



CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH

Behavioral Ethics and Teaching Ethical Decision Making*

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ABSTRACT

Business education often renders students less likely to act ethically. An infusion of liberal learning in the form of behavioral ethics could improve this situation by prompting students to develop higher levels of professionalism that encompass ethics, social responsibility, self-critical reflection, and personal accountability. More specifically, teaching behavioral ethics, which draws upon psychology, sociology, and related fields, can improve students' ethical decision making in a manner that can lead to a more ethical climate in organizations and in society more generally. This article introduces key concepts of behavioral ethics, argues that teaching behavioral ethics can have a positive impact, discusses materials that can be used to teach those concepts, and addresses action-research approaches to assessing the effectiveness of the instruction. There is significant evidence, though preliminary and incomplete, that teaching behavioral ethics is a promising new approach for improving the ethicality of students' decisions and actions.

Subject Areas: Ethics, Leadership, Curriculum Design, Course Design, Undergraduate Education.

INTRODUCTION

Three recent book-length discussions of the need to reform business school education all make the simple point (among others) that business education can be

*The authors gratefully acknowledge Mary C. Gentile, Oguntebi Olabisi, H.W. Perry, Jr., Ben Shaw, Lynn Perry Wooten, and three anonymous reviewers for their help on earlier versions of the manuscript.

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improved through an infusion of liberal learning, which we define as the research and teachings that may be usefully borrowed from the liberal arts and sciences. Colby, Ehrlich, Sullivan, and Dolle (2011) noted that business students see liberal arts classes that they must take to fulfill distribution requirements as largely irrelevant to their education. They recommended that liberal learning be integrated into the undergraduate business curriculum so that students may prepare to be civic leaders who more fully understand the effects that business has on society and the implications that other social institutions hold for business activity. Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010) suggested that MBA programs improve their teaching of thinking, reasoning, and creative problem solving by focusing less on narrow business skills and more on topics grounded in liberal learning: ethics, social responsibility, and personal accountability. Finally, Khurana (2007) urged that business schools emphasize professionalism by infusing the management profession with values beyond the technical requirements of jobs, and by teaching students that the purpose of management and corporate leadership necessarily goes beyond maximizing shareholder value and includes providing service to society. Delbanco agreed with these three assessments, lauding the infusion of literature and the arts into business school education “as a way to encourage self-critical reflection among future . . . entrepreneurs” (Delbanco, 2012, pp. 99–100).

One area in which business education needs an infusion of liberal learning is that of ethical decision making. As the dean of the Harvard Business School recently noted, “[t]he public lost trust in business, and some of our graduates seem to be responsible for that” (Middleton & Light, 2011). The dean of the IESE Business School agreed that business schools “need to better integrate an ethical view of management across the curriculum” (Canals, 2010).

For a few decades, business schools, and particularly professors of finance and economics, have taught students that markets are efficient because people are rational decision makers, and that business decision making should focus primarily, if not solely, on dollars and cents based on rational cost-benefit analysis. Teaching the rational actor model alone is not enough. It has caused employers to complain that “business schools have been churning out graduates too focused on making money and unable to think across disciplines” (Knight, 2012, p. 13). Undue confidence in the efficiency of capital markets has led many business students to the erroneous conclusion “that it hardly matters ethically what one does in business, since nothing one could do would ever disturb this magnificent equilibrium” (Shiller, 2012, p. 103). Studies show that teaching people to focus primarily on financial considerations causes them to tend to make decisions that are less social, less cooperative, less generous, and less ethical than people who are not primed to focus on money (Gino & Mogilner, 2014; Kouchaki, Smith-Crowe, Brief, & Sousa, 2013; Palazzo, Krings, & Hoffrage, 2012; Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006). There is substantial evidence that students’ ethics go the wrong direction as they are educated in economics and business (Dasgupta & Menon, 2011; Gentile, 2002; Huhn, 2014; Kenrick & Giskevicius, 2013; Liberman, Samuels, & Ross, 2004).

In recent years, the rational actor model has been called into question by research in the nonbusiness fields of behavioral psychology, cognitive science, experimental philosophy, and others that demonstrate that human decision making

is often far from rational (Gilovich, Griffin, & Kahneman, 2002; Kahneman, 2011). Even in business schools, the limitations of the rational actor model have been acknowledged by the rise of the new fields of behavioral finance (Baker & Ricciardi, 2014) and behavioral economics (Camerer, Loewenstein, & Rabin, 2004).

Research focusing specifically upon how people make ethical (and unethical) decisions has created an entirely new field called *behavioral ethics* (also “empirical ethics” or “scientific ethics”) that adds important dimensions to the study of ethical decision making (Ariely, 2012; Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011; De Cremer, 2009; Greene, 2013; Gino, 2013; Heffernan, 2011; Johnson, 2014; Rhode, 2006). There have been calls for infusing business school curricula with behavioral ethics (Doris, 2002; Glover, 2012; Haidt, 2014) because there is no strong evidence that training students to be moral philosophers (Haidt, 2012; Schwitzgebel, 2009) or to work to enhance their character (DeSteno & Valdesolo, 2011) improves their ethical actions. We argue that the philosophically based traditional approach to teaching business ethics should be significantly supplemented with the psychologically and sociologically based learning of behavioral ethics.

A BRIEF PRIMER ON BEHAVIORAL ETHICS

The field of behavioral ethics is so new that there is no accepted way to teach it. Prentice (2014) suggested that teaching business ethics through a behavioral lens should include at least three primary messages. First, people make most of their decisions, including those that are ethically tinged, instinctively rather than rationally. Second, people tend to believe that they are leading ethical lives while simultaneously doing lots of things that ethical people would not do. Third, there are cognitive limitations, social and organizational pressures, and situational factors that make it hard for even the most well-intentioned people to act as ethically as they would like. Fortunately, there is evidence that teaching behavioral ethics can have a beneficial impact (Prentice, forthcoming).

How People Make Ethical Decisions

Years of research, much of it summarized by Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman (2011), makes it clear that most human decision making is done intuitively by the unconscious system that Kahneman labels “System 1.” Most ethical decisions are also made emotionally and intuitively before the cognitive parts of the brain (“System 2”) engage. The dominant role of System 1 in ethical decision making is evidenced by the fact that children, even babies, have a basic moral sense that is hard-wired into their brains before they are taught morality by their parents and society (Walter, 2013). Even humans’ close primate relatives have evolved a similar rudimentary sense of fairness and justice (Folger & Cropanzano, 2010; Sun, 2013). Across human cultures, morality serves the critical purpose of encouraging people to follow their tribe’s values and to cooperate to advance the tribe’s goals, which also lends credence to the dominance of System 1 (Folger & Cropanzano, 2010; Walter, 2013).

