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International Ethical Leadership

The Power of Diversity in Ethics

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Introduction

Envision peace. Envision diverse collaborations for the common good. Envision a community of scholars and practitioners engaged in international ethical leadership. Why ethical leadership? Because expanding the community of ethical leaders can help us in our quest to attain the first two visions.

Throughout this essay, we explore how two different ethical frameworks, one based in principled ethics and the other in relational ethics, can inform leadership. This exploration offers insight into how ethical leadership can contribute to collaborative peacebuilding and what this process looks like in practice. Abstract discussion about the philosophical foundations of the ethical approaches is grounded in the examples of the cooperative leadership model of the National Peace Academy, USA and its collaborative work with the Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence.

After a short overview of ethical leadership as an emerging field and what ethical analyses in leadership decisions can offer, we delve into the philosophical grounding of the principled human rights approach and the relational care ethics approach. These approaches are further explained by their contextual application in the work of the National Peace Academy and its shared responsibility / shared leadership approach. Following that, we explore some of the general analytical tools offered by these frameworks, such as diversity inclusion (finding similarities), justification for action, and representing others.

The authors acknowledge that we are not value-neutral. We are situated within our fields, possess individual biases based on our own value systems, and are influenced by the time and space in which we live and work. We prioritize peace, human rights, and positive relationships among living things,

and are excited and inspired by advances in peaceful coexistence, advances exemplified by leaders such as Beatrice Mtetwa and David Suzuki.

The Field of Ethical Leadership

The field of ethical leadership is growing in scope and definition and represents an important cultural transition within academia; creating more space for ethical contextual analysis of our human condition. This shift can bring closer the thinkers and the doers—something those involved in peacebuilding have been doing for centuries. The expansion of ethical leadership as a field can also assist many institutions in their quests to offer more interdisciplinary educational opportunities to students as it provides models for successful science, business, and policy alike.

Leadership is a broad concept applicable in numerous contexts and having varying definitions. We are particularly concerned with how the term is evolving in relation to power structures and is becoming increasingly collaborative and less reliant on power over, top-down, command-control relationships. A few examples of the evolution of leadership that are relevant to our discussion of ethical leadership are found in transformational leadership and appreciative leadership. Transformational leadership, often practiced in nonviolent movements, is defined as a process whereby an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Rude, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Comerford 2005, 29). “It could be argued that all leadership is appreciative leadership. It’s the capacity to see the best in the world around us, in our colleagues, and in the groups we are trying to lead. It’s the capacity to see the most creative and improbable opportunities in the marketplace. It’s the capacity to see with an appreciative eye the true and the good, the better and the possible” (Cooperrider 2005). These changes in our understanding and practice of leadership are a crucial component of what it means to be ethical in a leadership context. “The study of ethics is concerned with values and morals that society deems appropriate/and or desirable” (Rude, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Comerford 2005). Ethics inherently involve our relationships with others and how we interact with them in the world.

Critical to understanding successful ethical leadership are, first, an appreciation for the philosophical foundations on which leadership decisions are based and, second, acknowledgment of the location (within time, space, relationships, social structures) of the leaders. To create a shared understanding of what ethical leadership is and what it looks like in practice, we start by examining

some of the ethical frameworks of the significant leaders honored by the Inamori Center and successful collaborative relationships that have resulted in measurable expansion of ethical leadership in peacebuilding initiatives, specifically peace education.

The honorees of the Inamori Ethics Prize represent diverse areas, such as human rights and international law, health and medicine, science, entrepreneurship, and environmentalism. These fields and the individuals who practice in them are grounded in numerous ethical frameworks. For the purposes of this exploration, we look at the ethical human rights framework. Two of the five honorees are human rights practitioners, and the work of the others involves human rights–related areas such as the right to health.¹ The human rights framework will serve as an example of the principled approach to ethical leadership. This approach, as will be discussed in more depth in subsequent sections, is grounded in liberal moral philosophy and finds its modern roots in thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, John Rawls, and Thomas Pogge.

