**Case 1: Teach For America**

In 1989, Princeton student Wendy Kopp developed a plan to revolutionize American education. Through her senior thesis, she proposed Teach for America, a program that would consist of recruiting recent graduates from prestigious universities to teach at K-12 schools in

low-income areas. Today, Teach For America (TFA) operates in 51 cities all the way from San Diego, California to Baltimore, Maryland.

On the surface, Teach for America looks like a wonderful to give back to the community.

The literacy and math levels of students in the TFA program have risen significantly since the pre-TFA days. Volunteers also get valuable experience and a good resume feature out of their

work. Aisha Dennis, an alumnus from 2008 who went on to be a lawyer, even went as far to say, “I learned to captivate an audience and manage a large number of students with varying needs. This improved my court performance and helped me manage my caseload”. The mutual beneficiality of Teach For America has granted it much attention and praise, especially in the media.

Not everyone is so enamored with Kopp’s program, though. Many people have raised debates over the morality of doing something good just for the boost on a resume. The intents of many incoming Teach for America volunteers are not to help low income students, but to check a box to get into graduate school or get a job they want. Also, the teaching term for a post at TFA is only two years, meaning TFA classrooms receive a new instructor frequently, leaving them

without a stable, consistent teacher. When the fact that most of these classrooms are made up of low-income, often minoritized students is considered, the wealth and racial dynamics also come into play. Often, it is a white teacher of affluent, privileged background educating povertized people of color. Critics say that not only does TFA lead to instability in the classroom, but it promotes dangerous racial dynamics. Students of color aren’t able to see positive role models of their ethnicity in the classroom. On the other hand, the positive educational effect TFA has had on the communities it serves is undeniable. TFA supporters say that the extreme advantages to implementing the program are worth some smaller disadvantages. After all, even if the teacher’s intent isn’t to serve the students but to provide them with a resume builder, the students are still benefitting drastically, producing a net good.

Critics fire back that this educational impact comes riddled with socio-economic and

racial implications. They also argue that the teachers are not invested enough in the program, as they only train for five weeks and teach for two years, whereas a real, qualified teacher would need to go to school for a teaching degree and student teach for a period of time before even being allowed in the classroom. Many question how the quality of a TFA teacher can compare to the quality of a professional teacher when these things are considered. TFA, however, maintains that their programs are in fact effective. *The 74 Million*, CNN’s educatory website, reported that a 2019 study in Texas confirmed that students under TFA programs were more likely to be successful in math than their non-TFA peers. Students under traditional teaching had a passing probability of 34.1 percent, while students under TFA had a passing probability of 37.4 percent

**Questions:**

1. Does a corrupt intent nullify a good action? Why or why not? Would there be any circumstances in which the opposite would be true?
2. Should TFA teachers have to commit to more than 2 years or are those 2 years enough?
3. In this situation, is it moral to discriminate against teachers because of their race in order to have ethnic role models for students of minority?

**Case 2: Great Lakes Rights**

According to the Great Lakes Commission, “the Great Lakes — Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario — and their connecting channels form the largest fresh surface water system on earth.” Besides acting as the drinking water source for almost 50 million Americans and Canadians, the lakes support roughly 1.5 million jobs and 3,500 plant and animal species [1].

While humans are dependent on the Great Lakes for many ecosystem services and economic activities, humans simultaneously pose a threat to the Lakes. For example, humans are responsible for the introduction of invasive species, such as sea lampreys and zebra mussels, which are “degrading habitat, out-competing native species, and short-circuiting food webs” [2]. Pollution, including agricultural runoff, causes toxic algae blooms. The city of Toledo, Ohio was forced to declare a state of emergency and shut off the municipal water supply for three days in 2014, when a particularly severe algae bloom struck Lake Erie. In large part as a response to this incident, the city of Toledo granted Lake Erie legal status in 2019 by passing the Lake Erie Bill of Rights Charter Amendment [3]. According to the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, one of the groups responsible for creating the Amendment, “the law recognizes the rights of the lake and its watershed, and empowers citizens – as part of that larger ecosystem, and who have ‘the right to a healthy environment’ – to stand up for the

lake when those rights are violated” [4]. In other words, “Lake Erie will have standing in court without needing to demonstrate injury to a human,” making it easier to combat pollution by suing polluters on behalf of the Lake [3].

