
Call for Papers: Building the Ethical Organization: Practical Theory for Developing Virtuous Human Systems

The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science

XX(X) 1–3

© 2011 NTL Institute

Reprints and permission: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

DOI: 10.1177/0021886311425465

<http://jabs.sagepub.com>



Ronald Fry and David Bright, Guest Editors

This special issue will focus on research that builds social theory and informs application of theory to support the creation of positive, sustained ethical action in human organizational systems.

Attention to business ethics, ethical decision making, corporate citizenship, and the development of value-based leaders and organization cultures have increased dramatically over the past decade. This trend corresponds to a similar increase in the media coverage of corporate scandals, wrong doing, and illegal actions. The dominant conversation concerning ethics appears to paint a gloomy picture that emphasizes the inescapability of human character flaws and debates. As Ghoshal (2005) so powerfully warned, we face a situation where the primary purpose of social theorizing often focuses on solving negative problems related to restricting the social costs arising from human imperfections. In contrast, this special issue will highlight examples of scholarship that provide insight into how to build significantly healthy, ethical organizational systems.

For instance, the emergence of Positive Organization Scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003) and Positive Psychology (Peterson & Seligman, 2003) over the past decade has explored personal and collective excellence. From a virtues point of view, excellence focuses on enabling an ideal human condition or obtaining “goods of first intent”—a condition that is intrinsically satiating and motivating. This is in contrast to a narrower understanding of excellence that is grounded only in instrumental concerns, commonly defined as achieving profitability or reaching specific performance objectives.

When considering excellence as virtue, a discussion of ethics becomes not just a matter of conduct but also a matter of character (at the individual level) and culture (at the larger system level; Bright, Stansbury, Alzola, & Stavros, 2011). The creation of ethical organizations is both about enabling the development of character-excellence among organization members and about nourishing a sustained culture of multi-excellence. Excellent organizations enable and project virtues such as justice,

forgiveness, integrity, and courageous action and do so in sustainable fashion. In sum, a focus on virtue and values goes well beyond codes of conduct that seek to avoid punishment, do no harm, or legal compliance (Googans, Mirvis, & Rochlin, 2007; Manz, Cameron, Manz, & Marx, 2008). Rather, the focus is on building the organizational dynamics that lead extraordinary and positively exceptional human organizational systems.

Possible contributions to this call include applied research that relates to topics such as the following:

- Interventions that build an understanding of ethics-in-practice, or that align multiple stakeholders for high engagement, shared goals, socially responsible activities, sustainable enterprise, and so on
- Organizational factors that relate to specific virtues, including techniques or mechanisms that encourage an infusion of virtues in organizational practice
- Organizational designs, policies, or procedures that encourage ethics and organization-level excellence
- Leadership characteristics that enable excellence and/or ethical organization
- The fostering of connections in the workplace that enable generativity, creativity, innovation, and ethical imagination
- Theories of organizational design or change that include ethical or virtue considerations

In sum, our call is for case studies, comparative studies, action-research, and other practical theory building, based in the applied behavioral sciences, that provide insight into the factors and conditions that enable ethical, virtuous organizing. Aligning with Lewin's (1945) ageless assertion that nothing is as practical as good theory, this call is for good theory building to enhance good organizing.

We invite scholarship of discovery (research), integration (synthesis), and practice (application) (Boyer, 1990) to demonstrate how behavioral science is contributing to the realization of virtue ethics in action to foster more positive deviance in leadership and organization behavior.

To be considered for publication, papers must be electronically submitted as an e-mail attachment (Microsoft Word files only) to David Bright (david.bright@wright.edu) by *March 1, 2012*. For questions about this call or the suitability of a manuscript for the special issue, please contact either of the guest editors: Ronald Fry (rxf5@case.edu) or David Bright (david.bright@wright.edu). Manuscripts should be prepared according to the guidelines printed on the inside back cover of any issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*. All papers that satisfy initial editorial screening will be processed using the conventional *JABS* double blind review process. Publication is targeted for March 2013.

References

- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Bright, D. S., Stansbury, J., Alzola, M., & Stavros, J. (2011). Virtue ethics in positive organizational scholarship: An integrative perspective. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Science*, 28(2). Advance online publication. doi:10.1002/CJAS.199
- Cameron, K. S., Dutton, J. E., & Quinn, R. (Eds.). (2003). *Positive organizational scholarship*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Ghoshal, S. (2005). Bad management theories are destroying good management practices. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4(1), 75-91.
- Googans, B. K., Mirvis, P. H., & Rochlin, S. A. (Eds.). (2007). *Beyond good company*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lewin, K. (1945). The Research Centre for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. *Sociometry*, 8, 126-135.
- Manz, C. C., Cameron, K. S., Manz, K. P., & Marx, R. D. (Eds.). (2008). *The virtuous organization*. Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific.
- Peterson, C. M., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2003). Positive organizational studies: Lessons from positive psychology. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, & R. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive organizational scholarship* (pp. 14-28). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.