Please note that examining the ethical framework of human rights as it relates to the Inamori Ethics Prize winners is not an attempt to attribute moral values to those individuals or to lump their practice into any one system. Instead, it is an exercise in understanding the possibilities for ethical grounding of successful leaders.

We also offer an analysis of a relational ethical framework, that of care ethics. Examples of successful ethical leadership that follow the relational model are found in the collaborative activities of the National Peace Academy and the Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence. This relational approach is inspired by the feminist tradition and the Earth Charter's definition of peace. Feminism and peace are connected. Therefore, using feminist frameworks such as relational ethics to guide ethical leaders in peacebuilding makes sense. "Feminism and peace share an important conceptual connection: both are critical of, and committed to the elimination of, coercive power-over privilege systems of domination as a basis of interaction between individuals and groups" (Warren and Cady 1994, 3).

The work of the National Peace Academy is supported by an understanding of peace that is shaped by the definition contained in the Earth Charter as the "wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part." This definition invites peacelearners to deeply inquire into the nature of right

1. "Inamori Ethics Prize Winners," *Case Western Reserve University*. Accessed April 25, 2012. <http://www.case.edu/events/inamori/>.

relationships. “Being in right relationships requires identifying, inquiring into, living with, and transforming existing relationships so that they are in accordance with our determined values, principles, and ethics.”²

Ethics in Professional Leadership and Decision Making

Why is ethical leadership important? How does one engage in ethical leadership? When exploring international ethical leadership, it can be difficult to separate discussions about the “how” and the “why.” The reason for this is the importance of process. One of the aspects of ethical leadership is understanding the foundations of the principles or relationships that guide the actions of ethical leaders. The process of identifying the foundations of ethical leadership helps the participants unearth a deeper understanding of shared goals. It can also bring together various fields of academia as well as bridge gaps between academics and practitioners.

International ethical leaders often succeed in operating and collaborating across ethical frameworks. Diversity of ethics, often reflected in the diversity of participants (due to diversity of cultural contexts and their attendant values), is both a goal and a challenge in ethical leadership. For example, in the founding of the National Peace Academy, a multistakeholder approach was undertaken through both visioning and global design summits, using the appreciative inquiry (AI) process as facilitated by Dr. David Cooperrider: “AI is important because it works to bring the whole organization together to build on its positive core, one that allows for engagement in both transactional (action planning) and/or transformational change (values–vision–mission identification and alignment). AI encourages people to work together to promote a more complete understanding of the human system, the heartbeat of the organization” (Cooperrider and Whitney 2008, xx).

Often because of diversity, ethical decision making in international environments poses the challenges of cross-cultural communication. When making efforts to improve cross-cultural communication and leadership development in an international professional environment, it can be helpful to get back to the basics by examining and possibly reassessing the framework within which we interpret situations and make decisions. We can gain insight by understanding the lens of our own value system and its impacts on our professional relationships. In a fast-paced global environment, it is natural to jump to problem solving and seeking answers to important and timely questions.

2. “Learning for Peacebuilders and Changemakers,” *National Peace Academy*. Accessed April 27, 2012. <http://nationalpeaceacademy.us/>.

However, there is a valuable step prior to solution-oriented engagement that involves making sure we are solving the appropriate problem or asking the right question. Our process of problematization is informed by the way we view ourselves in the world and by what we consider to be wrong or right—our morals or ethics.

Ethics need be brought back to the forefront of the leadership equation and critically examined both personally and professionally. By questioning the core tool used in our decision making, rather than taking it as a given, we can potentially improve our cross-cultural understanding and leadership skills. This improvement is a product of the process of being open to alternative ethical evaluation. This openness paired with a desire for a holistic understanding of the cultural dynamic lays the groundwork for success.