Activists argue that the Lake Erie Bill of Rights Charter Amendment is necessary because the Lake is not protected well enough by current legislation, such as the Clean Water Act [3]. Furthermore, many of them believe that an ecosystem has inherent rights, just like a person, and these rights must be protected legally—a philosophy called the “Rights of Nature” [4].

Opponents of the Amendment argue that it will harm small farms and businesses with new legal costs and that it violates the constitutional rights of equal protection and free speech. There is also uncertainty as to how enforceable the Amendment will be. A representative for the Ohio Farm Bureau, an agricultural lobby, has stated that “this is not a solution. In fact, it is counterproductive. This is going to lead to lots of lawsuits and stress” [5].

# Study Questions:

1. Do the citizens of Toledo—or, for that matter, any group of people—have “the right to a healthy environment”? If so, at what cost?
2. In the case of Lake Erie, do any individuals/groups have a special moral obligation to act in order to protect the Lake (e.g. government officials, farmers)? Why or why not?
3. Is the fact that Lake Erie is linked to the larger Great Lakes system morally relevant to what actions should/should not be taken for its protection?
4. Should we treat natural entities—such as Lake Erie—as possessing inherent rights and worth, independent of their utility to humans?

# Sources:

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4. <https://celdf.org/2019/02/breaking-news-toledo-voters-enact-lake-erie-bill-of-rights/>
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**Case 3: I Pledge Allegiance**

Vincent is an immigrant from the nation of Asomrof, but he has lived in the United States for 20 years and has been a naturalized citizen for a little less than half that time. While he is very proud to be an American citizen—including exercising his right to vote—he still feels a strong tie to Asomrof. Most of his extended family still lives in Asomrof, and he communicates with them regularly. Although he no longer lives in Asomrof, he stays well-informed on current events in his birth country.

Vincent is particularly worried about the upcoming Asomrofian elections. Like the United States, Asomrof has a two-party electoral system—consisting of the Green Party and the Purple Party—and Vincent is strongly opposed to the Purple Party’s presidential nominee. He disapproves of the nominee’s sexist statements about women, disdain for immigrants to Asomrof, and push for Asomrofian unification with the neighboring state of Yahtac. The Purple Party nominee has been extremely successful in mobilizing a devoted supporter base which often threatens and attempts to silence Green Party opponents. Vincent fears that if the Purple Party wins the presidential election, it will severely damage Asomrofian liberal democracy, including impinging on the state’s sovereignty (due to the push for unification with Yahtac) and degradation of civil discourse and free speech (due to the angry, yet so far only verbal, attacks the Purple Party supporters constantly launch on the Green Party, encouraged by the Purple Party nominee).

According to the U.S. Department of State, “the term ‘national of the United States’ means (A) a citizen of the United States, or (B) a person who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States.” Furthermore, although “U.S. law does not mention dual nationality or require a person to choose one nationality or another . . . dual nationals owe allegiance to both the United States and the foreign country” [1]. This makes Vincent a U.S. national, due to his U.S. citizenship; since he never relinquished his Asomrofian citizenship, he has dual nationality and dual citizenship. Consequently, Vincent could legally vote in the upcoming Asomrofian election if he so wished.

However, despite his strong objections to the Purple Party presidential nominee and anxiety for the future of Asomrof, Vincent does not feel morally permitted to vote in the Asomrofian elections, given that he no longer lives in the country and does not feel a part of the social fabric there anymore. Vincent decides instead to contact all his friends and relatives living in Asomrof and try to dissuade them from voting for the Purple Party nominee.

The day after the election, Vincent learns that the Purple Party candidate was indeed defeated in a landslide election where the Green Party won not only the presidency, but also most of the national legislature. Some of his relatives tell him that his influence convinced them to abstain from voting or vote for the Green Party during the election. While Vincent is relieved that the Purple Party did not win the presidency, he wonders if he has acted unethically by trying to influence Asomrofian elections. On the other hand, given that the Green Party won by such a large margin, he wonders if his actions matter at all, given that the Green Party would probably have won either way.

