated more objectively by both students and the professor.

The added wrinkle that I feel that will do the trick in terms of effective, outcomes-based education will be including a number of non-traditional sources, compiled to improve our students' ethical and moral compasses.[2]. I plan to take full advantage of the audio, video, and wireless technology available in our classes to choose segments from a broad based selection of poems, plays, current and past television programs, movies, cartoons, and novels as an integral part of the class. Each selection will contain an important example of an ethical dilemma and how the principal chose to deal with it. Many selections will be familiar to the students as entertainment sources, and not necessarily ever perceived from an ethics or morality viewpoint. My experience is that this somewhat unorthodox approach will not only pique students' sustainable interest but will also provide a significantly more creative and thought-provoking environment as they see that which they once viewed as entertainment now actually capturing

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[2] This is not a new idea nor is it one that I can claim as mine. Kidder and others introduce the value of creatively reaching out beyond traditional pedagogical tools in order to bring moral and ethical knowledge and awareness into a more relevant and visibly familiar context.

important ethical slices of life and learning. Carefully chosen, these familiar slices, now seen from a new vantage point, will more closely mirror the kinds of situations they will surely encounter as they enter their business and professional careers, our goal for the course largely will be met.

We can also safely assume that the vast majority of students enter our classes with a basic set of values and morality that provide a strong-enough foundation so that, when combined with a toolbox well stocked with morally acceptable awareness, experience, education and training knowledge and learning, a perfectly well prepared business professional can and will emerge. In some special cases, we might just help create even a small positive alteration in character. For the most part however, the best we can hope for is that we will provide a much broader set of informed choices for our students. We must accept the fact that, for the most part, the basic character and fiber of the entering student will most likely remain untouched through the end of the semester. That eventuality cannot in any way deter us, nor should it dissuade us from our task

If that one quintessential course could be put together that would contain all elements needed to create the perfectly moral professional, it surely would have been done long ago. It cannot and never will be done because there simply is no set or definable "perfectly moral" person, any more than there is a definable "perfectly moral" school of thought. There is simply (and fortunately) too much diversity in our highly pluralistic world to come even close to creating such a concept.

We can, however – indeed we must – make certain assumptions, as many have before us, that there exists on the part of all fair-minded people, and the overwhelming majority of the students we will meet, a recognizable acceptance of the fact that they can distinguish between "right from wrong, honor from shame, and virtue from vice,(Toner 1998). That very assumption leads us directly to accept the hypothesis that we can, in fact, create a workable, meaningful, and reasonably efficient course that significantly advances the ability of students to deal with moral dilemmas.

Can Ethics be taught? Yes it can, at least to the extent needed to create an ethically aware group of graduates with an adequate set of ethically sound business and professional leadership skills.

We are considerably closer to answering this question from a purely philosophical basis than ever before. Centuries of thought and debate surrounding that question have provided a viable set of tools that can help us develop a much higher level of awareness and a finer tuned moral compass for the next generation of business and professional leaders. As creative, flexible, and informed educators, we can create a much more responsive generation of leadership, equipped with the necessary experience and working knowledge to resolve dilemmas from an ethically acceptable framework. We cannot insure that our students will in fact follow that path, but we can help them know which course does in fact adhere to the path laid out by the moral compass we have created for them.   We can do better and we must continue to seek ways to accomplish this goal. As educators we have a tremendous obligation to do so and a huge moral imperative to succeed.

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