Even if leaders all have the same goal in mind—for example, to increase the effectiveness of an organizational program designed to improve the economic well-being of traditionally marginalized populations—the approaches to the situation and the eventual outcomes are not simply dependent on the end goal but also on the mechanisms used to analyze and problematize the situation in the first place. Ethical analysis can fill an important role in defining the problems, qualitatively measuring them, and identifying venues for change.

In the example offered earlier, a principled assessment can provide a helpful baseline for measuring the economic well-being of a marginalized population, offer a legal framework within which certain members of that group can claim their rights to redress, and determine if decisions were just based on the procedures followed to determine the outcome. Alternatively, a relational assessment can be successful in these endeavors because it does not seek to provide a removed, isolated assessment of a decision but rather a contextual examination of the actual impacts of that decision on the daily lives of situated agents. While human rights uses the structural mechanisms for punishment and restitution, a relational approach can offer insight into structural inequalities that are at the root of the problem. Care ethics can provide a foundation of values and ways of thinking about decisions by forcing us to examine the importance of micro and macro relationships. Human rights can provide a foundation in universally applicable principles and mechanisms for justice.

Additionally, it should be noted that these ethical assessments are not to be used in place of tools such as dialogue, cross-cultural communication education, and pedagogical learning environments but instead as a framework

within which these tools can be employed and used to their full potential. It is necessary to keep in mind the essential shared purpose that brings people together and to use these peacebuilding tools to move the group in a solution-oriented direction.

In the case of the relationship between Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence and the National Peace Academy, a dialogue ensued regarding partnership in organizing a Peace and War Summit at Case Western Reserve University.³ Conscious of the inherent value within the individuals and groups, and based upon the shared vision of what was probable through this different kind of gathering, an infrastructure of cooperation and empowerment emerged in a cocreative design process that resulted in a very successful summit.

Human Rights

Human rights constitute the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” (UN General Assembly 1948). Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (ibid., Art. 1). Human rights is considered the most basic and fundamental of rights that must be universally realized to reach our potential as humans. Fundamental to human rights is the belief in the worth of each autonomous individual agent. When referring to individual human rights, we are referring to the rights as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the nine international human rights treaties. When speaking of the rights tradition or framework more generally, we are referring to the liberal, cosmopolitan conception of the world and human relationships.

The human rights framework is based on the cosmopolitan notion of individual rights that finds its historical roots in the works of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke and in their conceptions of the rights inherent in natural law. Their early articulations of the rights of life, liberty, property, and equality help to form the principles that validate the legitimacy of governance (Hobbes [1651] 1968, 183–93; Locke 1960, 271). Kant’s notions of universality and treating all individuals as ends in and of themselves—“act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always

3. “Inamori Peace and War Summit Page,” Case Western Reserve University. Accessed April 25, 2012. <http://www.case.edu/provost/inamori/peacesummit/>.

at the same time as an end, never merely as a means,” (Kant 1998, 38)—find articulation in human rights principles and protection of dignity.

John Rawls’s theory can provide a philosophical foundation for justification of international human rights as part of our legitimate political structures. Two basic dimensions of his theory as presented in *Justice as Fairness* (2001) and *Law of Peoples* (1999) can be developed to conclude the philosophical soundness of human rights; first, the individual in a pluralistic society is the subject of rights, and second, the jurisdiction of justice is the basic structure of society. These two parts of Rawls’s theory have strength in their consistency, simplicity, and broad applicability. If the state is created to serve the interests of individual rights and the purpose of morality is to ensure that people are treated as ends, then when a state violates the rights of individuals within its own territory, it is jeopardizing its legitimate reasons for existence and should be morally condemned.

The system of human rights is something that is to be applied at a structural level. Rights are not simply basic guidelines for behavior of individuals or states but are standards that are to be applied in the design and operation of institutions within society. Not only are institutions worldwide obligated to respect human rights, they are also obliged to take active measures for their realization with such consequences as sanctions or other international intervention. The systemic approach of Rawls is reminiscent of that of the international system that prioritizes political structures while maintaining individual rights.