**Study Questions:**

1. What ethical obligations does Vincent have to Asomrof as an Asomrofian citizen? To the United States as an American citizen?

1. Does the fact that Vincent no longer lives in Asomrof influence what is morally required of him as an Asomrofian citizen?
2. Suppose the election had been won by a very narrow margin instead of by a large margin. Would this consideration have any bearing on the ethicality of Vincent’s actions?

Sources:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/travel-legal-considerations/Advice-about-Possible-Loss-of-US-Nationality-Dual-Nationality/Dual-Nationality.html>

**Case 4: Teacher Communications**

You are a member of the Appleton Public Schools Board. Recently, it has come to the board’s attention that one of its members, Mr. J.—a former middle school teacher—has been communicating with a former student in what the parents of the student believe was an improper manner.

Mr. J. has been on the school board for two years; prior to that, he had been an Appleton Public Schools middle school teacher for twenty years. A few months ago, he received an email from a former student, now an eighth grader, regarding the student’s creative writing, and replied to the email. Over the next few months, the student and Mr. J. continued exchanging emails, on topics such as Mr. J.’s own experiences in high school and the student’s writing. In his latest email to the student, he mentioned that he would like to stop by her classroom and see her during his next visit to her school. When the student showed the email to her parents, they became worried that Mr. J. was trying to establish an inappropriate relationship with their daughter through his emails, particularly because of his informal tone, including allowing the student to write to him on a first-name basis. They found it odd that Mr. J. would take such an extensive interest in their daughter when she was no longer his student. Furthermore, they were unsettled that Mr. J. had not disclosed his email conversations with their daughter to them.

The parents contacted the Appleton Public Schools superintendent to notify her of Mr. J.’s communications with their daughter and requested that he cease all contact. Mr. J. complied with this request and voluntarily provided the superintendent with all emails he had sent to and received from the student. Furthermore, he explained that as a school board member, he regularly communicated with parents and students alike, and viewed it as a natural part of outreach to constituents. He noted that he never pressed the student for personal information, and explained his first-name-basis communication with the fact that referring to teachers by their first names (instead of “Mr.” or “Ms.”) was the policy of the middle school at which he had taught the student. He stated that he regularly visits schools throughout the Appleton Public Schools District as part of his job on the school board, and interacts with many former students during these visits. He acknowledged that he could have provided more context for the nature of his visit in his last email to the student, but did not acknowledge any other wrongdoing.

The board is holding a vote on whether to remove Mr. J. from his position on the board. You must decide whether Mr. J.’s behavior warrants removal from the board before casting your vote.

**Study Questions:**

1. Did Mr. J. violate his integrity as an educator/school board member by communicating with the student in the manner described? If so, what options (including, but not limited to, removal from the board) does the board have for remedying the situation?

1. Should the student’s and Mr. J.’s genders be a factor in evaluating the ethicality of Mr. J.’s actions?
2. What ethical obligations does a teacher have to a student? To a student’s family? When (if ever) is a teacher released from those obligations?
3. What ethical obligations do you, as a school board member, have to the students, teachers, and parents of the Appleton Public Schools District?

**Case 5: From the crown prince to the drug dealer!!!**

Samba, a young Muslim and Senegalese man, belongs to an “Al pulaar” tribe who are direct descendants of Ndiadiane N’diaye, founder and emperor of the great Djolof Empire that existed for seven hundreds years. Samba is the oldest child in his family at 22 years old. Prince, he is the only male child in his family but he has three sisters whose survival depends on him plus his father and mother, already in their old age. The young peulh got married at 18 in order to respect and follow the tradition. He has a lot of responsibilities that nobody can imagine. His wife is pregnant with their second child, after Ozman, the first, who is almost 3 years old. Samba’s parents are very proud of him because he is honest and respects his culture and traditions but also his religion. His sisters tend to call him Almamy, meaning in their language, the man who loves praying. Samba is respectful and never lies or hurts his family. “I have my family’s weight on my left shoulder and God on the right one,'' he says at any time. He loves his family.