Humans’ innate moral sense often gets it right, as when people get a bad feeling in their “gut” when they are about to violate an important cultural rule

(DeSteno & Valdesolo, 2011); however, people's intuition often gets it wrong as well. Emotions such as empathy, guilt, shame, anger, and disgust play a huge role in humans' ethical decision making, and often lead people to make instinctive ethical judgments that they cannot logically defend ("moral dumbfounding"; Haidt, 2012). For example, Kelly (2013) argued that the disgust emotion evolved to keep people from eating poison and from exposing themselves to germs, but later in the evolutionary process, it was co-opted to assist in enforcing societal norms and moral values. Norms and values tend to vary greatly across cultures even though there are a few nearly universal values such as fairness is good and harming others (in the in-group) is bad (Joyce, 2006). In-group favoritism and ethnocentrism are often default moral values (Greene, 2014). Research has demonstrated that even when people feel they are reasoning their way to a rational answer to an ethical question, their cognitive System 2 is often simply rationalizing a decision that their intuitive System 1 has already made (Appiah, 2006; De Waal, 2013).

Human reasoning can play a bigger role in these processes, as Johnson (2014) has pointed out, but only if people are aware of their vulnerabilities. People must be particularly mindful of the vulnerabilities arising from three factors that can undermine ethical decision making, cognitive errors, social and organizational pressures, and situational factors.

Cognitive Errors

The literature on heuristics and biases pioneered by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (Gilovich et al., 2002) demonstrates that people generally do not make decisions consistent with the rational actor model. A raft of heuristics (rules of thumb) and biases shape people's ethical decision making in ways they often do not understand or even notice. To note just a couple, first consider incrementalism (the slippery slope). Well-intentioned people often find themselves in work environments in which ethical corners are being cut. Because people are generally not good at noticing gradual changes in their environment (Gino, 2013), these corners can grow larger and larger, and people may go from minor rule infractions to felony violations of the law almost without noticing (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). Second, people have a tendency toward self-serving biases in their decision making. They tend to gather, process, and even remember information in a self-serving way (Langevoort, 1997). This often causes well-meaning people to make decisions that objective third parties find appallingly selfish (Eldred, 2012). People are adept at noticing how the self-serving bias can affect others' decisions on ethical matters, but they are often nearly blind in perceiving how they themselves might be affected (Mlodinow, 2012). Other cognitive shortcomings include the following:

- **The Tangible & the Abstract.** When people make ethically tinged decisions, they have a tendency to consider immediate and tangible factors at the expense of more removed and abstract factors (Glover, 2012).
- **Loss Aversion.** People have a tendency to detest losses even more than they enjoy gains (Sunstein, 2013). Applied to ethics, this often causes them to make more immoral decisions to avoid what they perceive to be a potential loss than they would make to achieve what they perceive to be a potential

gain (Christensen, Allworth, & Dillon, 2012; Grolleau, Kocher, & Sutan, 2014).

- **Framing.** People have a tendency to make different decisions based upon how a question is framed (Herbert, 2010). This can be ethically disastrous when other factors (such as meeting production goals or bonus targets) are framed as more important than ethical standards (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011).
- **Overconfidence.** People have a tendency to believe that they are more ethical than they actually are (Chambliss, 2012). This can cause them to make decisions with serious ethical implications without proper reflection (Fine, 2006).

Social and Organizational Pressures

Though there are others, two of the most common social and organizational pressures that can cause well-intentioned people to make poor ethical choices are the tendencies to be overly obedient to authority and to conform excessively to the ethical judgments and actions of peers. People are wired to gain pleasure from being obedient to authority (Matousek, 2011). While following superiors' instructions is generally a good thing, especially if the superior is seen as being ethical, the desire to please authority can cause people to suspend their own ethical judgment. If they do so in a situation in which the superior is not ethical, people are capable of doing terrible things (Glover, 2012).

People also are wired to follow the crowd, to conform their behavior to that of their peers. Brain scans show that resistance to group pressure is psychically costly (Matousek, 2011). Peer pressure can actually change people's perceptions of the world (Cain, 2012). This conformity bias can be beneficial in an evolutionary sense, but if it causes people to suspend their own ethical judgment, then they may find themselves following the crowd off an ethical cliff because bad behavior is catching (Norris, 2014; Robert & Arnab, 2013).

Situational Factors

Many situational and environmental factors affect (often adversely) ethical decision making in ways that people do not even notice. Time pressure is one such factor. Studies show that when people are under time pressure, they will often act less ethically than in situations when they are not. They will not realize the impact that time pressure has on their decision making and actions, but the impact is often there nonetheless (Darley & Batson, 1963). Transparency is another important factor. It is often said that "integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching." Unfortunately, the evidence is shockingly clear that if people feel that they are not being watched, they will tend to act less ethically (Alter, 2013; Gino, 2013; Lieberman, 2013). For example, because people feel more vulnerable to scrutiny, they will tend to act more ethically in a well-lit room than in a dimly lit room (Haidt, 2014; Swaab, 2014). People also tend to act more ethically in a clean room, and less ethically in a dirty, ill-kept room (DeSteno & Valdesolo, 2011; Herbert, 2010). They are also more vulnerable to ethical missteps if they are

tired (Christian & Ellis, 2011; Kouchaki & Smith, 2014) or if their self-control is depleted (Ariely, 2012; Ayres, 2010; DeSteno, 2014).

Our behavioral ethics primer is summarized in Table 1. The following section discusses teaching behavioral ethics and the benefits of incorporating it into a business ethics course.

TEACHING BEHAVIORAL ETHICS

Long-standing debates over whether or not business schools should attempt to teach ethics highlight the struggles that business professors have had with teaching ethics-related topics (Gentile 2012; Ghoshal, 2005; Piper, Gentile, & Daloz Parks, 1993). For example, business professors have struggled with the question, “Can values and ethics can be taught to adults, even young adults, in the first place?” A common retort is, “Aren’t values and ethics learned when one is in elementary school from families and teachers?” Business professors have often felt unprepared and unqualified to teach values and ethics because they have not been trained in philosophy or other ethics-related disciplines. Even assuming that values can be taught and that business professors can teach them, business professors have struggled with whose values should be taught in a diverse, global context, and have worried that they would merely be teaching their own personal values. Additionally, business professors have wrestled with how to teach ethics when they do not have the curricular materials they need to integrate ethics into business courses. Because of these struggles, the question, “Can ethics be taught in business schools?” persists.

