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Ethical Challenges and Dilemmas in Organizations

A Case Study Approach

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The business of the modern world, for better or worse, is business. Unless we learn to conduct business in ways that sustain our souls and the life supporting web of nature, our future as a species is dim.

Peter Barnes
President, Working Assets Long Distance

❖   THE CHALLENGE OF ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS

If ethics were easy and straightforward in our organizations, there would be no need for books such as this one. However, this is rarely the case. Ethical decision making and practice are fraught with difficulties and challenges. Ethics often stretches us and moves us to think beyond

our own self to consider others: our family, our work group, our organization, our country, our culture. At the least, when we consider our own ethics, we have to ask ourselves: What is my own ethical position or stance? How is that similar to, or different from, others'? Will my actions have the intended consequences? What unintended consequences might arise from my actions?

These are challenging questions to ask at a personal level. We must consider what we deem appropriate and inappropriate, acceptable and unacceptable, right and wrong for ourselves—but also in relation to others. At an organizational level, such issues can become complex, if not daunting. Given the rise of organizational power and influence, the potential impact of decisions is, in some cases, profound and far-reaching. Stan Deetz (1992) reminds us that, by many standards, the business organization has become the central institution in modern society, often eclipsing the state, family, church, and community in power. Organizations pervade modern life by providing personal identity, structuring time and experience, influencing education and knowledge production, and directing news and entertainment. From the moment of our birth to our death, organizations significantly influence our lives in ways that often go unnoticed.

That is, over time, we have developed naturalized, taken-for-granted ideas about how organizations should function and the role that they should play both in our personal lives and in our culture. One of the goals of this book, then, is to raise your awareness regarding many of our commonsense assumptions about organizations, particularly when it comes to ethics. After you have read this book, I hope that you will have developed the awareness to pursue ethical questions and establish your own views on organizational ethics. A second goal of the book is to strengthen your ethical reasoning and decision making. It is not enough to be aware of organizational ethics; it also requires strong critical-thinking skills to understand ethical situations and possible courses of action. After you have read this book, you will have developed these skills as you learn about ethical theories, in general, and ethical practices, specifically. Hopefully, you will have greater confidence in your own decision making and you will better understand the decisions of others. Finally, a third goal is to motivate you to respond to, and proactively confront, ethical dilemmas that may arise in your organizational life. Overall, it is my hope that, after reading this book, you will believe that "organizational ethics matters" and that you will use your knowledge, skill, and motivation to enhance the ethics of our organizations today—and in the future.

The stakes in organizational decisions can be particularly high: How safe is a particular product or service? Does it have negative

effects on its users? How should employees be hired, trained, developed, compensated, or fired? How should wealth be developed and distributed? What effect does the accumulation of wealth have upon social, economic, political, and technological disparities with others? How do organizations impact our values, our families, and our communities? Whose definition of ethics is dominant in an increasingly global economy? These questions are certainly not exhaustive and you may come up with many others that are relevant to you.

Regardless of the question, it is clear that the consequences of organizational actions can be great for all of us. Yet, at the same time, the ethical demands on organizations are neither extraordinary nor excessive, according to Al Gini (2005):

> A decent product at a fair price; honesty in advertisements; fair treatment of customers, suppliers, and competitors; a strong sense of responsibility to the communities [they] inhabit and serve; and the production of a reasonable profit for the financial risk-taking of its stockholders and owners. (p. x)

It is worth noting, however, that not all organizations seek to produce a profit for stockholders and owners. Others are more interested in the social welfare of citizens across the world (Bonbright, 1997; Bornstein, 2004). For example, Ashoka, founded by Bill Drayton, is a non-governmental organization that operates in 46 countries and has assisted over 1,400 social entrepreneurs interested in improving human rights, education, environmental protection, rural development, health care, and poverty, among others.

It is also important to remember that our "organizational lives" are not separate or distinct from other realms of our lives. For example, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between our public and private lives, work and family, labor and leisure (May, 1993). As a result, it is crucial that we keep in mind that organizations are a part of life. They are not silos that function in a vacuum without direct effects on all of us. For better or worse, they are part and parcel of us.

