

**OBTC 2017 at Providence College**

**June 14th – 17th, 2017**

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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| **Submission Template for the**  **2017 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators** |

1. Title, Abstract & Keywords

*In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.*

Title: Teaching Ethics: Moral Awareness in a Deregulated Business World.

Abstract:

The new presidential administration is predicted to make things easier for business by rolling back years of governmental regulation. As much as they were sometimes disliked, regulations helped define what actions were permissible and which ones were thought to be harmful. How will a deregulated business environment affect the ethical decision making of businesspeople?

Using a behavioral ethics framework and a series of video clips of both famous and ordinary people, this session will engage participants in a demonstration of how organizational members use cognitive biases and self-deception to keep from recognizing and responding to ethical concerns.

Keywords: Ethics education, behavioral ethics, video exercise

1. Teaching Implications:

*What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*

Learning Objectives:

1. To examine how business ethics is usually taught and to illustrate a more complete approach.
2. To demonstrate a video exercise that will help students identify the cognitive techniques that allow people to engage in self-deception in the face of a moral question.

The teaching of business ethics, either as part of a survey course (e.g., Concepts of Management, Business and Society) or as a stand-alone course, usually includes coverage of philosophy’s major moral theories coupled with a case approach. Unitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics, human rights, social contract, etc., present different ways of thinking through moral questions; i.e., they teach processes of moral reasoning. It is natural that management instructors, who may never have formally studied ethics, rely on these theories and illustrate their application using case examples.

Accordant to Rest (1986), ethical decision making is comprised of four stages – moral awareness, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral behavior. So, the decision maker first recognizes that an issue contains an ethical dimension; then, he/she makes a judgment about the moral action and, if motivation is present, engages in moral behavior.

Implicit in relying on a moral theories approach to teach ethics is the assumption that decision makers are aware that a moral question exists; most ethical theories start the moral decision-making process at the judgment stage. However, Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2011) contended that while using the moral theories may help teach processes of ethical reasoning and judgment, the theories are useful only if one has perceived the moral question (Rest’s Stage 1).

The area of inquiry known as Behavioral Ethics has emerged as an approach that can supplement teaching business ethics using moral theories. Behavioral ethics is a new and currently rather broad field; one of its frameworks is to use social science research to examine the cognitive techniques people use unintentionally to self-deceive when engaging in ethical decision making (Trevino, Weaver, and Reynolds, 2006). Self-deception is at the heart of this process and involves the lies we unconsciously tell to ourselves to avoid the truth of a situation. The moral aspects of decisions fade, which enables people to do immoral things but still keep an image of themselves as moral people. “The moral colors of an ethical decision fade into bleached hues that are void of moral implications” (Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, 2011; Bazerman and Banaji, 2004; Tenbrunsel and Messick, 2004, p. 224).

Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2011) describe a number of predictable cognitive responses that lead to failure to recognize that a decision contains a moral component. Following are a handful that will help demonstrate the kinds of examples I will be using.

*Motivated blindness/willful ignorance*: People see what they want and miss or discount contradictory information; people do not perceive or become knowledgeable about things that don’t benefit their decisions or actions. People who like to eat meat often don’t want to know the details of what occurs on industrial farms.

*Condemning the condemner*: Rather than listening to those who morally question a decision or a plan of action, the critic is devalued and discredited. There is a website called Unemployedprofessors.com. It is marketed to students as a way to get papers written by real professors. It encourages student to use its services by arguing that universities require useless courses and waste student time; furthermore, professors don’t care about their students. It recruits professors by pointing out how universities now take advantage of scholars by using them as adjuncts, paying them very little, etc.

*Bounded awareness*: This involves excluding important and relevant information from decisions by arbitrarily limiting the definition of the problem. President George W. Bush, a legacy admit to Yale, roundly condemned Affirmative Action. He failed to see the similarities between the two programs by constraining his focus to the ills of Affirmative Action rather than the unfairness of preferential treatment for anyone, including the rich and connected.

*Over-reliance on law:*  This is claiming that obeying the law is the same as acting morally. In the poisoning of Flint water with lead, state officials kept stressing that they were meeting the requirements of the Lead and Copper Rule and refused to acknowledge that they were producing immoral outcomes despite supposedly meeting regulations.

Students will receive a more complete ethics education if coverage includes the moral awareness stage, and they are asked to examine their own thinking for use of these cognitive techniques.

1. Session Description and Plan:

*What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you’d like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session’s goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session.*

This will be a 60-minute session, with time allocated as follows:

* Discussion: 25 minutes
* Video Examples: 30 minutes
* Wrap Up: 5 minutes

The session will start with a brief overview of the ethical decision-making process and discussion about how it is typically taught. I will give attendees a handout that describes some of the cognitive techniques that people use to avoid recognizing an ethical issue exists. I will then show a video compilation of people actually using these techniques (e.g., the president of Mylan defending her actions after the EpiPen price increase). After each statement/conversation, I will stop the tape and ask the participants to identify the technique being used and its effect.

1. Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *Navigating the Changing Currents*?

As the United States heads into a new administration under Donald Trump, business experts are predicting a pronounced unraveling of government regulation. Restrictions are expected to be lifted in the areas of labor costs, environmental regulations, financial services, and agriculture (Timiraos and Tangel, 2016). Deregulation will give more decision-making discretion to organizational managers and members, and it will be up to business decision makers to recognize and respond to ethical issues. Because regulation declares what is acceptable and what is not, organizational members may not have fully developed the skill of moral awareness. Participants will leave the session with a new technique for building moral awareness with their students.

1. Unique Contribution to OBTC:

*Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?*

This work has never been presented before.

**References**

Bazerman, M. & M. Banaji. (2004). The social psychology of ordinary ethical failures. Social Justice Research, 17(2), pp. 111-115.

Bazerman, M. & A. Tenbrunsel (2011). *Blind Spot*s. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Rest, J. (1986). *Moral development: advances in research and theory*. New York: Praeger.

Tenbrunsel, A & Messick, D. 2004. Ethical fading: the role of self-deception in ethicalbehavior. Social Justice Research 17(2), pp. 223-236.Timiraos, N. & Tangel, A. (December 28, 2016). Donald Trump’s cabinet picks signal deregulation moves are coming. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from [http://www.wsj.com/articles/donald-trump-cabinet-picks-signal-deregulation- zmoves-are-coming-1481243006](http://www.wsj.com/articles/donald-trump-cabinet-picks-signal-deregulation-%09moves-are-coming-1481243006).

Trevino, L., G. Weaver, & S. Reynolds. (2006). Behavioral Ethics in Organizations: A Review. Journal of Management, 6(32), pp. 951-990.