Since several years, Samba’s family has a lot of land, cows and horses that they could sell to the farmers and get money if needed. But for the past two years, after one full year of drought, the “al pulaar” tribe has lost about half of everything they have. The majority of healthy animals died. The farmers, fearing to lose all their crops again, were not buying anymore land. Samba was watching his people suffer from this disaster and his father as well, whose illness got worse. All the money that he has left was used for his father’s medical care, from the dispensary next to the village, and the survival of vulnerable persons in the tribe. Now, everything was definitely gone! Everyday, between the end of the night and the beginning of the day, Samba wakes up, rides his horse and goes to the mountains. After praying to his dear God, the weak man opens his arms directed to the sky and ask for goodness. One day, Samba decides to go over the ocean he was watching after each prayer from the top of the mountains. There, the idea of immigration came to him. He discussed with his parents about his thoughts but they refused. Samba didn’t want to stay in the tribe. He wanted to be rich and help out.

Disappointed, Samba went to see his uncle, in the neighboring village to talk about his situation. He agreed to help him out but the condition was he must take his cousin, Omer, 16, with him. His uncle gave him an amount of money. A week later, after his first day prayer, Samba rode his canoe with his cousin, to not look behind them again. All he wants is to achieve America. Days passed, nights, weeks, now a month,…they finally reached the U.S. There, everything was just amazing. Meanwhile, Samba was suffering from having his cousin’s responsibility over him, being both poor, immigrants and homeless. Their lives were just miserable because they were obliged to run away every time they see or hear the police coming and even if they were sleeping. That night, the weather got worse around 03:45. Samba, unable to fall asleep, ensured that Omer is well covered.

With eyes opened, Omer’s face was completely icy. “No! He screamed! the cold has taken my little one,'' he said. He took his cousin in between his arms against his heart, and his eyes were filled with tears. A few minutes later, the police were coming, and Samba left and abandoned his cousin’s body. He was crying as he ran. A month later, Samba found a group of multicultural immigrants. With them, he felt safe and started working as a cleaner in a bar restaurant. Here, the “el capo” of drug dealers in the cartel, used to come eat, drink and talk about business with other gangsters. Weeks later, Samba starts to develop a good relationship with those people. He has always been appreciated by the “el capo” saying that Samba is a very brave and smart man and he could one day do the same job as well as he does. One time, the “el capo” offered an interesting amount of money to the young man in exchange for working for him. Samba refused the offer.

He was earning money as a cleaner and started using technology. Now he could send messages to inform his family about his situation and send money through *Groupe* *La* *Poste.*

He decides to hide Omer’s death by saying he is at work every time people back home ask about him. And they obviously trust him because “time is money in the USA,” they said.

Things start becoming fine again. This morning, Samba was devastated after his wife tells him that doctors of the city have diagnosed cancer at his father’s lungs and he will die if he doesn’t do a surgery in the next couple of weeks. It costs 5.000.000cfa equals to $10,000. No way! He can’t make it even with a month of hard work. He tried to borrow money to the owner of the bar, but it didn’t work out. Now his only chance is “el capo”.Samba hesitated a lot to ask him. However, he did. Fortunately, he gave him the amount of money he needed to save his dad’s life. But, Samba ignored that with the drug dealers, everything has a price. Now he is working as a drug delivery man for that man or if not he will be killed. He is still sending money monthly to his family back home.

“I sold my faith for the good reason, they lose me”. This is what he says anytime. He had decided to hide the origin of the money that saved his Dad’s life and his actual job. “At least, they are alive…”

**Questions:**

1. Was it a wise decision of Samba to immigrate? (Why or Why not)
2. What obligations does Samba have when he took his cousin?
3. Would Samba immigrate if he was aware of what is happening now?
4. Should he hide Omer’s death from his dad/family? (Why or Why not)
5. Should he tell his father where and how he obtained the money that saved his life and his actual job?(Why or Why not)

**Case 6: A Criminal Friendship**

One day in a high school band class, students are put in small groups to practice a quartet piece for performance. Four friends, Elise, Jennie, Rhea, and Sandra, are put in the same group and assigned a small room to practice in. The four girls trust each other, and are fairly close.