Behavioral ethics’ response to the question of whether ethics can be taught in business schools is yes; the “choice architecture” surrounding people’s decisions can be changed, and those decisions can often be altered. This premise has been demonstrated by a variety of organizations in several contexts. For example, companies have increased their sales by tactically using psychological knowledge about how people make consumption decisions (Ariely, 2008). By triggering the envy emotion, makers of high-end goods can stimulate customers’ purchasing desires (Sun, 2013). Governments have begun to use behavioral principles to advance policy goals including reducing litter (Homonoff, 2012), increasing organ donations (Johnson & Goldstein, 2003), and improving teacher performance (Gneezy & List, 2013). Similarly, companies and other organizations can use the psychological and sociological principles uncovered by behavioral ethics research to improve the ethical behavior of their employees. By applying findings from this research, firms can improve their employees’ recognition of ethical issues, sharpen their ability to reach ethical conclusions, strengthen their desire to act ethically, and improve their ability to act upon those desires (Prentice, forthcoming; Zhang, Gino, & Bazerman, 2014).

Benefits of Teaching Behavioral Ethics

Borrowing, with some amendments, from Rest (1994), we suggest that there are four key steps to acting ethically to which an understanding of behavioral ethics contributes. First, people must perceive the ethical dimensions of an issue that they face (moral awareness). Second, they must have the ability to decide upon a course

Table 1: Behavioral Ethics Primer.

Foundational Assumptions

People make most of their decisions instinctively rather than rationally.
People tend to believe that they are leading ethical lives while doing things that ethical people would not do.
Cognitive limitations, social and organizational pressures, and situational factors make it hard for even the most well-intentioned people to act as ethically as they would like.

How Ethical Decisions are Made

Most decisions, including ethical decisions, are made intuitively. While this innate moral sense often gets it right, as when people get a bad feeling in their “gut” when they are about to behave unethically, moral intuition often gets it wrong.
People must understand factors that can wreak havoc on moral decision making: cognitive errors, social and organizational factors, and situational factors.

Cognitive Errors: Heuristics, Biases, and Rationalizations

Incrementalism	The slippery slope in which one gets used to minor infractions and does not notice when minor infractions give way to major infractions.
Self-serving bias	People gather and process information in a self-serving way and fail to see and/or object to unethical behavior that serves their self-interest.
Tangible & abstract	People remember immediate and tangible factors (e.g., hiding debt will keep the company’s stock price from falling this quarter) at the expense of more removed and abstract factors (e.g., nameless, faceless shareholders may lose money in the future if the company doesn’t “turn it around”).
Loss aversion	Because people detest losses more than they enjoy gains, they will make more immoral decisions to avoid a loss than they would to achieve a gain.
Framing	People make more or less ethical decisions depending on how an issue is framed.
Overconfidence	People have a tendency to believe they are more ethical than they are, which inclines them to make decisions with serious ethical implications without proper reflection.

Social and Organizational Pressures

Obedience to authority	Complying with the unethical request of a supervisor.
Conformity bias	People conform to the behavior of their peers and justify unethical behavior because “everyone is doing it.”

Situational Factors

Time pressure	People are more likely to act unethically under time pressure.
Transparency	People are more likely to act ethically when actions are transparent.
Fatigue	People are more likely to act unethically when they are tired.
Cleanliness	People are more likely to act ethically when they are in a clean room.

of action that is ethical (moral decision making). Third, they must have the desire to act on that ethical decision (moral intent). Finally, they must have the motivation and courage to act upon that desire (moral action). Teaching behavioral ethics can help students improve on all four dimensions.

Moral awareness

Moral awareness is critical. Obviously, “[i]ndividuals are better equipped to make moral decisions if they are aware of the relevant moral values and implications of the decisions they are facing” (Moore & Gino, 2013). Unfortunately, as noted, many people are (over) confident regarding their character, and assume that because they are good people, they will do the right thing if they encounter an ethical issue. If they are not paying attention however, they may not see the ethical aspects of a decision they must make. People are often so focused on pleasing their boss, fitting in with the team, or hitting bonus targets that they do not see ethical issues that are right in front of them. They suffer from what has been called moral myopia (Drumwright & Murphy, 2004) or ethical fading (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). Training in behavioral ethics can inform students that unless they actively keep ethics in their frame of reference, they might fall prey to these psychological tendencies. Every day, those who desire to act ethically must remind themselves of their ethical aspirations and of the need to constantly keep their ethical antennae extended.

Behavioral ethics also counsels people to pay attention to their intuition. Although the brain’s System 1 often leads people to making erroneous moral conclusions, the evidence is clear that when their “gut” bothers them, it is often for a good reason. A simple “gut check” facilitates moral awareness. “When faced with a moral decision, take a few seconds to pause and listen to your inner voices. Is there a hint of guilt, a hint of shame, a gut feeling of unease? If so, don’t ignore it” (DeSteno & Valdesolo, 2011, pp. 55–56).

One of the biggest impediments to moral awareness is the slippery slope noted above. Studies show that people are unlikely to notice gradual deteriorations in others’ ethical conduct (Gino, 2013). Unfortunately, they have the same problem in observing how their own conduct may be slowly degrading. What begins as a departure from good practice can gradually become the norm, so that padding an expense account a little paves the way for padding the expense account a lot (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). Behavioral ethics can remind people that “the first dishonest act is the most important one to prevent” (Ariely, 2012), and that it is easier to be ethical 100% of the time than 97% of the time, because 3% can soon become 5%, then 7% or more (Christensen et al., 2012). Behavioral ethicist Dan Ariely argued that if people can be educated about the phenomenon of incrementalism, they can pay more attention to early errors and “apply the brakes before it is too late” (Ariely, 2012).

Moral decision making

Even if people are aware of an ethical question that faces them, they must still be able to formulate an ethically defensible answer. Training in philosophical approaches such as deontology or teleology can be helpful in this regard, but

most ethical mistakes in business are not made because people have not read enough Kant or Bentham (Abel, 2008; Jennings, 2005). Insider trading, earnings fraud, tax evasion, foreign bribery, and other common white collar crimes do not present vexing philosophical quandaries. Rather, when good people make bad ethical choices, it is most commonly because they have fallen prey to the cognitive shortcomings, social and organizational pressures, and/or situational factors mentioned earlier.

