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CPR E 234

Final Paper

Going into this class, I did not think ethics played a role in the cybersecurity world. However, this class completely changed my perspective on ethical decision making. Before this class, I thought decision making was black and white, however, there is much more depth that goes into decision making. In this essay, I will explore factors I learned from this class that will guide my decision making. Also, I will how people are affected with my original thought process, then I will explain how people are affected from my new thought process I learned from this class. Furthermore, I will breakdown some important soft skills that will play a role in adhering to the codes while achieving my career goals. Lastly, I will explore areas I might struggle with, and how I will overcome these challenges with tools I have learned in this class.

There are several factors I learned from this class that will guide my ethical decision making. Most of these factors are different types of “ethical codes.” There are five ethical codes that we learned in this class that will shape my ethical decision making. However, not all of these codes are necessarily useful. The first ethical code I’d like to explore is what I believe to be the best one: utilitarianism. According to Britannica, utilitarianism is, “an action (or type of action) is right if it tends to promote happiness or pleasure and wrong if it tends to produce unhappiness or pain—not just for the performer of the action but also for everyone else affected by it” (West). Utilitarianism bases decisions on providing the best net happiness or outcome for a given group. For example, imagine there is a train, there are two rails. One of the rails has a highly successful

brain surgeon, while the other has four homeless people. You are in control of which rail the train goes on. A person with a utilitarian mindset would have the train go on the rail with the brain surgeon. They would spare the four homeless people because it benefits the most people. I realize this is a morbid example, however, it highlights the main idea with utilitarianism. The reason I believe utilitarianism is the best ethical code, especially for businesses, is because having as many people being happy with the company is crucial in having a successful business. Another ethical code we learned in class is called "virtue ethics." According to an article I found by Stanford, they state: "It may, initially, be identified as the one that emphasizes the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to the approach that emphasizes duties or rules (deontology) or that emphasizes the consequences of actions (consequentialism)" (Stanford). This essentially means that one that follows virtue ethics follows the basic virtues of courage, honesty, compassion, generosity, and justice. I feel as if I relate to this ethical model the most because I grew up in a Catholic family, and many of these virtues are embedded in my brain. In a business, a combination of virtue ethics and utilitarianism would yield the best outcome. Using virtue ethics when concerning with employees would be the most beneficial, while utilitarianism would be the most beneficial when concerning with clients. The next ethical model I learned from class is called deontology. According to an article I found by Britannica Encyclopedia, "In deontological ethics an action is considered morally good because of some characteristic of the action itself, not because the product of the action is good. Deontological ethics holds that at least some acts are morally obligatory regardless of their consequences for human welfare" (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). I do not believe I will follow deontology in my professional or personal life. There is too much of a gray area of what is right and wrong simply because not everyone is going to have the same definitions of what is morally right or wrong. This is why I

most likely will not be basing my decisions with deontology. The last ethical code I would like to discuss is consequentialism. According to an article I found by the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, they describe consequentialism as, “The view that morality is all about producing the right kinds of overall consequences. Here the phrase “overall consequences” of an action means everything the action brings about, including the action itself” (Internet [Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)). I personally am not a fan of this ethical code at all. I do not like this code because people are basing their actions off what someone else does not want them to do. This code relates to the following quote, “Are you sorry because of what you did, or are you sorry because you got caught?” Based on my summary of ethical codes above, utilitarianism and virtue ethics have changed my thought process the most.

Before this class, I had no direction with decision making in a professional atmosphere. Since I had no direction, I could have run into several problems in my professional career. Prior to this class, I did not necessarily follow a single ethical code, other than just following the rules. However, learning about different ethical codes made me realize that I have been living with a consequentialist mindset my entire life. I was basing my actions on whether I was given consequences rather than whether I believed the action to be right or wrong. For example, basically my entire life I never thought swearing was bad (unless it is a derogatory comment directed at someone), but I would never swear because I knew my parents would ground me. Since I have matured a lot and learned about different ethical codes, I believe I follow utilitarianism and virtue ethics the closest. Maturing and growing made me realize how selfish I was earlier in my life. Another reason my mindset changed is because I found my true passion. My true passion is helping others, and I can not help others with a selfish mindset. So, to truly fulfill my passion, having a utilitarian and a virtue ethics driven mindset is crucial.

Being successful in the cybersecurity field will require many skills. There are five that stand out to me: willingness to learn, sense of humor, humility, leadership, and confidence. I would also like to mention work ethic, but I believe that is too obvious of a skill and it is not unique to the cyber security field. I believe willingness to learn is the most important soft skill to have, especially in the cyber security field. Each day, there are new exploits and vulnerabilities to discover and learn about. If one does not enjoy learning or have a want to learn, they will eventually get burnt out of their job and produce inadequate work. This is where I believe I stand out over others. I love learning new things and improving my craft day in and day out. As important as having a will to learn is, I do not believe it correlates to any ethical code we learned in class. Perhaps the only one it would correlate to is utilitarianism because improving my craft day in and day out would benefit the company and their clients. I believe having a sense of humor is incredibly crucial as well. According to Forbes, “In workplaces that encourage people to be themselves--that are less hierarchical and more innovative--people tend to be more open with their humor. Even people who aren’t always comfortable sharing their humor tend to do so in more relaxed environments where the use of humor becomes second nature with everyone’s style” (Smith). I relate to this quote greatly because I feel that my personality is rooted around humor. When I am in an environment that does not allow me to be myself, I tense up and I do not think like myself. This often happens to me during exams because humor is my way of “staying loose,” or staying relaxed, and when I am not relaxed, my thoughts get clouded, and it becomes harder to think straight. I believe this soft skill most closely relates to utilitarianism as well because having clearer thoughts and better ideas will benefit the greatest amount of people. This is another area I believe I stand out because many of my friends and people I know say that I am the funniest person they know. I hope they aren’t just saying that because they are my

