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Navigating the Moral Terrain of Community Development: Wisdom from Ethics for Practice

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Objectives

- Identify the relevant questions of moral analysis and moral reasoning in the context of resource scarcity.
- Examine sources of implicit bias in the context of distributing limited goods.
- Discuss methods by which to practice self-care in the context of serving others.
- Distinguish between caring for a person with needs and caring for the needs a person has.

Relevant Questions of Moral Analysis

- “What?” (Veracity)
- “Why?” and “How?” (Beneficence, Nonmaleficence)
- “Who?” (Dignity, Autonomy)
- “When?” and “Where?” (Justice, Privacy, Confidentiality)
- “What if...?” (Prudence)
- “What else?” (Fidelity, Courage)

Relevant Questions of Moral Reasoning

1. What are we attempting to do? (Is our plan for serving persons in need ***ethically, legally, and practically reasonable***?)
2. Why are we attempting to do it? (Is our plan for serving persons in need focused on ***the overall well-being of those in need***?)
3. How are we attempting to do it? (Is the method of serving persons in need ***proportionate*** to the goals we had for serving them in the first place?)
4. What do we intend in attempting to do it? (Is our plan for serving persons in need emerging from a place of ***benevolence***?)
5. In sum: Is our **plan** for serving; **method** of serving; ethical, legal, and professional **reasoning**; and professional **intention-in-acting** consistent with what is: (a) *objectively* in the best interests of persons in need and (b) expected of us in our moral obligations to uphold the professional standards of community development?

“Modes of Knowing” in Morally Complex Circumstances

- An action (producing both good and bad effects) may be deemed **morally proportionate** if:
 1. The value at stake is at least equal to the value being sacrificed.
 2. There is no less harmful way to protect the value here and now.
 3. The means used to protect the value (here and now) will not undermine it in the long run.

- Therefore, an action (producing both good and bad effects) may be deemed **morally disproportionate** if:
 1. A lesser value is preferred to a more important one.
 2. Harm is unnecessarily caused in the protection of a greater good.
 3. In the circumstances, the manner of protecting the good will undermine it in the long run.

Applying the “Modes of Knowing” in the Context of Community Development

- Remember the criteria of moral proportionality (which derive from the principle of double effect):
 1. **What** (Must be reasonable)
 2. **Why** (Must be other-centered)
 3. **How** (Must be proportionate)
 4. **Intention** (Must be benevolent)

The **principle of double effect** requires the fulfillment of:

1. The *nature-of-the-act condition*: The action must be either morally good or indifferent: ✓
2. The *means-end condition*: The bad effect must not be the means by which one achieves the good effect: ✓
3. The *right-intention condition*: The intention must be the achieving of only the good effect, with the bad effect being only an unintended side effect: ✓
4. The *proportionality condition*: The bad effect must not be disproportionate to the good effect: ✓

A Preliminary Model for Ethical Decision Making

1. Respond to an intuitive sense that something is wrong.
2. Gather information.
3. Identify the ethics problems and moral issues involved.
4. Seek a resolution.
5. Work with others to determine a course of action.

The Psychology of Implicit Bias

- Also known as implicit social cognition, ***implicit bias*** refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.
- Implicit biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.
- Residing deep in the subconscious, implicit biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness.
- Implicit biases are not accessible through introspection: the implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance.
- These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages.
- In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations.

Characteristics of Implicit Bias

- Implicit biases are **pervasive**. Everyone possesses them, even those with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.
- Implicit and explicit biases are **related but distinct mental constructs**. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold **do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs** or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own ingroup**, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.
- Implicit biases are **malleable**. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.

Test Yourself: *Project Implicit* (Harvard Univ.)



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Weapons IAT

Weapons ('Weapons - Harmless Objects' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize White and Black faces, and images of weapons or harmless objects.

Race IAT

Race ('Black - White' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of European and African origin. It indicates that most Americans have an automatic preference for white over black.

Age IAT

Age ('Young - Old' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish old from young faces. This test often indicates that Americans have automatic preference for young over old.

Gender-Science IAT

Gender - Science. This IAT often reveals a relative link between liberal arts and females and between science and males.

Native IAT

Native American ('Native - White American' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize White and Native American faces in either classic or modern dress, and the names of places that are either American or Foreign in origin.

Religion IAT

Religion ('Religions' IAT). This IAT requires some familiarity with religious terms from various world religions.

Gender-Career IAT

Gender - Career. This IAT often reveals a relative link between family and females and between career and males.

Skin-tone IAT

Skin-tone ('Light Skin - Dark Skin' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize light and dark-skinned faces. It often reveals an automatic preference for light-skin relative to dark-skin.

Sexuality IAT

Sexuality ('Gay - Straight' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish words and symbols representing gay and straight people. It often reveals an automatic preference for straight relative to gay people.



Managing Implicit Bias in Resource Allocation

- Notice your emotions (which apprehend what we value) and ask:
- What am I feeling? (Is it rational?)
- Why am I feeling it? (Is it properly ordered?)
- Where does it emerge from? (Is it just?)
- What else should I consider? (Is it thoughtful?)
- How should I respond? (Is it helpful?)
- When should I respond? (Is it time-sensitive?)

Earning Trust with Constituents

What is trust?

Trust is a willingness to risk the degree of confidence one has in a situation of vulnerability.