As an example, consider the self-serving bias which, as noted above, can cause people to unintentionally make selfish decisions that seem indefensible to objective observers. “[B]ecause self-interested goals are generated automatically, they occur before the effortful and slower process of deliberation gets underway. This starts a cascade reaction, in which the decision that is ultimately reached will often be based on self-interest rather than ethical considerations” (Eldred, 2012, p. 361).

If people have not been educated as to the impact of the self-serving bias, they cannot guard against it. While de-biasing is difficult, some research suggests that teaching people that the bias operates outside their conscious awareness, and convincing them that they are, quite naturally, as prone to bias as those around them, can “inspire people to engage in efforts to overcome their biases” (Pronin & Schmidt, 2013, p. 211). An educational slideshow that educates physicians about their vulnerability to the pharmaceutical industry’s efforts to exploit their self-serving tendencies, changed the attitudes of the physicians (Fugh-Berman, Sciali, & Bell, 2010). Behavioral ethics research also demonstrates that people can reduce the impact of self-serving bias by listing weaknesses in their own positions or addressing alternatives to their conclusions (Babcock, Loewenstein, & Issacharoff, 1997).

Self-serving bias is only one of the factors that can make it all too easy for good people to do bad things. Research however indicates that if students are educated about the ways in which they are vulnerable to making unethical decisions, they themselves can more effectively guard against making such errors (Brink, 2013; Pronin & Schmidt, 2013).

Moral Intent

Even if people identify the ethical aspects of a decision that must be made and is able to make an ethically defensible choice, they must still want to do the right thing. With the exception of psychopaths, most people wish to act ethically, at least as a general rule and up to certain limits. Nonetheless, evidence indicates that most people lie and cheat a little bit almost every day (Alexander, 2013; Peterson, 2011). The biggest problem in this regard is that people often use rationalizations to permit themselves to not act ethically in given situations. “Rationalization is the great enemy of moral progress” (Greene, 2014, p. 301).

Rationalizations that can neutralize moral intent have been studied and categorized (Anand, Ashforth, & Joshi, 2004). Behavioral ethics teaches students to respond when they hear themselves invoking the most common of such rationalizations. People who are determined to live a moral life must simply pay attention to their own rationalizations. They must monitor themselves carefully. When

people hear themselves using common rationalizations (“It’s not my fault,” “No one will really be hurt,” “He deserves it,” “If I don’t do it, someone else will”) with themselves or others, alarms should go off in their heads because these are reliable indicators that they are considering acting unethically.

Moral action

Even if someone detects an ethical issue, identifies an ethically appropriate course of action, and wishes to do the right thing, there may still be a gap between these three steps and moral action. Hannah and colleagues identified three factors critical to turning moral intent into moral action: moral ownership, moral efficacy, and moral courage (Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011). The teachings of behavioral ethics can bolster all three.

People are more likely to not just think about doing the right thing but to actually do it if they take moral ownership; if they feel a sense of psychological responsibility relative to the situation (Hannah et al., 2011). This sometimes requires them to overcome moral muteness, a desire to not talk about ethical issues because doing so might require action (Drumwright & Murphy, 2004). Fortunately, the advice given earlier in this section relative to ethical fading and moral decision making should assist well-intentioned people to increase their moral ownership.

Moral efficacy is people’s feeling that they can act and actually make a difference (Hannah et al., 2011). People are less likely to act in an ethically fraught situation if they believe that they cannot impact the situation in a meaningful way. However, behavioral ethics research teaches that even in a large organization, a single individual who feels strongly can make a difference. In many instances when it appears that one’s organization is about to act unethically, it may be simply because other employees are making an innocent mistake, not because they are bound and determined to act unethically. They may merely be framing the issue incorrectly, and one person who gives them good reason to change their minds may succeed in changing the firm’s course. The “power of one” is the idea that others may not have the courage to lead but may have the courage to follow if just one person in an organization is determined to do the right thing (Maxwell, 1999). Gentile studied a large number of people who had been asked to do something they believed to be ethically objectionable, and found that the large majority of those who resisted were successful (Gentile & Hittner, 2011). Behavioral ethics training can convince people of their moral efficacy, thereby encouraging moral action.

The third factor is moral courage, “the strength of will . . . needed to face and resolve ethical challenges and to confront barriers that may inhibit the ability to proceed toward right action” (Sekerka, Bagozzi, & Charnigo, 2009). People may be too timid to stand up to superiors or peers, or too worried about losing their jobs to muster the courage to convert their moral intent into moral action. Behavioral ethics teaches that facing difficult ethical choices is a normal part of a business career, and that by anticipating the difficult ethical choices one may have to make, people can improve the likelihood that they will live up to their own ethical standards. Gentile notes that “[b]y anticipating or *normalizing* the idea that we will have to take risks—even career-threatening ones—in service of our values at some point in our work lives, we expand our vision of what degree of

freedom we have in our decision making” (Gentile, 2010, p. 78). It is hard to act ethically on the fly, but “pre-scripting,” or anticipating difficult ethical situations and deciding in advance how to respond to them, can help. People may improve their golf swings, their tennis strokes, and their ethical actions by visualizing them in advance. Gentile’s behavioral research demonstrates that the “single most striking difference” between those who lived their values and those who did not was that those who acted “had said something, at some point, out loud and to someone outside their own heads. This single act makes the decision more real, less hypothetical, less easily avoided” (Gentile, 2010, p. 58).

Scholars have found that people can break free of moral myopia and moral muteness and exercise moral imagination (Drumwright & Murphy, 2004), the ability to see and act on ethical alternatives (Johnson, 1993; Werhane, 1999). People can increase the likelihood that they will develop and exercise their moral imagination by generating ethics-related “scripts” (Gentile, 2010). Scripts are cognitive structures that help people organize and understand events, and develop persuasive arguments (Ableson, 1981). Those who have built scripts are more likely to have the courage to put their scripts into action in difficult circumstances (London, 1979).

There is clearly promise in adding behavioral ethics to a course on ethics. The benefits of doing so are summarized in Figure 1. We review important tools and resources for incorporating behavioral ethics into the curriculum from two approaches that complement and enrich each other, *Ethics Unwrapped* and *Giving Voice to Values* (GVV).

