234's Impact on Ethical Decision Making

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Through Legal, Professional, and Ethical Issues in Cyber Security class also known as 234, I've learned many things about ethics and morals and have developed into an ethical thinker capable of making the right ethical decision in ninety-nine present situations. Also, one of the course objectives is to "Use ethical decision-making as applied to cyber security in a business environment." So to wrap up the class I think it's important to talk over my ethical decision making specifically, let's discuss what factors I find important and that will guide my ethical decision making, what I believed coming into the course and how its impacted those factors, what I've learned over this semester, what soft skills I think are important to adhering to this code while achieving my goals and lastly where I might struggle in the future and how I will develop strategies to overcome them.

Starting out with important factors, the most important one that will guide my ethical decision-making is seeing all the other perspectives and ethical theories others have. This is because the wide array of views has become an important factor I will consider when deciding. For example, Kantians would follow moral duty, as shown by "Kant would say this is our "duty" to the "moral law." (Blankely, L05, slide 14) In contrast, Utilitarians will focus on maximizing overall happiness shown by the quote, "Morality of an action based on maximizing the "good" (Blankely, L06, slide 20). These two show the difference in theories. With this difference, we can see the importance of knowing and using different theories to view and make ethical decisions that could have vastly different outcomes depending on how you act and how others perceive your actions.

The next important factor would be working through theoretical ethical decisions. For example, the essay "Assignment 3" in 234 had us "Describe an ethical dilemma" (Blankely, L06, slide 2) and then "Analyze the situation from a Kantian, Utilitarian, and Virtue perspective and determine what each method would lead you to do." (Blankely, L06, slide 2) The reason it's important is that working through these ethical dilemmas through different views will "help you grow as an ethical thinker." (Blankely, ICD) This experience and growth will help guide my ethical decision-making.

Another important factor would be class discussions. These discussions are an important factor because of the knowledge they give you by participating in them. For example, "People tend to want to be on the "moral high ground" and avoid the stigma of an accusation that their view is ethically wrong. Thus, arguments based on ethics can be, and often are, used to intimidate people with different views" (Baase, pg. 66), participating in these discussions can give you a feel on how to navigate around people who try to intimidate others so everyone has a fair chance to share their opinion without feeling lower or intimidated by other. This makes it an important factor because these discussions will help me become a person who can provide an open and safe environment for many opinions. I can rely on those opinions to help me make the most ethical choice.

Another important factor is the ethical OS. "Not the end all, be all solution, but a very useful framework" (Blankely, L04, slide 8), meaning it's a rather helpful guide for what to think about when it comes to breaking down risk zones. For example, say there is an ethical dilemma involvininformation being posted on the web. We can right away go to the first risk zone, "Truth, Disinformation, Propaganda," and start asking questions like "What type of data do users expect you to accurately share, measure or collect?" (Blankely, L04, slide 9) or "Even if your tech is meant to be apolitical in nature, how could it be co-opted to destabilize a government?" (Blankely, L04, slide 9) The shown base information and understanding makes the ethical OS an important factor that will guide my ethical decision-making since it offers a good platform for questions you might want to ask yourself relating to different types of risks.

Risk management is another important factor. Risk management is the process of conducting a risk analysis to determine the acceptable level of risk from something such as an action. Risk management looks at things you should be worried about, like "Fire, Flood, Tornado" (Blankely, L21, slide 4), and the likelihood of it happening in the grand scheme of things. This is an important factor because it is a nice base and should be used in your ethical decision-making; otherwise, you might start a "fire" since you didn't properly plan out and understand what risks were involved with your decision. A good example of risk management in the field would be "Sandia National Laboratory developed a "chemical lab on a chip" that can detect emissions from automobiles, chemical leaks, dangerous gases in fires (reducing risk for firefighters), and many other hazards." (Baase, pg. 47) It's a good example because it shows a company putting special protections in place to minimize risk, and if we substitute our field to the problem, it shows why risk management is important.

Freedom of expression is also an important factor. Because while it might be a good thing most of the time, it can also be used as a bad thing and "Can cause serious harm to an organization or individuals." (Blankely, L07, slide 13) This makes it an important factor because this double-sided edge shows that it needs to be thought about with care, or your decision might end up causing more harm than good. It's also important because freedom of expression is a huge deal in modern society, and if we don't consider it, it will likely end up with many people upset.

The last important factor would be that there isn't always a clear winning option with no risks or losses. For example, "The software that controls a self-driving car must make critical ethical decisions such as whom to hit when a collision is unavoidable. Suppose, for example, that a child runs out into the road, the car knows it cannot stop in time to avoid hitting him, and the only alternatives are to swerve into a wall or another vehicle." (Baase, pg. 29) While swerving into the wall or hitting another car a clearly the better option, they both end up with the car damaged and likely harm the passengers. This shows that even with a few options, an outcome with all parties winning isn't always an option. So what has impacted all these factors?

Now that you know all the important factors, it's important to know what information I had before 234 and how it impacted them. Starting out, one thing that impacted what I think are important factors that will guide my ethical decision-making is that I didn't think there were many ethical theories. This is because of a rather simple reason. For example, imagine you only know the inside of your house, then one day, you get to see how beautiful the world is. For me, I used to think the ethical theory was just Divine Command Theory, "easy to understand - black and white." (Blankely, L05, slide 5) But now I can see that there are "so many different ethical theories" (Blankely, ICD) ranging from Divine command to contractarianism. This "eye-opening experience" impacted my important factors because it made me realize there are many different ways to examine ethical decisions. This is why the vast number of ethical theories is an important factor that will guide my ethical decision-making. While I might not have known many ethical theories, is there another thing that impacted my ethical decision-making?