While they are practicing in the separate room, Sandra starts to brag about the shirts she stole from a store earlier that day. She says that shoplifting gives her a way to defy her parents and gives her a thrill, to the point that she is unable to resist shoplifting when the opportunity presents itself. She also details multiple other times that she has gone shoplifting for various different items. Elise and Jennie remain quiet, not wanting to support Sandra’s behavior in any way, while Rhea laughs and nods with her. Sandra asks if Rhea can go with her to the bathroom and help her remove the items she shoplifted that morning from her person. The two girls leave and Elise and Jennie are left alone in the room.

Jennie knows that Rhea doesn’t agree with Sandra’s behavior either, but is going along with it to support her friend. She says as much to Elise.

Elise and Jennie wonder if they should report what they’ve just heard to an adult, or if they should keep their friend’s trust and stay quiet. They both know that Sandra has a difficult home life. Sandra is often verbally and emotionally abused by her parents, and has mentioned that her older brother used to be physically abused for simple mistakes he made. Sandra has also expressed, on many occasions, that she is overly controlled at home and isn’t allowed to do anything, which she says is causing her to act out in potentially dangerous ways. Elise and Jennie know that if they report Sandra’s behavior, the school and related authorities would involve her parents, as Sandra is a minor. Elise and Jennie realize that they could be worsening her home situation by reporting her- her parents may start to physically abuse her as well.

Later that day, Jennie asks if Elise and Rhea want to go shopping after school. Both agree, and meet up with Jennie in the parking lot. However, Rhea has invited Sandra along as well. Elise and Jennie are nervous, but still don’t say anything for fear of destroying their friendship with Sandra.

While the girls are looking around the store, Sandra walks up to them. She giggles and whispers that she has just snuck some more clothes under her hoodie and in the bag she is carrying. As much as the other girls try, Sandra will not be convinced to not shoplift the clothes. Elise, Jennie, and Rhea don’t know if they should report Sandra, or be complicit in a crime to help their friend. Once again, they are worried that by reporting her, they may make their friend’s situation at home significantly worse, yet they are also as legal risk by indirectly helping Sandra to shoplift.

**Questions:**

1. What, if anything, should Sandra’s friends do in this situation? Should Jennie and Elise have reported Sandra as soon as they heard that she was shoplifting?
2. Is Sandra in control of her behavior in this case? If she is, does Sandra have an obligation to address her own behavior, since she is aware that she is acting in certain ways to defy her parents, and that these actions are often illegal or dangerous?
3. Knowing that Sandra shoplifts, should Elise and Jennie have refused to go on the shopping trip or refused to take Sandra with them at the risk of hurting their friend’s feelings?
4. Do spectators of an addiction or bad habit have an obligation to remove or protect the person with the addiction/habit from situations that may trigger their behaviors or enable them to act on their addiction/habit? (This is assuming that the spectators know the person and of their addiction/bad habit.)

**Case 7: Would you stick to your necessities or your morals?**

Veganism is a term that has grown in popularity over the last few decades, and although there is a stigma around it, benefits and facts outweigh what is told to be true around the world. Even though there are a lot of reasons why one might choose to try a vegan diet, ethics seems to be the most controversial.

If we think of a hypothetical example such as a man or woman needing a job and the only place that is hiring with a decent wage is a slaughter house should that person take the job, even though they have strict morals on animal abuse, in order to feed their family or should he/she stick to their morals and refuse the job?