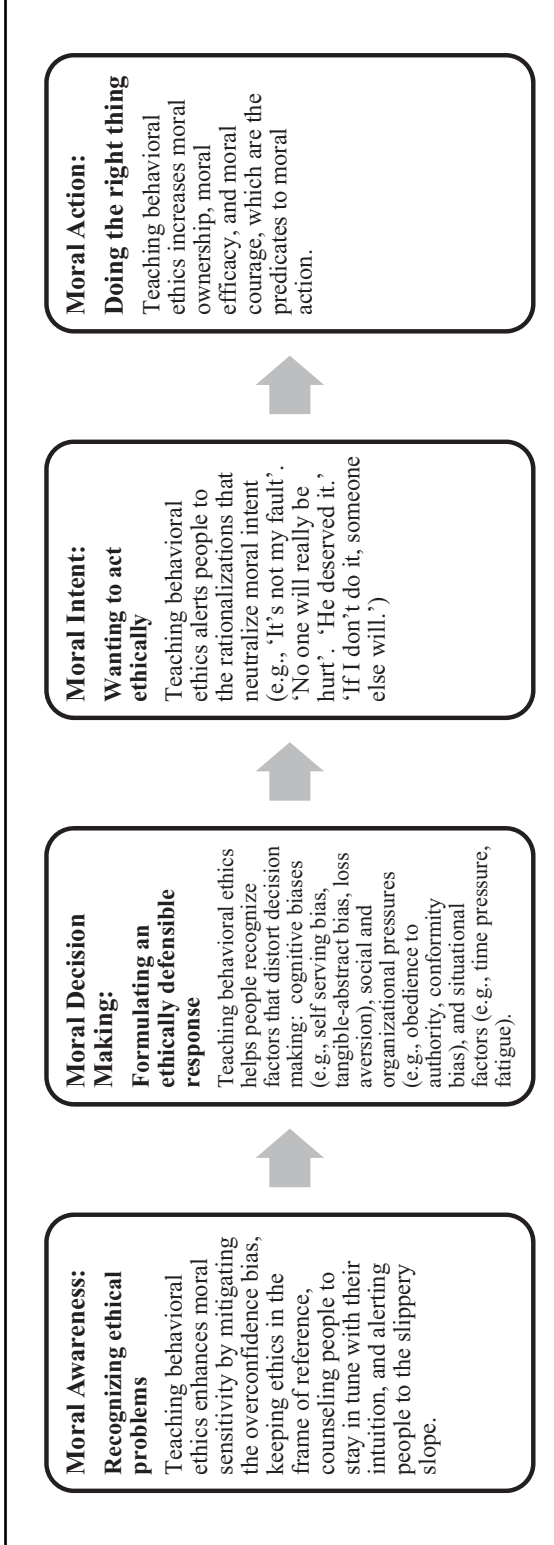
Ethics Unwrapped

Ethics Unwrapped, produced by The University of Texas at Austin, provides many free, easily accessible (via YouTube or ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu), research-driven, timely, and topical videos for anyone who wishes to teach or learn about ethics and ethical decision making. The videos are accompanied by teaching notes and additional resources that supplement instruction, and can be used in their entirety as substitutes for lectures or readings, or excerpts used as discussion starters. As such, *Ethics Unwrapped* addresses two of the problems that have long plagued business ethics education in general (Piper et al., 1993): (a) many business professors are not schooled in ethics-related disciplines such as behavioral ethics and thus not comfortable delivering the content and (b) there are few teaching materials available.

The scope of the *Ethics Unwrapped* videos, which have won multiple awards for quality, ranges well beyond behavioral ethics, but a majority of the videos currently available present behavioral ethics concepts. They draw their theoretical basis primarily from the research on decision-making biases and heuristics pioneered by Kahneman and Tversky (Gilovich et al., 2002) and examined more recently in business contexts by business professors (e.g., Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2010; Drumwright and Murphy, 2004; Gino, 2013, 2014; Prentice, 2004, 2014; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004).

Ethics Unwrapped currently has three major video series. “Concepts Unwrapped” is a series of short videos that address a variety of topics, including

Figure 1: Benefits of Teaching Behavioral Ethics (Key Steps to Ethical Decision Making).



more than two dozen that address behavioral ethics concepts. The videos feature content written and narrated by academic experts, engaging animations, and interviews with students who react to the content in ways that engross viewers. Many of the videos explain factors described earlier that can make it difficult for good people to live up to their own ethical standards, including Incrementalism, Self-Serving Bias, Tangible & Abstract, Loss Aversion, Framing, Overconfidence Bias, Conformity Bias, Obedience to Authority, Ethical Fading, Moral Myopia, Moral Muteness, and Moral Imagination. Other Concepts Unwrapped videos that contain behavioral ethics content not explained earlier include the following:

- **Fundamental Attribution Error.** This is the tendency people have when reading about a person doing the “perp walk” to think “He did a bad thing. He must be a bad person. I am a good person. I would not do that bad thing.” The video emphasizes that because all people are subject to cognitive limitations, social and organizational pressures, and situational factors, no one should be overly confident of their own ethicality.
- **Moral Equilibrium.** People tend to have a scoreboard in their heads that keeps track of whether they are acting consistently with their view of themselves as ethical people. They also have a tendency, after having done something good, to feel as if they have a surplus on the scoreboard which may give themselves “moral license” to fail to live up to their own ethical standards.
- **Role Morality.** People will often assume roles, such as that of a loyal company employee, and in service of that role take unethical actions they would never take to benefit themselves in their personal lives.

The newest videos of Concepts Unwrapped include a two-part video addressing how leaders can both act more ethically themselves and encourage ethical behavior in their organizations. In addition, there is a four-part video, “Being Your Best Self,” that explains the four key steps of ethical action identified earlier (moral awareness, moral decision making, moral intent, moral action) and gives tips for overcoming the difficulties associated with enacting these steps.

The second series of videos, “Cases Unwrapped,” currently features one “video case,” “In It to Win: The Jack Abramoff Story,” in which disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff tells his own story of how he veered off the ethical path. The documentary is supplemented with a series of six short videos that illustrate how some of the concepts of behavioral ethics explain Jack’s downfall. Five of the videos (Jack & Framing, Jack & Moral Equilibrium, Jack & Overconfidence Bias, Jack & Role Morality, and Jack & Self-Serving Bias) apply principles discussed in the Concepts Unwrapped videos. The sixth short video, “Jack & Rationalizations,” addresses the important topic of rationalizations.

Ethics Unwrapped has a third series of videos based on the GVV program, which is described below. The GVV program has seven principles or “pillars” that characterize its approach. Ethics Unwrapped has eight GVV videos, an introductory video, and a video for each of the seven GVV principles: Values, Choice, Normalization, Purpose, Self-Knowledge & Alignment, Voice, and Reasons & Rationalizations.