Another thing that impacted what I think are important factors that will guide my ethical decision-making is that I didn't believe there was a difference between ethics and morals. While morals depend are "Develop throughout the course of one's life" (Blankely, L03, slide 9), ethics "Do not depend on individual experiences." (Blankely, L03, slide 8) Not knowing this difference has me still looking at the bigger picture or focusing on what is ethically right more often than I look at what I find morally right. This impact impacted my important factors by making them sway towards ethical things. For example, the ethical OS is an important factor in my ethical decision-making.

There are only a few things that I knew before coming into 234 that impacted my important factors, but in contrast there are quite a few more impacts that came from information that I learned in

234. This uptick in impacts makes sense since 234 is where I was exposed to ethical decision-making factors and what it is about. And while some of the things I learned in this class might seem small and something I should already know, but being presented within the class made, they still had an impact in their way. So what did I learn within 234 that impacted my ethical decision making factors?

Something I learned in class that impacted my important factors would be the fact that the first amendment protects "even discussing illegal acts, sedition, and anything else that doesn't directly cause harm." (Blankely, L07, slide 7) The impact that this had on my important factors would be my addition of freedom of expression to them. This is because this protection of bad actions showed that stuff that could possibly relate to freedom of expression needs to be carefully looked at. It also impacted my ethical factors by making risk management more important since this freedom of expression could be a significant risk in some situations depending on who is using it and where they are using it.

Something else I learned in class that impacted my important factors would be the fact that sometimes you need to let slide because "Totally secure == totally unusable." (Blankely, L27, slide 13) For example, let's say we have a social media platform, and to make the site completely safe for all ages, we disable posting text or pictures, making it unusable. This has impacted my important factors by making me more open to balancing risks with good or risk management, to put it simply.

The next thing I learned in class that impacted my important factors is that most people follow the rules. More specifically, "Rawls, like other social contract theorists, said that reasonable people, recognizing that a legal (or political) structure is necessary for social order, will want to cooperate on terms that all accept, and they will abide by the rules of society, even those they do not like." (Baase, pg. 62) This impacted my important factors by making me more interested in what other people had to say because, based on what they might want to do, I can figure out how others might react to my decision and plan around that.

The last thing I learned in class that impacted my important factors is that data is important. This impacted my important factors by making discussions more important. This is because if we can talk to people and gain data and information from them, we can understand "The consequences for being misinformed" (Blankely, L20, slide 3). Also because it lets us "paint a better picture of what is going on" (Blankely, ICD) and is an important part of making sure we understand what is happening and what we need to do about it.

Now that we know the important factors and what had an impact on them throughout my life, I think it's important to look at the soft skills that will help me adhere to this code and achieve my goal. Ethical behavior is one soft skill that will be important in adhering to this code while achieving my goals. My goal is to become a pen-tester at some point, with pen-testing. I'll likely end up seeing intellectual property that the public cannot access. This information could be "confidential IP that provides a competitive advantage to its owner" (Blankely, L11, slide 13), and if I leak this, I could potentially lose my job and never get hired as a pen-tester. Me leaking information would be considered unethical, making ethical behavior a must-have soft skill to achieve my goal. Another important soft skill for this would be critical thinking. This is because with pen-testing, I'll most likely run into tricky situations that require an ethical decision to be made, and I'll need to think about it critically, trying not to let "feelings of guilt or inauthenticity" (Blankely, L03, slide 9) get in the way of making the correct and most ethical decisions in any sort of situation. In the same fashion, strategic thinking is also an important skill since you really have to think about the outcomes that will happen. In these tricky situations, another important soft skill to have would be open-mindedness. This is because ethics doesn't depend on my experience and "May vary based on context" (Blankely, L03, slide 8). Being open-minded will help me account for the different contexts and not block out other options based on past experiences.

So now that we know what soft skills will help achieve my goals and adhere to my ethical code, let's look at where I might struggle. An area where I might struggle would be following through with my ethical decisions. This is because I'm a rather meticulous person who tries to find the best option, so I will likely try to reevaluate and make the best choice even after I've made and started to implement a decision. How will I develop strategies to cope with this challenge? Mostly I'll make sure to double-check things that are easy to check, such as data make sure to "Reducing Uncertainty" (Blankely, L20, slide 9) to ease my concern and make it more likely I will get the decision right the first time instead of changing it later down the like once I start to implement it. Otherwise, I don't think there are any other areas I will struggle with since this class has provided a nice source of basic information and intermediate information that I can add to with personal experience and real-life experiences that will lead to me making the right decision.

In conclusion, 234 has had a significant role in shaping my ethical decision-making factors through impacts. Through this course, I've become an ethical decision-maker capable of making the right decisions in most situations. I've also learned how to use different ethical theories, working through theoretical ethical dilemmas, participating in class discussions, the ethical OS, risk management, and considering freedom of expression as important factors to come to an ethical decision. While it's true that not all the decisions will have a clear winner, these factors and skills will hopefully give me the ability to narrow it down to the best one for each situation. To sum it all up, 234 has been a valuable class I will use for the rest of my life whenever an ethical issue or decision arises.

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