At this time, a major question for humanity to consider is being posed through the United Nations, thanks in large part to Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury: is peace a human right?⁴ The authors note that every time a major question is posed, significant change occurs. Two examples: Should women have the right to vote? Is slavery an acceptable practice? While humanity still struggles with these questions to some degree, there is no longer a question for the majority of humanity about the answers: yes and no, respectively.

Douglas Roche, in his book *The Human Right to Peace*, calls education a “weapon” for peace and suggests that “peace education offers a concrete strategy that goes beyond the current management approach to violent

4. “May 2011 Bulletin.” *United Religions Initiative*. Accessed April 20, 2012. <http://www.urinorthamerica.org/news/latest-announcements/1-latest-news/127-may-2011-bulletin.html>.

conflict. More than simply advocating against war, it seeks to create something more systemic and lasting from the bottom up” (Roche 2003, 196). We agree, and as consciousness shifts in answer to this big question regarding peace as a human right, humanity is faced with understanding how to make peacebuilding a cultural norm. For human rights to become systemic, it is necessary to have the tools of conflict resolution, restorative justice, mediation, nonviolent communication, and so much more as inherent in our education systems and thereby our societies in order for our attitudes and behavior to embody and reflect the principles and processes of peace and social justice.

A popular critique of this system stems from the exclusive nature of Rawls’s theory and can also be characterized as the objection to Western liberal imperialism, that is, of attempting to deal with a diverse world using liberal ideology applied at a systematic level. Eva Feder Kittay critiques the exclusivity of Rawls’s theory of justice on the basis that it does not explicitly address the concerns of dependents or dependency workers (Kittay 1999, 76). Her critique is feminist in nature because it is based on the lived experiences of individuals and because it questions whether Rawls’s theory adequately addresses the needs of women through the lens of the issue of dependency. Martha Nussbaum’s critique follows similar lines (2006, 4).

Kittay’s and Nussbaum’s critiques of Rawls are useful in that they point out some of the inherent yet often overlooked limits of principle-based frameworks. In seeking universality and abstract truth, the principles may be positive and progressive in theory but impractical and unrepresentative in practice. For example, viewing all human beings as born free and equal in the enjoyment of rights is fundamental to human rights (and to Rawls). However, if we start from a premise that is in fact not realized in the lived experiences of most human beings, then we may be at the wrong starting point for the realization of human potential. Perhaps we need to employ a framework for analysis that allows us to understand the challenges faced by those who cannot realize their rights. If we can better understand their situated existence as not free and not equal, we may be able to develop better mechanisms for that free and equal realization of rights.

A key distinction between human rights and feminist care ethics is the value of embodiment. Traditional rule-based and justice-focused approaches derive from disembodied experiences and application of abstract universal rules and principles. On the other hand, feminist approaches most often derive from lived embodied experience. Care ethics places primary value

not in how the principles or rules created in abstraction may apply to our lived experience but in how that lived experience and our reactions to it influence and develop ethics and morality. The way to act or move forward is not determined outside of the experience itself. Knowledge stems from the feelings and reactions to that experience, and those feelings and reactions stem from our previous experiences and relationships.

In a peacelearning pedagogy, such as that promoted by the National Peace Academy, this reflective and experiential approach is paramount.

Peacelearning is the process through which the National Peace Academy facilitates learning toward the full development of the peacebuilder. Peacelearning emphasizes learning as an essential capacity of peacebuilding. As such, peacelearning is much more than simple acquisition of new knowledge and skills; it is a transformational process in which new information and ideas are integrated into the knowledge and experiences we already have. Peacelearning is directed toward both inward and outward change. It is a learner centered process that is non-hierarchical and elicitive, seeking to draw forth knowledge from the individual learner. It invites learners to engage in modes of critical thinking and self reflection that are necessary for internalizing the principles and processes of peace. It also capacitates learners to pose critical queries and questions that may lead to new understandings and possible solutions to personal, interpersonal, social, economic, political and environmental problems for which no answers currently exist. Peacelearning nurtures those capacities that are essential for learners to be agents of personal and social change.” (Jenkins 2011)

This process of peacelearning is rooted in experiences of the learner. They have ownership of the knowledge because it directly relates to their experiences. It builds on the embodied experiences of the learners instead of in an imagined state of nature as is the primary environment for principled approaches such as human rights.