❖ THE CURRENT STATE OF ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS

In an era of widespread organizational scandals, it is appropriate that we study organizational ethics more closely. This edited volume is not the first to explore organizational ethics (see, for example, Conrad,

2003; Donaldson & Gini, 1996; Malachowski, 2001; Michalos, 1995; Parker, 1998; Peterson & Ferrell, 2005; Seeger, 2002) nor will it be the last (Cheney, in progress). But it is a volume that seeks to capture a unique historical moment as citizens have begun to seriously rethink and reevaluate the role of organizations in their lives.

Even a limited list of recent organizational misconduct should be enough to raise concerns:

• Former WorldCom CEO Bernard Ebbers was convicted of fraud and conspiracy charges for his role in a massive accounting scandal estimated at $11 billion.

• Adelphia founder John W. Rigas and his son, Timothy Rigas, were accused of looting the company and cheating investors out of billions of dollars. Both were convicted of conspiracy, bank fraud, and securities fraud.

• Martha Stewart was convicted of conspiracy, obstruction of justice, and making false statements about her sale of ImClone Systems stock.

• Tyco International CEO Dennis Kozlowski and CFO Mark Swartz were convicted of stealing millions by accepting illegal bonuses and abusing company loan programs. Both received 25-year prison terms.

• Enron executives—former CEO and chairman Ken Lay, former CEO Jeffrey Skilling, and Chief Accounting Officer Richard Causey—are scheduled to be tried on fraud and conspiracy charges in January 2006.

• Former Qwest CEO Joseph Nacchio and six other executives face charges of orchestrating a massive financial fraud that concealed the source of billions of dollars in reported revenue.

• Freddie Mae and Freddie Mac, both government-assisted entities (GAEs), face scrutiny regarding questionable accounting practices that could place millions of mortgages of United States homeowners at risk.

• Several pharmaceutical companies, including Merck and GlaxoSmithKline, have had to withdraw drugs that have been deemed unsafe for public use, in some cases. In addition, the Food and Drug Administration is facing questions that its regulatory control over drug safety has been jeopardized by close relationships with the industry.

Even this limited list does not include scandals among nonprofit organizations, the military, churches, athletic teams, journalists, and

the United States government. For example, the director of the Boy Scouts of America has been charged with receiving and distributing child pornography. U.S. military guards at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq have been accused of engaging in physical and mental abuse of prisoners. Congress is currently conducting hearings on steroid use in baseball, although its use appears common in many other sports, as well. Individuals in the Catholic Church were not only aware of child sexual abuse among some of its priests, but they also covered it up. Several well-known journalists have recently plagiarized articles, and the Bush administration has "purchased" favorable reporting from journalists in order to "sell" its programs to the public.

Reconsidering organizations and their place in our lives affords us the opportunity to even reflect on some of our common beliefs about organizations as we know them: choice of consumers; the value of market mechanisms; the benefits of free trade; and the desire for ongoing growth and development (Cheney & Frenette, 1993).

Undoubtedly, there is growing, if not renewed, interest in organizational ethics. For a time, the recent scandals intensified the media scrutiny of organizations and their leaders. Each new scandal seemed to produce additional clamor for organizational change, with strategies that included improved legal compliance, stronger sentencing penalties for white collar crime, more rigorous professional codes of conduct, and more stringent government oversight and regulation. The scandals also raised serious questions about our trust in corporate America, in particular (Lorsch, Berlowitz, & Zelleke, 2005), and have produced lawsuits, criminal trials, and legislation (e.g., the Sarbanes-Oxley Act). In several cases, the scandals have produced the decline, if not the destruction, of several well-known organizations—most notably Arthur Andersen.

However, even as I prepare this volume in mid-2005, I wonder whether media coverage of the scandals—and the organizational ethics issues related to them—has begun to wane. Has the public's interest in organizational ethics already faded? Will the highly visible scandals overshadow less overt misconduct, as well as some of the more subtle but substantive ethical questions of today about market forces, consumerism, and globalization?