Table 2: Sample Assignment and Class Session

 Introducing Behavioral Ethics with Ethics Unwrapped

Pre-class Assignment

Watch “In It to Win: The Story of Jack Abramoff,” Ethics Unwrapped Curriculum

<http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/series/cases-unwrapped>.

This 25-minute documentary film about former lobbyist and convicted felon Jack Abramoff focuses on the decision-making biases and social and organizational pressures that contributed to Mr. Abramoff’s unethical and illegal behavior.

Read “Scripts and Skills: Readings,” Giving Voice to Values (GVV) Curriculum

<http://www.babson.edu/Academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/curriculum.aspx>
(Click on the “Scripts and Skills” Module”).

This reading reviews six articles that provide insights from behavioral ethics research regarding factors that can lead to unethical choices and strategies for overcoming them and GVV. For example, the first article reviewed is one by Robert Prentice (2004) that summarizes psychological research on decision-making biases and heuristics that can result in unethical behavior.

Study Questions

1. What decision-making biases and heuristics contributed to Mr. Abramoff’s unethical and illegal behavior?
2. What social and organizational pressures contributed to Mr. Abramoff’s unethical and illegal behavior?
3. What could Mr. Abramoff have done to counteract the decision-making biases and heuristics and the social and organizational pressures that he faced?

Class Session

The instructor can lead a discussion of the decision-making biases heuristics and social and organizational pressures that Mr. Abramoff faced. As the discussion progresses, the instructor can play the six short films (approximately 2–5 minutes each) illustrating the decision biases and rationalizations to which Mr. Abramoff succumbed (framing, moral equilibrium, overconfidence bias, role morality, self-serving bias, rationalizations). The instructor may also want to use the short Ethics Unwrapped film, “Introduction to Behavioral Ethics.” See the teaching note for the series on Jack Abramoff:
<http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/teaching-notes>

The Ethics Unwrapped videos are flexible tools that may be used to serve any diverse teaching goals and objectives in traditional, blended, or online courses. They have been used in courses across business disciplines and in a number of nonbusiness schools and colleges. For example, a History professor who teaches a course on the Holocaust uses the videos on Obedience to Authority and Conformity Bias when teaching material related to the mass shootings of civilians in Poland, and a Government professor who teaches a course on the American Presidency uses videos on Overconfidence Bias and Self-Serving Bias when discussing presidential decision making. Table 2 provides a sample assignment and class session that can be used to introduce behavioral ethics using Ethics Unwrapped videos.

Giving Voice to Values

GVV is an innovative, values-driven research, and curriculum initiative designed to enable individuals to develop the skills, knowledge, and commitment they need

to put their values into action (Gentile, 2010). The GVV program is based on the popular business ethics book, *Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What's Right* (Gentile, 2010), and related materials. As the book's title suggests, the initiative focuses on the "post-decision making" phase, what one should do to "give voice to values" after deciding what the correct ethical approach is. As such, it poses the question, "Once we know what we think is right, how do we get it done?" (Gentile, 2012, p. 191), and "voice" serves as a metaphor for acting on one's values and living in sync with them.

The GVV approach emphasizes "educating for action," and draws much of its theoretical underpinnings from behavioral theory related to rehearsal or practice "as a way of changing thinking patterns and subsequent behavior defaults," and "pre-scripting" or preparing scripts that will guide one in future situations (e.g., Gentile, 2012, p. 193). As such, GVV focuses on presenting positive examples of how individuals have given voice to their values in the workplace, and provides students with opportunities to practice how they would actually respond to situations that present ethical issues. Like *Ethics Unwrapped*, GVV draws on theory and research related to decision-making biases and heuristics (e.g., Gilovich et al., 2002).

The GVV website contains readings, exercises, cases, and teaching notes, and the GVV initiative uses an "open source" approach that invites and encourages scholars in all business disciplines and in many countries to create and contribute curricular materials. Faculty perspectives on teaching and research related to the GVV initiative are featured in Gentile (2011). In an edited volume, faculty addressed teaching GVV in required and elective courses in a variety of business disciplines (Gentile, 2014). Gentile recently partnered with Nomadic to develop a series of interactive, online, social-cohort-based modules that introduce GVV and offer opportunities for students or practitioners to work in cohorts on its application. The interactive modules can be customized for individual organizations. All of the curricular materials except for the book (Gentile, 2010) and online modules are available free of charge.¹ Examples of GVV teaching tools that encompass behavioral ethics include the following:

- "Scripts and Skills Module" provides readings, exercises, short cases, and teaching plans focused on identifying cognitive errors, social and organizational pressures, and situational factors that make it difficult to give voice to values and developing scripts that overcome these factors. The exercises include peer coaching and keeping an on-going journal.
- "A Tale of Two Stories" asks students to identify and analyze two situations, one in which they gave voice to their values and one in which they did not. Students must identify the cognitive errors, social and organizational pressures, and situational factors that made it harder or easier to give voice to values. They also reflect on the scripts that enabled them to act on their values.
- "Giving Voice to Values Written Assignment" requires students to identify a scenario that presents a values conflict in the workplace and to analyze

¹<http://www.babson.edu/Academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/home.aspx>

the pressures and factors that make it difficult to give voice to values. Students then create a script with arguments to persuade others of their point of view, and an action plan to implement the ethical approach. The assignment has been used effectively as both an individual and a team assignment, and some professors have used it to create GVV cases and teaching notes in collaboration with students (Drumwright, 2011).

Table 3 provides a sample assignment and class session that introduces the GVV approach using Ethics Unwrapped videos. Table 4 compares Ethics Unwrapped and GVV resources.

Table 3: Sample Assignment and Class Session

Introducing Giving Voice to Values (GVV)

Pre-class Assignment

Read “A Tale of Two Stories,” GVV curriculum

<http://www.babson.edu/Academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/curriculum.aspx>
(Click on “Foundational Readings and Exercises”).

This exercise asks students to think of two situations from their past experience that posed a values-based conflict for them—one situation in which they acted in sync with their values and another situation in which they did not. They then answer questions that help them (1) reflect upon why they behaved in the manner that they did and (2) examine factors that made it easier or harder for them to speak up and give voice to their values.

Class Session

Students initially meet in small groups to discuss the situations that they identified in the preclass exercise and look for themes regarding what motivates people to give voice to their values and factors that make it easier or harder to do so. Afterward, the large group assembles, and the instructor leads a discussion in which the students share the themes that they observed during the small group discussion. The instructor then introduces the GVV approach using the Ethics Unwrapped film, “Intro to GVV” (7 minutes), which gives an overview of the GVV approach and its seven pillars (<http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/series/giving-voice-to-values>).