On one hand, some people may say that refusing the job would not be the most clever idea if that person really needs the money so they can take care of themselves and/or a family, mainly because money is money regardless of where it came from and you have to do what you have to do to survive. In desperate situations, people should put aside their own morals until they are in a comfortable position to make decisions. Also, the slaughter house would be able to replace the worker easily, so the fact that he or she didn’t accept the job in the first place wouldn’t make that big of a difference. In this case, the fact that this person stuck to their morals and decided not to take the job would only affect him, since the person isn’t really stopping anything and the slaughter will just continue to go on. Moreover, we should consider the situation that this person is in. Let's say that he or she has a sick family member that needed treatment urgently, and they needed to get the money as soon as possible, then taking a job as a slaughterhouse worker wouldn’t (and shouldn’t) be a hard decision to make.

On the other hand, another group of people would argue that choosing necessities over morals would not be the right thing to do. Mainly because the essence of a person is given by their morals, so deciding to work in a place that promotes animal abuse would mean a betrayal of their own values, therefore, he or she would be hurting his or her essence. Morals are what make up a person and they are very hard to change. Taking into consideration that the animal agriculture industry is the number one contributor to the mass animal slaughtering that has been, and still is, going on, taking that job wouldn’t mean anything else than a huge betrayal to their morals. It is no secret animal agriculture takes the lives of over 70 billion animals per year (not counting the number of aquatic animals, that is in the trillions), and while some people might agree that this hypothetical person would not be affected if he joined this industry, even if he or she had strong opinions against animal abuse, because we have been taught that people in slaughterhouses kill animals humanely. However, some others might argue that there is no humane way of killing something that does not want to be killed and something that fights for their lives until their last breath.

**Questions:**

1. Does this person have an obligation to take care of their family regardless of their morals?
2. Should this person follow their beliefs and decline the job?
3. Should this person put their own morals aside and take the job?
4. When do morals come before necessities and vice versa?

**Case 8: An Individual’s Obligation to the Environment**

Katie spent the majority of her childhood growing up on a large farm in the American midwest. The farm was family owned, but produced corn, wheat, and several other crops on an extremely large scale for distribution by a statewide supermarket chain. Even from a young age, she can remember seeing the effects of climate change on the yield of the farm, in the increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and decreased water availability. These changes resulted in smaller harvests and caused her parents lots of stress about affording to plant on such a large scale the following year.

As the years went by, Katie’s parents began selling parcels of land to larger companies in order to afford to plant their remaining land. When Katie was 15, her family sold the entire farm and moved to Indianapolis to look for jobs in the city. Katie benefited from the improved education and job opportunities there, and eventually went to college and medical school. When she graduated, she was a surgeon and eventually partnered in opening her own practice.

Katie became extremely wealthy from her success as a surgeon, but she never forgot her roots as a farmer. She watched as the effects of climate change became more dramatic, and more local farms were forced out of business by the unpredictable weather and the expenses it caused. All around her, Katie hears people talk about using public transportation, minimizing vacations to reduce commercial jet emissions, and avoiding patronage at restaurants and take-out places.

Katie understands that all of this is supposed to be better for the environment, but she also knows that the vast majority of fossil fuel emissions and contributions to climate change come from poorly regulated industries, not consumers. Additionally, she feels she’s earned the right to b   enjoy vacations and going out to eat - she worked hard to put herself through school and open her own practice. Why should she have to give up luxuries she’s worked hard for, when it will only be minimally effective in preserving the environment?

Katie knows that people of lower income households often can’t afford to make the same convenience sacrifices that she can (like avoiding unsustainably sourced foods, single-use plastics, etc.), because food and housing prices take precedence. Additionally, she feels responsible for doing everything she can to prevent climate change, and by extension, help the farmers who can’t afford to keep their land.

**Study Questions:**

1. Is Katie obligated to give up luxuries that damage the environment, given her background?
2. Regardless of your answer to the previous question, how does this obligation extend to the average consumer (if at all)?
3. How does the socioeconomic status of an individual affect their obligation to do what is better for the environment, if at all?

**Case 9: An Attempt to Stand Out**

With summer coming to an end and with the beginning of the fall semester approaching, many incoming seniors all across America and overseas are frantically trying to fill out their college applications. With the recent scandals involving the college application process having been in the media, many students are hoping to optimize their chances of receiving admission to their dream colleges; some of which may be prestigious and well-known universities. While these recent scandals are being unearthed and brought to light now, lying on college applications is nothing out of the ordinary when it comes to trying to grab the attention of college admission teams.