Over the years, attention to such ethical scandals "appears to ebb and flow between the well-publicized, most egregious acts of misbehavior and the mundane, naturalized, and often overlooked practices of everyday organizational life" (May & Zorn, 2003, p. 595). Recently, however, several authors have noticed a renewed focus on organizational ethics,

among them Lynn Sharp Paine (2003), a noted Harvard professor of business ethics. In her book, *Value Shift*, Paine explains that ethics has found its way back onto the agenda of organizational leaders. Executives at businesses, for example, have launched ethics programs, mission-driven strategies, values initiatives, and cultural change efforts. In addition, companies have created ethics officers, high-level ethics committees, ethics ombudspersons, codes of ethics, and ethics task forces. Finally, companies have attempted to strengthen their relationships with various stakeholders, developing programs on the environment, human rights, work–family balance, corporate volunteerism, community assistance, product safety, customer service, and philanthropy, among others.

This shift in focus has left many observers asking, what is happening? Why the recent emphasis on ethics? The obvious answer is that organizations have realized that a lack of legal compliance can produce disastrous results, similar to many of the scandals mentioned earlier in this chapter. But organizational scandals alone don't explain the change. According to Paine (2003), there are several additional reasons for the shift in focus toward ethics among organizational leaders:

- Reasons related to risk management
- Reasons related to organizational functioning
- Reasons related to market positioning
- Reasons related to civic positioning (p. 7)

In effect, many leaders have learned that ethics improves organizational performance and, ultimately, the bottom line. Still others have decided that it is the right thing to do; they have concluded that organizations should be fair, honest, respectful, responsive, trustworthy, accountable, and responsible, regardless of whether it serves the organization's self-interest.

I hope that this edited volume of case studies—and others like it—will produce a visible and sustained re-commitment to organizational ethics, as Paine has noted. Although ethical scandals are not unique to our time, the confluence of ethical misconduct in so many different realms and institutions provides a rare opportunity for organizational change. To create such change, though, requires that we delve deeper into the fundamental issues that enable and constrain the opportunities and challenges of creating organizations that are simultaneously productive and ethical. What can we learn from past eras of

organizational misconduct? What, if any, relationship exists between organizational ethics and broader conceptions of ethics in our culture as a whole? What are the prospects and limitations of changing organizational ethics? To what extent are ethical failures based on individual, group, organizational, or cultural phenomena? This volume is hopefully a first, incremental step toward answering some of these questions.

❖ HAVE WE LEARNED ANYTHING FROM THE PAST?

Occasionally, it can be helpful to consider some of these questions by learning from ethical and unethical behavior of the past. In many respects, the recent organizational scandals may seem to be different from those of the past. They seem larger, more significant, and of greater consequence. Yet, in fundamental ways, they are similar in that they involve greed, corruption, arrogance, and power. In the 1950s, it was the wealth and power of corporations to create domestic oligopolies prior to international competition. In the 1960s, it was the rise of unwieldy and often mammoth conglomerates that expanded without regard to consumers' needs. Hostile takeovers were the ethical concern of the 1970s. By the late 1980s, figures such as Ivan Boesky and Michael Milken became icons as a result of the insider trading scandals. In the 1990s, executive compensation, downsizing, and the transition to global labor concerned us. The most recent "corporate meltdown," according to Charles Conrad (2003), was the result of "massive financial and status-related incentives combined with declining external constraints combined to create a fraud-inducing system, which in turn provided organizational actors with ready rationalizations/legitimations of practices that 'pressed the envelope' or worse" (p. 16). Somehow, each decade seems to have its own ethical crises. Is history repeating itself? Have we learned anything from the past?

Charles Redding, considered by many to be a central figure in modern organizational communication, may help us answer these questions. Back in 1982, he noted that "the preponderance of everyday problems that plague all organizations are either problems that are patently ethical or moral in nature, or they are problems in which deeply embedded ethical issues can be identified" (p. 2). Prominent author Robert Jackall (1983, 1988) argued in his book *Moral Mazes* that businesses (bureaucracies, in particular) are vast systems of "organized

irresponsibility." Similarly, two social psychologists, Sabini and Silver (1982), claimed that businesses have a "genius for organizing evil." These comments came at a time when prominent business authors were extolling the importance of ethics, and numerous centers and institutes for business ethics were emerging around the United States. One observer even called ethics "the hottest topic in corporate America" (Sarikelle, 1989).