What follows is a brief introduction to care ethics and an explanation of how it can be practically applied in leadership and ethical decision making. We address challenges to the care ethics framework and thus make the case that it is not only appropriate but a powerful tool for international leadership, aligned with learning to live in right relationship.

Care Ethics

An ethic of care takes “relations as ontologically basic,” meaning that human interactions and subsequent affects are a basic fact of our existence. Caring is a way to contribute to those basic relations. Care ethics is an approach to ethical situations that is distinct from the traditional principled approach. It approaches moral questions through connectedness and relationships instead of through application of abstract principles. Relationships between persons are primary determining factors in the conception of self (McHugh 2007, 39). This is found in the grounding of peace in right relationships, defined in the earth charter; simply put, peace is living in right relationship with self, others, and the world around us. “A morality of caring sees persons as interdependent rather than independent individuals, and that ethics should address issues of caring and empathy and relationships between people rather than only or primarily the rational decisions of autonomous moral agents” (Robinson 1999, 11). Robinson outlines an ethic of care in the international sphere as one where moral values are based on the moral motivation of creating and maintaining good personal and social relationships. This does not just apply to local face-to-face relations but to all levels of relationships, including global economic ones (*ibid.*, 2). In doing so, Robinson provides the reader with a critical ethic of care, one that can move beyond the classical critique of feminist ethics as parochial.

The care ethics framework as originally developed by Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, Virginia Held, and others is refreshing in its offering of a different approach to morality and ethics and, therefore, everyday decision making. A liberal rights-based approach takes each individual as an autonomous agent and applies principles of right and wrong outside of the context of the social world; care ethics, stemming from the feminist tradition of embodiment, does not seek to assess the principles of action outside of the relational social context within which those actions will occur. It is an approach to morality based in the actual lived experiences of human beings rather than in an abstract imagined state of isolated individual analysis.

While still not enjoying the same recognition and legitimacy as traditional liberal frameworks, care ethics offers an alternative to principled applications that focus on justice. This revolution in ethics has brought legitimacy and a sense of validation to alternative moral evaluation. It has provided a different way to problematize situations and develop solutions, a way based on relationships, specifically caring ones.

Because care ethics is inherently relational, its starting point is different from that of traditional frameworks. When we reassess the professional relationship in terms of a connected individual, we can develop a better understanding of how both an individual and the organization as a whole relate to the cultural forces at play in any global environment. An organization that appreciates the interconnected nature of the individuals it employs can become better poised to manage its resources in a culturally diverse setting. Additionally, various cultures and religions are rooted in the concept of the connected human condition. The exercise of a broad-based, relational framework such as care ethics can help individuals identify with other similar cultural practices and understand their relationships and the subsequent contributions to the human community in a more holistic way.

Thinking about leadership in these terms can be helpful because it gets down to the very basics of our moral decision making. Starting at the very root of why we interact in a certain way and consciously trying to incorporate new techniques and new information into those processes is a learning experience. The exercise itself is valuable, and training our minds and hearts to assess things using different forms of data and a different perspective is a necessary step for building successful cross-cultural relationships.