Trust has five faces:

1. BENEVOLENCE.
2. RELIABILITY.
3. COMPETENCE.
4. HONESTY.
5. OPENNESS.



Ensuring Good Communication with Constituents

1. Never stop earning trust.
2. Get personal.
3. Be specific.
4. Focus on the leave-behinds, not the takeaways.
5. Have an open mind.
6. Speak less, listen more.
7. Replace ego with empathy.
8. Read between the lines.
9. Know what you're talking about.
10. Speak to groups as individuals.
11. Bonus: Be prepared to change the message (and messenger) if needed.

Or, Three Elements of Great (Virtuous) Communication, According to Aristotle

- Ethos. (Gk. “character”)
 - Integrity.
- Pathos. (Gk. “suffering”)
 - Emotion.
- Logos. (Gk. “word”)
 - Reason.



If All Else Fails...

- Before you speak/act/react/interact, **THINK**:

T: Is it **true**?

H: Is it **helpful**?

I: Is it **inspiring**?

N: Is it **necessary**?

K: Is it **kind**?



Practicing Self-Care via Examination of Conscience

1. Begin with gratitude.

You are privileged to work in community development, where individuals willingly invite you into the darkest corners of their lives. Be grateful for that opportunity, as well as your professional role and personal talents.

2. Put others first.

- View the day with the eyes of others, not merely with your own.

3. Review the day.

- Carefully and critically look back on the day just completed.

4. Face your shortcomings.

- Reflect on and accept what went wrong (or could have gone better) in your actions and interactions with self and others.

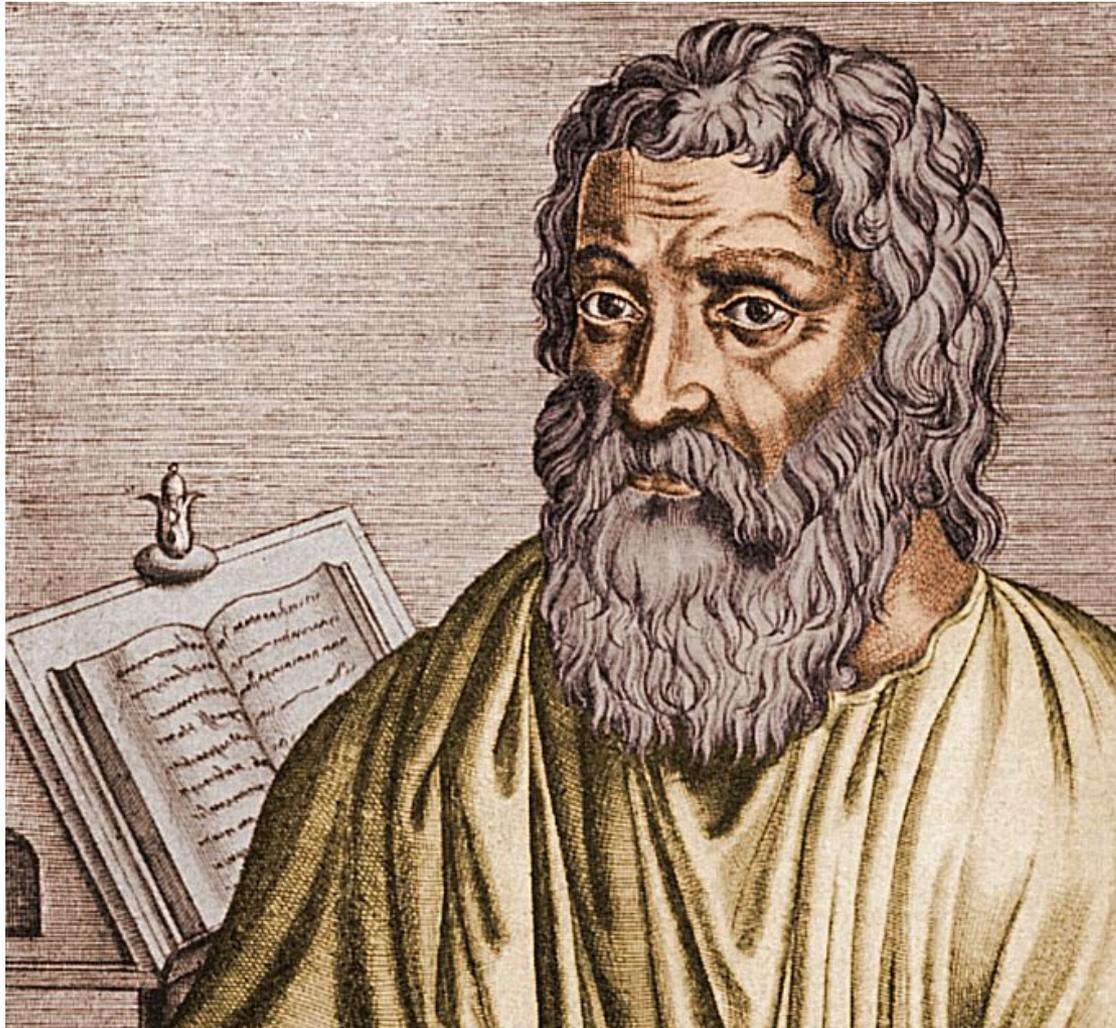
5. Look toward the day to come.

- The difference between who you are and who you want to be is **what you do**. Think of ways to bridge today's gap for tomorrow.

Exercise 1: Distinguish Between Sacrificing What You Have and Sacrificing Who You Are



Exercise 2: Care for the Person with Needs, Not Simply the Needs a Person Has



Exercise 3: Provide What is Needed, Not What is Deserved



Open Floor: Questions and Comments



Thank You

Have an ethics question, concern,
consult, or request?

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