Redding also bemoaned the fact that there seemed to be no sustained interest in organizational ethics. He likened the lack of attention to organizational ethics to "wandering in a lonely desert," asking the question of any interested observers who might listen: "When will we wake up?" At that time, over two decades ago, Redding explained that he noticed increased talk about the ethical dimensions of organizational life, as managers and executives were attending numerous conferences, seminars, and workshops that focused on ethical problems in organizations. Yet, he wondered whether all of the ethical talk was backed up by ethical action.

Redding's question regarding an ethical "awakening" could be asked today, as well. No doubt, many persons have awakened to issues related to organizational ethics. One can hardly pick up a newspaper or listen to the evening news without some new ethical scandal in the business world. Ethics centers and institutes have proliferated in the last two decades. The conferences and training programs that Redding noted in the early 1980s still continue today and, in many respects, have grown. Yet, organizational scandals—in both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors—appear rampant. Hopefully, this time, we will learn from our mistakes and misdeeds.

❖   ETHICAL DILEMMAS

One of the ways to learn from the past—and also to enhance our ethical action in the future—is to think about the nature of ethical dilemmas that organizations and their members have faced. Throughout my discussion of organizational ethics in these first two chapters—as well as the rest of the book—it is important to remember that it is *people* who make decisions in and about organizations. Organizations don't make decisions, per se. People do, albeit within the accepted norms and standards of organizations. At one level, then, any book on organizational ethics needs to account for the actions of individuals. So, although I

frequently refer to organizational ethics, it is merely a shorthand way of referring to the numerous individual and collective decisions that are made within and between organizations.

In an accessible and popular book, *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living,* Rushworth Kidder (1995) explores the personal dimension of ethical decision making. Each of us faces a multitude of ethical decisions throughout our lifetime, even if they are not readily apparent to us. Those decisions shape our sense of self, as well as others' sense of us.

Kidder (1995) explains, though, that some of our attention to ethics is misdirected. He claims, for example, that right/wrong ethical dilemmas gain much of the public attention. On the one hand, we denounce persons who have engaged in organizational misconduct. On the other hand, we praise the courage and integrity of those persons who have engaged in "right action." The former are often shunned while the latter are sometimes idolized. But, in the end, right/wrong dilemmas tend to be fairly clear-cut and straightforward. By contrast, Kidder argues that "right/right dilemmas" are much more challenging and merit more attention. He explains his premise this way: "The really tough choices . . . don't center on right versus wrong. They center on right versus right. They are genuine dilemmas precisely because each side is firmly rooted in one of our basic core values" (p. 18).

Although any number of right/right dilemmas is possible, Kidder (1995) notes that several are most common:

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

According to Kidder (1995), each of the preceding dilemmas—and others like them—pose the most difficult challenge for us since they represent pairs of values, both of which we tend to accept. For example, in organizational terms, should a boss show mercy to an employee who has made a costly blunder, or should the employee be punished? When an employee finds out that a significant downsizing is imminent and a friend will be fired, should he or she tell the friend the truth or remain loyal to the company? When an employee conducts a safety study that suggests a product is unsafe for public use, should the

employee remain loyal to the company by staying silent or inform the public? Should a company executive make a financial decision that will benefit stockholders and employees in the short term but may have a negative impact in the long term? We struggle with such ethical dilemmas because we are torn between two values, both of which seem right, but we are forced to decide between them.