One common challenge to the relational approach is that it is limited in its ability to be universally applied and is impractical for systematic guidance because relationships must be taken in context. While emphasizing the importance of knowledge through situated contextual subjects, care ethics rejects evaluation on an isolated case-by-case basis because “the very focus on cases in isolation rules out attending to general features in the institutions and practices,” that affect the lives of those individuals (Held 2006, 53). Robinson and Clement also tackle this critique: “There is no conceptual reason that an ethic of care cannot be applied in public contexts” (Clement 1996, 89; see also Robinson 1999). They posit that an ethic of care is not parochial or personal but relevant to global and public contexts. There is nothing inherent within a relational analysis that deems it only valid for personal face-to-face relations, and at their heart, feminist ethics are tools for structural analysis, uncovering power and equality dynamics in social, economic, and political systems. Recognizing and appreciating the unique nature of human relationships does not prevent a sound empirical analysis of their effects or how they may be taken into consideration in public policy and law.

National Peace Academy, USA

One example of successful ethical leadership grounded in the notion of our relational identity is the National Peace Academy, USA. The relational ethical framework is applied at a structural level to create an effective, cooperative institutional structure. These relational ethics guide not only face-to-face interactions among the leaders and staff but also the organization as a whole in its internal and external relations. The founder of the International Institute on Peace Education and author of *Comprehensive Peace Education*, Betty Reardon, offers this for thought:

Given the particular nature of the current problems of violence and the unprecedented opportunities presented by the growing attention to the concept of a culture of peace, in particular, questions of the development of consciousness, and human capacities to intentionally participate in the evolution of the species and the reconceptualization of culture should inform the next phase of peace education which might now address the “heart of the problem.” A culture of peace perspective promises the possibility to probe these depths, the “heart,” the self concept and identity of the human species and cosmologies from which these concepts and the dominant modes of thinking of a culture of violence arise. Now, as never before, all of education needs to be concerned about the question of what it is to be human and how formal curriculum can facilitate the exploration of that question so as to prepare learners to participate in social change, political-economic reconstruction, cultural transformation and the consciousness. Clearly, this requires profound changes throughout all educational systems, but most especially it demands equally significant developments in peace education, a new concept of purpose, a more fully developed pedagogy, broader dimensions than even comprehensive, feminist or ecological and cooperative education have envisioned. (Reardon 2000, 415)

Thus, ethical leadership, living the inherent values of this consciousness, is one of the reasons the National Peace Academy (NPA) was created. It was born from conversations regarding better ways to do business, involve civic society, and enlighten government process through education. The NPA strives to incorporate an ethical standard in everything it does in order to create a culture of peace, fostering a new type of prosperity in business and culture.

Michael Shank makes the case for a peace economy and the proven benefits, “The majority of businesses perform better when poverty and violence is not prevalent. If a country increases its ranking on the Global Peace Index by 10 slots, the GDP per capita increases well over \$3,000 and consumer spending increases dramatically. Businesses will undoubtedly benefit from a boon like this” (Shank 2012).

The NPA provides significant online and on-site coursework and recognizes that a peace education infrastructure is only as strong as the guidelines by which it operates. As NPA was conceived, it became apparent that the approach and how the organization would be run were as important as the peacebuilding and peacelearning pedagogy being developed. Thus, NPA strives to embody and reflect the principles and processes of peace as it develops the peacebuilder—inner and outer, personal and professional—and supports peace systems, local to global.

Along with the Biosophical Institute, a private foundation based on and supporting character education and ethical living, the NPA developed an infrastructure of board, trustees, and staff based on ethical leadership, an applied understanding of shared leadership and responsibility that allows for growth, discovery, and action among those responsible for the organization. One of NPA’s first partners was the Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence, whose staff has been welcomed to NPA’s Peacebuilding Peacelearning Intensive, and NPA has sent its edulearner faculty to participate in Inamori programs.

Engaging in ethical leadership acknowledges the importance of the root of an idea. In order for us to create an ethical society, we must first act ethically in our daily lives, including how we work and communicate with one another and how we run our organizations. This is a fundamental part of how the ideas of peace and ethical thought and action that we espouse will come to fruition. Since its inception, this practice has been paramount in how NPA connects, educates, and learns peacebuilding through five spheres: personal, social, institutional, political, and ecological.