 Lillian Anderson is one of these 17-year-old high school seniors stressed over what will make her seem the most unique to the college admission team. Lillian has worked hard over the past four years but hasn’t been elected to any leadership positions and is worried that she’ll simply blend in with the sea of applicants. Lillian has discussed these concerns with her best friend Melissa who is in the same boat as her. Melissa has told Lillian that there’s no need to worry as colleges don’t actually fact check anything you write, especially, if it doesn’t sound out of the ordinary. Lillian is conflicted because she feels that this is wrong but the more information she gains, she discovers that more and more people are doing it. In the end, Lillian concludes it’s not the road she wishes to take, she wants to get into college based on her own merit.

 College application season has passed and now acceptance letters are rolling in. Lillian was deferred from her top school but was accepted into other colleges. She is disappointed but knows she made the right decision. Lillian learns that Melissa has been accepted into all of her schools, including her reach schools like Harvard and Yale. Lillian is happy for Melissa but can’t help but wonder if she ever followed through with her plan. Lillian decides that it wouldn’t hurt to ask and Melissa proudly tells her that she didn’t lie, she embellished. She argues that she participated in every club and organization she listed on her application at one point in time. She then turns it around on Lillian and asks her where telling the truth got her. Lillian leaves upset but conflicted because Melissa may have a point. Colleges rarely have the time to fact check every activity students claim they’ve invested their time into and for how long. Another part of Lillian still believes that Melissa’s actions were wrong because other students like herself were honest and instead, colleges accepted students that “embellished” like Melissa.

Melissa had no bad intentions when she decided to add a few more clubs and volunteer programs to her application. With limited slots available, it was also hard for Melissa to earn those leadership positions that colleges look for. Lillian and her were in the same boat, but Melissa simply decided that she would use the system to her advantage instead of being cheated by it. While Melissa is eagerly ready to accept her slot at Yale, Lillian is still waiting to hear back from her top school but time is running out. Lillian keeps considering how Melissa went about applying to colleges and she can’t help but question whether it was right. Next fall, many more high school seniors will be facing the same struggle of applying to colleges; she wonders if this cycle should be allowed to continue.

**Study Questions:**

1. One of the claims Melissa made on her application was that she was still participating in a club that was disbanded during her sophomore year. Is it morally defensible for Melissa to claim she was still in the club?
2. Is Lillian morally obligated to report Melissa to an authority figure? Does Lillian’s bond with Melissa outweigh her obligation to society?
3. In the context of Melissa’s situation, if the colleges she got into weren’t as prestigious or competitive, would it be morally right for her to obtain slots that could be given to students like Lillian?
4. What Melissa has done isn’t uncommon. Even parents across America are guilty of wanting their children to embellish their application. Should parents be held accountable and not just the students?

**Case 10: Who Dunnit?**

A prosecuter is given a new case to tackle and he is trying to figure out who to prosecute. The case surrounds a child named Danny.

Danny is a 12 year old kid who lives with his Mom and Dad and his family resides in a bad neighborhood. They have been living there for Danny’s whole life. Although there has always been some crime, throughout the last few years, there has been an increase in the number of robberies and other crimes that have been committed in their neighborhood. Recently, their own house was broken into in the middle of the night, and valuables were taken. Luckily, the family was out that night, but it didn’t diminish the growing discomfort they were beginning to feel in their home. Their family cannot afford to pay for an alarm system for their house. In desperation for a solution to keep their family safe at home and to protect their family belongings, Danny’s parents feel they need to find an answer to the situation. After doing some research and talking to their neighbors, his parents decide to purchase a gun. They don’t tell Danny about the gun because they don’t want to worry or scare him about how dangerous the situation is. The parents hid the gun in a case high up in their closet.