If time permits, the instructor can show one or more of the Ethics Unwrapped videos on specific pillars (e.g., “Pillar 2: Choice”) available here:

<http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/series/giving-voice-to-values>.

See the teaching notes for the Ethics Unwrapped GVV series for discussion questions related to each pillar (<http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/teaching-notes>). Faculty may request the URL for GVV teaching notes by e-mailing Mgentile3@babson.edu.

Follow-Up Reading

The instructor can assign the two-page reading, “An Action Framework for *Giving Voice to Values*: The To-Do List,” which summarizes the seven GVV pillars, and “*Giving Voice to Values*: Brief Introduction,” which provides an overview of the GVV approach. To access the readings, visit the following site:

<http://www.babson.edu/Academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/curriculum.aspx>
(Click on “Foundational Readings and Exercises.”).

Table 4: Comparison of resources of Ethics Unwrapped and Giving Voice to Values (GVV).

	Ethics Unwrapped	GVV
Web address	www.ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu	www.babson.edu/Academics/teaching-research
Director(s)	Program Director: Cara Biasucci Faculty Director: Robert Prentice	Creator & Director: Mary C. Gentile
Institutional home	The University of Texas at Austin	Babson College
Focus	Developing moral awareness & ethical decision-making skills, behavioral ethics, foundational/fundamental ethics, business ethics	Empowering ethical action
Major components	Short videos, documentaries, discussion questions, case studies	Book, curriculum, case studies, on-line learning modules
Cost	Free	Curriculum, case studies: free Book, online learning modules: available for a fee
Teaching notes	Yes http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/teaching-notes	Yes, upon request Email: mgentile3@babson.edu
Videos	Yes	No
Languages	English, Spanish	Book: English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean (forthcoming) Curriculum, case studies: English, some materials available in Russian Online learning modules: English

ASSESSMENT

Assessment raises difficult challenges, both substantively and methodologically, and these challenges appear particularly formidable when assessment focuses on learning related to ethics. For example, how does one measure nuanced and sophisticated ethical reasoning and the translation of that reasoning into responsible, ethical judgments and actions in the workplace? How does one capture whether an individual has mastered how to learn about ethical issues that emerge as new trends and new technologies evolve and transform the workplace? These questions barely scratch the surface of the assessment challenges related to teaching ethics in general and behavioral ethics in particular. Nonetheless, accrediting bodies, state legislatures, and state higher education coordinating boards increasingly demand that colleges and universities demonstrate that their programs are producing the desired learning outcomes. For example, the Association for the Advancement of

Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) requires that key learning goals related to ethics be articulated, that student learning related to these goals be assessed in a systematic, direct way, and that assessment data be used to improve student learning (Martell & Calderon, 2005).

Despite the challenges, assessment of student learning related to ethics does not need to be something that is delegated solely to curriculum experts. Faculty can be active participants in assessment and in improving their own learning and teaching through action research (Noffke & Somekh, 2009). Action research enables educators and other professionals to transform their practice into “living theories” through an ongoing, cyclical process of “observe-reflect-act-evaluate-modify-move in new directions” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p. 7). Many of the approaches highlighted below are forms of action research that faculty can use themselves to improve their instruction.

Criteria for Student Learning

The Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities provides criteria for student learning outcomes related to ethics (Association of American Colleges and Universities). The rubric focuses on five elements that contribute to students’ ethical self-identity: (1) ethical self-awareness, (2) understanding different ethical perspectives/concepts, (3) ethical issue recognition, (4) application of ethical perspectives/concepts, and (5) evaluation of different ethical perspectives/concepts. For each element, the rubric provides four performance descriptors that demonstrate progressively more sophisticated levels that faculty and curriculum specialists can use to evaluate student work.

Teaching behavioral ethics contributes to meeting the criteria of the Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric in multiple ways. First, it highlights the importance of ethical self awareness (element 1) by making the fundamental point that people who do not intend to do anything wrong can be blindsided by ethical issues and unintentionally make unethical decisions. As such, it emphasizes the continuing need to pay attention to ethical issues because good people can make bad decisions. Second, teaching behavioral ethics provides students with an understanding of concepts (element 2) related to cognitive errors, social and organizational factors, and situational factors that can impinge on ethical decision making. Third, because of this understanding, students are able to recognize rationalizations that serve as “red flags,” which helps them identify ethical issues more readily (element 3). Fourth, teaching behavioral ethics requires students to create scripts, which emphasizes the application of concepts (element 4). Fifth, when students have an understanding of behavioral ethics and the ability to apply its principles, they are more likely to evaluate various ethical perspectives and alternatives in a manner that increases the probability that they will act ethically and responsibly when they encounter ethical issues in the workplace.

Assessment Methods

A variety of assessment approaches and methods can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of behavioral ethics instruction, though measuring ethical learning is

fraught with difficulties, and any method used will have limitations. The measures discussed below are best used in combination.

Input measures

Input measures (e.g., the number of professors adopting behavioral ethics teaching tools and the number of students exposed to them) are based on the assumption that professors will not adopt and continue to use behavioral ethics teaching tools if they do not believe they are effective. The adoption of behavioral ethics teaching tools in recent years has been impressive. For example, GVV has been piloted in more than 625 educational and business settings on all seven continents. There is a database of over 3,500 GVV contacts, about half of whom are educators. Launched just 2 years ago, Ethics Unwrapped has been used by more than 130 colleges and universities and in dozens of organizations around the world. Digital media provide a number of proxies for adoption of these teaching tools. For example, YouTube analytics show that Ethics Unwrapped videos had more than 220,000 views as of mid-2015, with approximately 3,000 new views added each week.

Output measures

Output measures address the question of whether the desired learning is achieved. They can be based on both student and faculty reports of the effectiveness of behavioral ethics in courses, and often involve qualitative data, self-reported data, and direct assessment of student work, much of which faculty can incorporate into action research.

Qualitative data from faculty regarding the effectiveness of incorporating behavioral ethics is abundant. For example, feedback from dozens of instructors who are using Ethics Unwrapped videos in college courses and employee training has been collected and used to improve existing resources and determine new resource needs. Though there has not been a large-scale, systematic study, themes emerging from qualitative data include the following:

- Ethics Unwrapped videos mitigate feelings of inadequacy that professors may have regarding their preparation to teach behavioral ethics.
- They are an easy, fool-proof way of incorporating behavioral ethics into existing courses, and can be used in place of a lecture or a reading assignment, or as a discussion starter.