Tools

Within each of these ethical frameworks are tools and methodologies that are helpful to leaders as they seek to impact positive change. An understanding of multiple frameworks and a willingness to move between them can offer even further assistance and create a more holistic and widely applicable approach.

The process of ethical assessment of leadership decisions and actions, and the relationships impacted by them, reveals several tools. Tools that can assist leaders in such areas as diversity inclusion (finding similarities), justification for action, and representing others can be helpful in much of the work of international ethical leaders in health, law, environmental justice, and peace education. The more ethical frameworks the leader can draw from and understand, the more tools they potentially have at their disposal.

As discussed by Gilligan and further demonstrated by Johnston (Gilligan 1995, 38–39), the process of switching between numerous ethical frameworks consciously or unconsciously is not impossible or even uncommon in individuals, including young children (*ibid.*, 11–15). This is an important consideration for individuals and groups working for reconciliation between divergent groups or those seeking to increase diversity within their organizations. Using two approaches to analyze the same criteria can help in developing a more nuanced understanding of a complicated set of problems. While the two approaches outlined herein are fundamentally different, they are not necessarily in conflict with one another. The fundamental difference stems from different conceptions of self; the ethics of care present the human identity as relational, one that cannot be separated from our social relationships, while the human rights framework stems from an individualist philosophical perspective, conceiving of the self autonomously and prior to social relations. Accordingly, they can offer unique information to leaders seeking broad perspectives on a given situation.

Diversity Inclusion: Finding Similarities and Universality

Ethical leaders are often successful because they can bring together diverse individuals and groups to share common goals and processes. One tool in bringing people together is identifying relational or ethical connections—similarities or common identities. Both Narayan (1997, 81–117) and Lugones (1987, 2) project a similar message of focusing on similarities when embarking on the process of learning about “others.” Lugones speaks to identifying with another as a means of beginning to understand their different “worlds” (*ibid.*, 3). This process of identification involves being able to see yourself in someone else. Searching for these similarities, rather than focusing on what differentiates, fosters understanding and the potential for right relationships. “Where political or ethnic identity issues are at the root of conflict, women can use their gendered identities and social experiences to bridge these chasms and set an example for others in their own identity groups” (Anderlini

2007, 126). This gendered identity is created through a process of finding similarities. Often these similarities are fleshed out through the sharing of narratives, which allows for identification of common relationships. Those common relationships can be positive ones that provide models for future action or negative ones that provide venues for change.

Precisely because of this situated approach, care ethics is often criticized for being too relative and not finding universal application. However, as presented by Virginia Held, in its embrace of emotions an ethic of care demonstrates that some “feelings can be as widely shared as rational beliefs” (Held 1993, 52). This means that care ethics can find universality through a different avenue than human rights. Human rights universality stems from universal principles applied to all human beings. Care ethics universality stems from the existence of universally recognizable emotions and relationships outside of shared humanity.

The human rights framework regards individuals as autonomous beings who have rights solely based on their membership in the human race. Identity as humans with rights and dignity is respected outside of any relationships or connections individuals may have except for that of shared humanity. Legitimate human rights claims are independent of all personal relationships yet dependent on the belief that all humans possess one shared relationship. The process of identifying similarities and points of connection is one of finding our shared humanity. This construction of human identity can be very powerful for universal applicability. Regardless of diverse backgrounds, all individuals are included under these international standards.

Justification for Action and Reciprocity

The ethics of care highlights the importance of the moral motivation behind action. For a care ethicist, the moral motivation comes from relationships themselves and the desire to perpetuate or create good relationships. The reciprocal nature of caring as explained by Nel Noddings is distinct from the traditional contractarian approach to reciprocity in that it involves thinking about how to meet the other morally. “It is recognition of and longing for relatedness that form the foundation of our ethic, and the joy that accompanies fulfillment of our caring enhances our commitment to the ethical ideal that sustains us as one-caring” (Noddings 1984, 6). This type of reciprocity can be particularly relevant in thinking about the issue of ethical leadership because a successful organizational policy will create reciprocally productive relationships. The focus is on the creation and maintenance of successful

employment relationships rather than on the exercise of power within the institution.