In most cases, we choose the action that is "the nearest right"—the one that best fits our own ethical perspective on the world. As you will see in Chapter 2, we may be more or less oriented to duty, rights, utility, virtue, or relationships when it comes to ethics. However, Kidder (1995) also encourages us to explore whether there is a third way that might enact both values, the "trilemma solution":

> Sometimes that middle ground will be the result of a compromise between the two rights, partaking of each side's expansiveness and surrendering a little of each side's rigidity. Sometimes, however, it will be an unforeseen and highly creative course of action that comes to light in the heat of the struggle for resolution. (p. 167)

Ideally, though, the resolution is not so much a compromise or middle ground position as it is a creative means to move beyond the ethical dilemma by appreciating the tension between the two values.

❖ COMMUNICATING ABOUT ETHICS

Since organizations are so close to us, it can be challenging to talk about the ethical dilemmas that arise from them. Before we continue further, then, we should explore how we talk about ethics and how ethics is structured within our culture (see, for example, Willmott, 1998).

For example, it is worth considering how ethical issues are communicated in contemporary life. Are ethical issues framed in a particular way? Are there particular persons or groups who have greater (or fewer) opportunities to speak regarding ethical issues? Are there ethical issues that are rarely, if ever, discussed publicly? That is, are some ethical issues marginalized? How do persons tend to respond to ethical violations of the law or cultural norms and expectations? How do persons who have violated them explain their behavior? Noticing such

patterns of discourse should provide you with interesting insights regarding the place of ethics in our culture today.

For anyone interested in constructive conversations regarding organizational ethics, it is important to consider the distinctions between descriptive ethics, normative ethics, and analytical ethics (Goodpaster, 1995). The goal of descriptive ethics is to represent, in a neutral and empirical manner, the "facts" of an ethical situation, as well as the values of the persons and organizations involved. There is no attempt to make an ethical judgment regarding the situation since the emphasis is on attaining accuracy, as much as possible. In effect, the purpose of descriptive ethics is to "map the terrain" of the ethical situation. No personal judgment is presented.

Normative ethics, by contrast, according to Kitson and Campbell (2001), "seeks to develop and defend judgments of right and wrong, good and bad, virtue and vice" (p. 11). It involves exploring points of view and presenting one's position. It introduces the question: Given the situation, what is my ethical judgment about it? As an extension of the first two, analytical ethics is interested in whether an ethical judgment is appropriate, in comparison to other ethical judgments. It functions at a meta-ethical level by comparing and contrasting different ethical perspectives, decisions, and practices. Therefore, analytical ethics provides the justifications for a normative ethical judgment.

During discussions of ethics-based case studies of organizations, it is important to distinguish the type of statement being made. How is the ethical situation in the case being described? Is a normative position or point of view presented in response to the case? Or, is a position or point of view being analytically argued that is in contrast to others? In everyday conversation, it is all too common for us to describe situations in a normative or analytical manner, reflecting our own personal values or biases. However, it can often be a helpful exercise to bracket our comments in these three steps (i.e., descriptive ethics, normative ethics, and analytical ethics), beginning with description and moving to defense of a position, based on an evaluation of multiple points of view. However, we should keep in mind that the assumption that we can accurately describe an ethical situation rests on the belief that the factual content can be separated from our values (Willmott, 1998). While descriptive ethics claims to describe "what is," some critics question whether such an approach actually privileges one way of viewing an ethical situation over another—in effect, presenting what is ultimately a value-laden description of a situation as if it is natural or

taken for granted. As you discuss these cases with others, you may find, for example, that what you consider to be clear-cut and factual may be questioned by others.

Using the concepts of descriptive, normative, and analytical ethics as a conversational guide, class discussions of organizational ethics may be conducted around some of the following questions:

• How should organizational ethics be defined? That is, what constitutes responsible and irresponsible action?

• Why should students, owners, employees, consumers, and citizens be interested in organizational ethics?

• What are the prominent meanings and discourses surrounding ethics, in general, and organizational ethics, specifically?

• How has ethics evolved, historically?

• What is the relationship between organizational ethics and specific social, political, economic, ideological, and technological conditions?

• How, if at all, has ethics changed the nature of management and organizational communication?

• What is/should be the role of ethics in our emerging, global economy?

• How, if at all, has ethics changed organizing processes?

• From your perspective, how does ethics enable or constrain today's organizations?

• How might a renewed emphasis on ethics change management and organizational communication in the future?