friends. Another key skill to have is humility. Humility, in other words, is humbleness, or having the ability to admit it when you make a mistake. I believe the second half of that definition is the most important in the professional world. Being able to admit when you make mistakes is incredibly crucial when it comes to learning and improving in the cybersecurity world. It is better to admit that you make a mistake than it is to lie about it, because you are only lying to yourself and limiting your potential. Another great soft skill to have is leadership. Being a good leader is very important for those who have high ambitions. For those who don't have high ambitions, leadership is not as important because some people perform better when they have a set of instructions in front of them. Leadership is crucial for me especially because I seek to become a chief information security officer down the road. I believe I possess the skills and the passion to achieve that goal. Finally, we have confidence. Confidence could be described in many ways, however, I will define it as "having undoubtable trust within thyself." According to an article I found by Kaplan Professional, they state, "You'll be more likely to engage in challenging, but manageable projects. This will push the boundaries of your comfort zone, which will encourage you to aim for, and achieve, new goals. These are both valued characteristics of successful workers" (Baldwin). Challenging yourself and the employees is essential for growing a business and improving innovation. I would also like to add that a confident person is not shy. Confidence and leadership tie into each other because one cannot be a good leader if they do not have the utmost confidence in thyself. For example, imagine you are a chief information security officer for a well-respected cyber security company. If you lack confidence in your plans or directions to your employees, they will easily sense that and they will not respect you and they will begin to question your leadership. Furthermore, if clients sense a bad leadership foundation, they will

question the company and even take their business elsewhere. I believe I possess all these skills, however, there is always improvement, and I will certainly face challenges.

I believe my willingness to learn, sense of humor, and humility are skills I have locked down. However, the two skills I will need to improve are leadership and confidence. In class, I learned many strategies to improve at these skills. I recall in class an example where we discussed a situation that involved a data breach at a company. In this scenario, I was the director of cyber security, reporting to the chief information security officer. As the director of cyber security, I became aware of a data breach, but no important data had been leaked yet. To fix the breach, I had to either shut down the servers for a month, or I could leave them open. Leaving them open would take much longer to fix, but there was the risk that more information could be stolen. I could either disclose with the clients that their data had been stolen, or I could leave it under the radar and patch it. If I disclosed to the clients that their data had been stolen and shut down the server, I could potentially lose thousands of clients. If I did not tell them about it and in the future more data got stolen, the entire company could crash. In this scenario, I did not know what to do. From this scenario, I learned that it is okay to ask for help from your supervisors or even your peers. Prior to this class, I would have tried to figure things out on my own, which would lead to a faulty solution to the problem. I used to think that asking for help would make me appear less confident to the people working for me. This would be a utilitarian mindset because, regardless of how I feel or how my coworkers feel about me, I am seeking the best solution that satisfies the greatest amount of people. To work on my leadership skills, there was one video from class that was very eye opening for me. I specifically remember watching a video with Elon Musk speaking about Tesla's crash. In this video, there was a quote that stood out to me. Musk spoke about leadership and how to improve at it. Specifically, he mentioned that to

become a good leader, you must surround yourself with people who are more successful than you. Most people who are highly successful are naturally good leaders. Growing up, I used to just follow, rather than lead. However, after I learned that from Musk, I have made the conscious decision to spend more time with very successful people. Last summer, I started my own business, but it did not grow as much as I wanted it to because I did not collaborate with people more successful than me, I thought I could make something of it on my own. This summer I will strive to collaborate with successful people as much as possible. Furthermore, I have an internship and at this internship I will be around several highly successful people. Doing the things I listed above will improve my confidence and my leadership skills in the professional world.

In conclusion, this class has been incredibly beneficial to me in preparation for my professional career in cybersecurity. Going into this class, I had an incredibly narrow view of ethics and their relationship with the professional world of cybersecurity. However, I learned many ethical codes that will influence my decision making. I related most to the ethical code of utilitarianism because it outlines achieving the best net outcome, which is important in the business world. I also related to virtue ethics because most of the virtues were highlighted in my upbringing. With my understanding of these ethical codes and their relationship with the workforce, I formed new ways to approach dilemmas. My own growth and maturity played a large role in the transformation of my mindset. Furthermore, I've identified essential soft skills that are important for success in the cybersecurity field: a willingness to learn, a sense of humor, humility, leadership, and confidence. While I acknowledge my strengths in some of these areas, I also recognize the need for improvement, specifically in leadership and confidence. I am committed to improve in these areas by surrounding myself with successful people and putting

my ego aside. I am confident that my new mindset will allow me to have a successful career in cybersecurity. Lastly, I would like to thank you for a great semester and everything you have taught me!

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