It can be argued that the motivation to act is an important factor to consider, especially in the global system where the ability to impact change is often determined by relative power. The justification for action on behalf of a marginalized group can be based in the emotions we feel toward this inequality and the desire to create right relationships (including structural ones). We understand that poverty and marginalization are wrong because the lived experiences of those in poverty demonstrate that to us. In her chapter titled “Cross-Cultural Connections, Border-Crossings, and Death by Culture,” Uma Narayan offers relevant guidelines for international leaders when she cautions that good intentions are not enough to justify the potential harm that can be inflicted by proceeding with arrogant perception. Even the decision to embark on this endeavor, as cautioned by Alcoff (1995, 24–26), must be examined with the critical eye.

In principled ethics such as that of human rights, the justification for action is clearly codified in human rights treaties and other institutional systems. The individual is the rights-holder and society is the duty-bearer (Donnelly 2003, 7). In the event that a society is violating these rights, individuals and groups can make a legitimate claim to both their own society and the international community for protection. We can know that the individual in a pluralistic society is the subject of rights because, in both human rights in practice and in Rawls’s theories of justice, an outside institution can intervene in the domestic affairs of the state on behalf of individuals whose rights have been violated.

Representing Diverse Groups: “Speaking for Others”

Another important issue facing international leaders is that of speaking for others. It would be wise for individuals who have the intent to develop a program or intervention to consult Alcoff’s model and her four cautions (Alcoff 1995, 24–26). According to her model, when designing a program or intervention for a particular context, the leaders must first examine their impetus to speak and intervene. Second, they must interrogate the bearing of location and context on what is being said and done. Third, accountability and responsibility must be carried throughout the entire process, and, finally, prior to any program or intervention implementation, the probable and actual effects must be thoroughly evaluated. This fourth part is not just about the words or actions on behalf of others and who is saying them but is about

who is receiving them as well, the audience. The intentions are not enough to determine the outcome. Whether or not to speak for others is a choice. It is a critical and important choice that must be seen as such. Recognizing when one is speaking for others and engaging in the difficult analysis and dialogue necessary to make an educated choice about whether to speak are the first steps in reducing the harm (often unintentional) and problems associated with speaking for others.

Conclusion

The goals of improving human life for individuals and communities and working to reach human potential are fundamental in both care ethics and human rights, yet they each offer very diverse paths for attaining those goals. Leaders operating within these two frameworks may speak the same philosophical language while having vastly different priorities. “Justice and care as moral perspectives are not opposites or mirror-images of one another, with justice uncaring and care unjust. Instead, these perspectives denote different ways of organizing the basic elements of moral judgment: self, others, and the relationship between them” (Gilligan 1987, 75).

Ethical leadership can occur within either, neither, or both of these philosophical traditions. It is about leading from values, and not necessarily through externally defined sets of values; rather it is about leading through personal and communal ethical foundations. Ethical leadership stems from the inside out, acknowledging and acting on our core values that stem from our most basic relationships as humans with one another. Brown offers a definition of ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown, Trevio, and Harrison 2005, 120).

This definition is helpful, yet we challenge our readers to take their ethical leadership one step further from the phases of conduct and communication to looking within. We encourage you to examine the ethical foundations of your actions. We invite you to locate your ethical foundations within the web of diverse philosophical, spiritual, and moral ethical traditions, and then to go beyond that personal reflection and inquiry by striving to incorporate alternative ethical analysis to your work, bringing in new tools and new questions and reflections to your daily decisions. Appreciation for this baseline can open new doors for conscious ethical leadership in action.

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