• How, if at all, has recent attention to ethics affected management practices?

• What are the agendas for research, teaching, and practice that are relevant to persons interested in organizational ethics?

❖ BENEFITS OF CASE STUDIES

Case studies are one of the best ways to talk about the real, day-to-day ethical dilemmas in organizations. They are also an ideal way to apply

theories learned in the classroom, whether they are ethical theories or organizational theories (for examples, see Donaldson & Gini, 1996; Keyton & Schockley-Zalaback, 2004; Sypher, 1997). This case studies book is based on the assumption that you need to not only understand the theoretical developments in organizational studies (for a more extensive discussion of organizational communication theories, see May & Mumby, 2005), but you also should know how they are enacted in ethical organizational practice

This book, then, is designed to address this focus on praxis in a manner that clarifies the rapidly changing organizational environment—as well as the diversity of organizational practices that has followed these changes. In short, you need an explicit mechanism by which you can compare and contrast a growing number of developments in organizations. In addition, you will need to be prepared to understand, and appropriately act upon, the various ethical dilemmas and challenges you may confront in your organizational lives. Case studies of ethical and unethical organizational practices are one of the primary means to accomplish these goals.

Case studies, in general, offer several benefits:

• Case studies provide an opportunity to explore the real-world functioning of organizations in context.

• Case studies stimulate reflection on others' actions.

• Case studies provide exemplars of appropriate and inappropriate, productive and unproductive, useful and irrelevant behaviors.

• Case studies prompt lively discussion regarding alternative courses of action.

• Case studies provide an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations.

• Case studies serve as an impetus for future action.

More specifically, the case studies in this book may also be used to develop skills in three primary areas:

• Ethical engagement—You should develop the desire to pursue ethical issues in greater detail and establish your own independent thinking about ethics.

• Ethical reasoning and decision making—You should develop greater confidence in your judgments and in your ability to understand and appreciate others' points of view regarding ethics.

• Ethical practice—You should develop the ability to respond to and proactively address ethical challenges that may arise in your life.

Case studies, then, should increase your motivation and interest in ethical issues, should improve your analytical and critical thinking skills around ethical challenges, and should provide you with a foundation for making organizations more ethical.

❖ CASE STUDIES OF ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS

My hope is that this book will motivate you to think more critically about organizational ethics in your own life and also in the lives of others. More specifically, the book will 1) introduce you to a range of ethical theories based on duty, rights, utility, virtue, and relationships; and 2) explore case studies of organizations that either enable or constrain common elements of ethical practice such as alignment, dialogic communication, participation, transparency, accountability, and courage.

One of the reasons I was motivated to edit this volume is because many organizational case study books tend to be both atheoretical and ahistorical in their focus and, typically, marginalize ethics. By contrast, this book seeks to conceptualize and historicize ethics-oriented cases by 1) providing a theoretical foundation of ethical perspectives that can be applied to them; 2) identifying sets of ethical practices that might serve as examples for future organizational behavior; and 3) drawing upon their relationship to other cases (e.g., within an industry, a nation-state, a profession) within a particular period of time. The contributors to the book were encouraged to utilize their own scholarly strengths and expertise to develop fuller, richer cases, while supplementing their expertise with additional historical and current resources. As such, the cases should be seen merely as a starting point for a more thorough and complex understanding of the cases themselves—and others that may be related to them by topic, issue, ethical perspective, or practice.

The cases in this volume were selected because they focus on organizations that have confronted challenging ethical dilemmas and, as a result, have acted ethically or unethically in response to them. That is, the cases in the book represent a full range of organizational practices,

from overt violations of the law to exemplars of responsible behavior. Each case, however, is written to direct you to ethical dilemmas that present tensions, contradictions, challenges or opportunities for the organization and others that it affects. You will also notice that, in contrast to some other case study books, these cases are about real—rather than hypothetical—organizations. I believe it is important for such organizations to be included in a case study book, first to present you with a realistic account of organizational life and second, to hold unethical organizations accountable and to praise ethical organizations.