An analysis of student comments regarding the use of Ethics Unwrapped revealed the following themes:

- The videos provide clear and engaging explanations of concepts and theories.
- Students can relate to the concepts because they are illustrated in the lives of students.
- Real stories featuring real people make the abstract concepts relevant and easy to grasp.

Perhaps the most common way to assess student learning in college courses is through student self-report measures. These measures are most frequently taken only at the end of a course, but if there is no baseline measure of knowledge at the beginning of the course, the increase in learning cannot be assessed. To provide a measure of change, pre- and postmeasures can be used such that students assess their knowledge of a topic at the beginning of a course and then again at the end of the course. However, this approach can be complicated by respondents' changing understanding of the phenomenon being studied, which can make pre-post comparisons invalid (Dickenson, Fisher, Shaw, & Southey, 1995; Howard et al., 1979; Howard & Dailey, 1979; Shaw, 2013; Terborg, Maxwell, & Howard, 1980). Practically speaking, this means that students often do not understand what they do not know about a topic at the beginning of a course, and as a result, they may overestimate their knowledge of the topic. By the end of the course, students may have a more sophisticated understanding of the topic and may thus be more aware of what they do not know. As a result, they may be more modest and more perspicacious in their assessment of what they know about the topic than they were at the beginning of the course. The result may be a disappointing outcome of "little change" or even "no change," but what has actually happened is that the scale's anchor points have changed over time. This has also been called response-shift bias.

One promising way to mitigate the problem of response-shift bias is referred to as the "pre-then-post" approach (Dickenson et al., 1995; Howard et al. 1979; Shaw, 2013; Terborg et al., 1980). At the beginning of a course, students assess their knowledge of a topic such as behavioral ethics—the "pre" measure. At the end of the course, two different measures are used. First, students are asked to retrospectively evaluate their level of understanding related to behavioral ethics at the beginning of the course—the "then" measure. Second, students are asked to evaluate their understanding of behavioral ethics now that they have completed the course—the "post" measure. Differences between the "then" and "post" measures have been demonstrated to be more strongly correlated with observer ratings and objective measures of behavior change than differences between "pre" and "post" measures (e.g., Dickenson et al., 1995; Howard & Dailey, 1979; Howard et al., 1979). Ben Shaw (2013) pioneered the "pre-then-post" approach in assessing the GVV curriculum, and found that the increase between the "then-post" measures was considerably greater than the increase between the "pre-post" measures.

Another approach to assessing student learning related to behavioral ethics is to conduct action research by having faculty and/or curriculum specialists evaluate samples of student work. For example, the Simmons School of Management has a biannual Assessment of Learning (AOL) faculty workshop to assess its learning goals, one of which pertains to social responsibility and ethics (Ingolls, 2011). All faculty members are invited and expected to attend the workshop. Faculty members first discuss the criteria used to identify strong and weak papers, and then each faculty member evaluates a sample of student papers using a rubric that addresses the learning goal. The data are entered into a spreadsheet, projected on a screen, and discussed by the faculty. Ingolls (2011, p. 361) described the ensuing "conversation" as the "sine qua non" of the assessment process because the data are "fresh and compelling." She also noted that the process eliminates

the “oft lamented assessment problem of data sitting on shelves in dust-covered notebooks.” Disappointment with ethics-related assessment results at the 2007 AOL workshop led to the integration of GVV into the Simmons curriculum in 2008. Ingolls (2011) reported impressive improvement in assessment measures after the integration of GVV (e.g., in 2007, 45% of students linked ethics and values to their recommendations in a case analysis, while in 2009, 84% of students did so when analyzing the same case).

A combination of assessment methods provides the most comprehensive evaluation of overall efficacy. An example is the Ethics Unwrapped Ethics Integration Initiative launched in August 2014 at the University of Texas at Austin. This multipronged assessment approach measures the impact of Ethics Unwrapped on student learning across a variety of disciplines over the course of four semesters. Assessment of the initiative will involve data analytics, student and faculty surveys, focus groups, and direct assessment of student work. Since it would be helpful to conduct a study in which qualitative and quantitative assessment data are compared for ethics courses that do and do not include behavioral ethics, at least one course in this initiative will be taught and assessed with and without the inclusion of Ethics Unwrapped videos in the curriculum.

The measures of learning described above will not be completely satisfying. It will be infeasible to compare, for example, the number of arrests, indictments, and convictions 10 or 20 years after graduation of a group of employees who took a behavioral ethics class versus a group of employees who did not. The employees will inevitably have worked for different supervisors, in different organizations, and faced different pressures and opportunities to act unethically. The authors do however have anecdotal reports from students that they resisted pressure to act unethically in the workplace and felt better qualified to handle difficult ethical challenges than their peers who had not taken such a course.

CONCLUSION

The best current thinking on the future of business education emphasizes both the importance of integrating more liberal learning into graduate and undergraduate curricula and the critical need to expand the capacity of business students to lead ethically. It is thus opportune that one area of the decision sciences, behavioral ethics or the study of why people make the ethical and unethical decisions that they do, holds great promise for improving students’ ethics education and their subsequent ethical behavior in the professional world.

This article is among the first to emphasize how a particular area of the decision sciences can contribute in a meaningful way to improving ethics education. Behavioral ethics focuses on understanding cognitive errors, social and organizational pressures, and situational factors that can prompt people who do not intend to do anything wrong to engage in unethical behavior. It moves beyond cautionary tales of bad behavior to enable people to rehearse and practice skills and approaches that will enable them to act ethically. As such, it provides compelling support for all the steps in Rest’s (1994) model from moral awareness to moral action.

This article also emphasizes that infusing liberal learning into the business curriculum just for the sake of doing so would add little value. However, by using resources such as the Ethics Unwrapped and the GVV educational platforms, the integration of liberal learning into business education in the form of behavioral ethics can be done in a purposeful way. By embracing the tenets of liberal learning that include critical thinking, multiple framing, practical reasoning, and reflection, educators can meaningfully improve current approaches to ethics education in business schools.

Nothing could be clearer than the fact that business students are not currently receiving the effective training that they so desperately need to become ethical leaders. The Savings & Loan scandals of the late 1980s, the Enron-era scandals of the late 1990s, the subprime scandals of 2007–2008, and ongoing headlines such as those about widespread insider trading, the manipulation of the London Interbank Offered Rate, money laundering, and the bribery of foreign government officials make it clear beyond cavil that better ethics training must be a top educational priority. The liberal learning-infused approach outlined in this article that is research-based and being rigorously assessed brightens the future of ethical training for business leaders.

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