As you will see when you read the cases, contributors were asked to define "organization" broadly to include not only businesses but also other types of organizations (e.g., educational institutions, religious institutions, political organizations, not-for-profit organizations) and organizing, in general. This is in stark contrast to most business ethics case study books that focus exclusively on corporations. Contributors were also encouraged to write cases that examined broader cultural constructions of work (e.g., work and identity, work–family balance, welfare-to-work programs, health care and work, globalization) that are so relevant to our everyday lives. The book, then, not only explores ethical issues within organizations, but also within the social, political, economic, ideological, and technological contexts that affect, and are affected by, organizations.

Each case also examines a unique dimension of organizational communication. Some cases focus on the communication response of organizations after a product or service has failed. Other cases in the book explore the communication strategies of leaders who have produced ethical or unethical organizations. Or, in some cases, communication is discussed as a means to frame organizational decisions. Still others explore how gender, race, and family are constructed in and through communication within organizations.

You will also notice that a variety of sources were used in constructing these cases about organizational ethics, including observations, interviews, questionnaires, and documents (e.g., company documents, media coverage, legal materials, legislative hearings, professional association studies/reports, etc.). As a result, some cases are organized chronologically to follow a time line of events while others are structured in a narrative form.

Regardless of the structure of each case, though, you should first identify the ethical dilemmas that are raised in the case. Once you have identified the ethical dilemmas, use the ethical perspectives and practices from Chapter 2—in combination with outside resource materials—to fully understand, appreciate, and discuss their complexities. You should be

able to understand the context of the case, the evolution of the ethical dilemmas, and the key actors facing them. Finally, as you develop your own opinions about the cases, be sure to consider alternative views that may be presented by your instructor or by other students. Doing so strengthens your "ethical agility" and better prepares you for the variety of ethical dilemmas you may confront in the future.

Although I will not recount all of the cases here, you will find a wide array of organizations and ethical issues in this volume. Some of the cases include the following:

• Wal-Mart—The case examines claims that the company's economic impact "limits the ability of local businesses to survive." The case study also examines how Wal-Mart has responded to charges that it negatively affects local businesses.

• Coca-Cola—The case explores a history of racial discrimination at the company, which constructed "a corporate hierarchy in which African American workers were clustered at the bottom of the pay scale, averaging $26,000 a year less than White employees." According to the case, the hostile work environment created "unusually high rates of stress-related illnesses, such as depression," among African American workers.

• Mitsubishi—The case addresses a class action sexual discrimination lawsuit by several female employees of the company and explores their claims, as well as the company and union responses to them.

• Hewitt and Associates—The case considers the degree to which single and married employees with families should be treated similarly or differently.

• The Catholic Church—The case traces the chronology of the church's sexual abuse scandal, displaying the degree to which the church was candid with the general public and its parishioners regarding the extent of abuse.

• The Bush Administration—The case identifies several criteria for a "just war" and compares them to the justifications for, and practices of, the war in Iraq.

• NASA—The case reflects back on the communication and decision-making processes prior to the shuttle Columbia launch, based on lessons that should have been learned from the Challenger disaster.

It also explores NASA's public response to the explosion of Columbia, which occurred during re-entry.

• U.S. Forest Service—The case discusses the moral judgments made by the Forest Service when it blamed wildland firefighters for their own deaths in the Storm King Mountain fire. It also examines the use of fire codes in assigning blame and avoiding responsibility.

• College Athletics and Integrity—The case examines scandals and fraud in several university athletic departments, including the University of Colorado, the University of Georgia, and St. Bonaventure.

As students of organizations, it is particularly important that you be able to first identify current trends regarding ethics and second, to intervene in the emergence, development, and acceptance (or rejection) of those trends. The case studies should help you in that process. Before we move to the cases themselves, though, it is important for you to have some additional background information regarding a range of ethical perspectives and ethical practices. Chapter 2 will provide that theoretical and practical foundation for you to thoroughly explore the case studies. That chapter should give you the tools to understand, critique, and apply theoretical and practical material to the cases and, ultimately, to consider alternative ethical futures for organizations.

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