After school, Danny has a babysitter because his parents work long hours. Under the supervision of his babysitter Anne, a graduate student, he has friends over and they decide to play hide and seek. Danny decides to hide in his parents closet and finds the case. He climbs the shelf and grabs the gun and thinking that it was so cool, he goes to show it off to his friends and while playing with it he accidentally shoots and kills one of them.

The law states that he (the prosecuter) can only prosecute one person for the child’s death, but he MUST prosecute someone. Who does he hold most accountable? The parents, Anne the babysitter, or Danny? The parents weren’t home and they trusted Anne with the supervision of their child but at the same time, Anne didn’t know about the gun in the closet. Danny showed it to his friends out of curiosity and his intents were innocent.

**Study Questions:**

-Who is morally responsible for the death of the child? Should the parents be punished for a crime they didn’t commit? Should the babysitter be punished? Or Danny, although he’s a minor?

- Did Anne fail in her responsibilities of a babysitter? How about the responsibilities of the parents?

-Should Danny’s parents have taught Danny about the gun? Or would that have urged him to play with it more?

-Is Danny old enough to comprehend the responsibility of his actions? Is he old enough to know what a gun is?

**Case 11: Sick with Guilt**

The Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was officially diagnosed on December 31st, 2019. It’s typically spread through respiratory droplets from people to people. As of now, the information points to an incubation period of 2 weeks (14 days), which means that it can take up to 14 days to show symptoms of the disease. People are generally considered “safe” after two weeks of contact with no symptoms. The best way to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus disease is by washing your hands frequently. As of now, there are 83,000 confirmed cases, and the number grows daily.

Elizabeth is a 26-year-old Chinese immigrant who has recently visited China. She went over Christmas vacation and returned on January 1st--the day after the Coronavirus outbreak. Though she’s been careful to limit her contact with others, it’s been just over three weeks since she came back and she doesn’t feel that there are any issues. She decides to resume her daily life as normal, working at as a part-timer in a convenience store at night and applying to jobs and going to interviews during the day.

She’s been struggling for some time to find a stable job. Additionally, her family in China has always had many financial difficulties, and so she always makes sure to send some money back home every month, despite her own issues. Her parents haven’t shared their exact financial situation with her, but she’s pretty sure that her contributions help them out greatly.

A well-respected company that she’s been through two previous interviews for contacts her and informs her that she is one of their final choices for a stable position with decent pay that would both be incredibly beneficial for her, but is also in alignment with what she’s interested in. She recognizes this as a once in a lifetime situation which would help her get many future career opportunities. They want to do one final interview with her and ask her if she’s been to China within the past two weeks. She tells them no but is uncertain over whether or not she should give more information. She eventually decides not to tell them about her trip. They have her go through with the interview, and she ultimately gets the job.

Feeling guilty, she decides that besides giving some of her first paycheck to her parents, she’ll also donate part of the money to trusted organizations in order to combat the coronavirus.

**Study Questions:**

1. Was it wrong for Elizabeth to have kept her travel history a secret from the company she was interviewing for when it’s been over two weeks since she had gone to China?
2. If the company was only asking Asians if they had traveled to China within a certain time frame, does Elizabeth have an obligation to tell the truth?
3. Say she still doesn’t feel sick, but someone from her company falls ill to the coronavirus. Does she have a moral obligation to get tested and inform her company?
4. Did she have an obligation to donate her wages to charity organizations?

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**Case 12: Wanting Something More**

James and Sophia are both 24-year-olds living in Ann Arbor, Michigan. They met each other at a coffee shop on university campus-- when Sophia works as a barista-- and found they had similar interests in life. Over time, they gradually build their friendship up: going out, learning more and more about each other. Similar taste in movies, books, etc. until one day a couple months later, James asks to be Sophia’s boyfriend. They both mutually disclose their feelings for eachother, but Sophia turns him down due to work and life taking up a lot of her time. After this, nothing much changes. They continue to go out as friends, but a lot more frequently than before. As for potential romance, James keeps on insisting for an advancement of their friendship to something more intimate, to his rejection for the same reasons every time. Eventually, he learns that Sophia had had a relationship in highschool ending in her having a child, and the father leaving. He hears this from a mutual friend, and decides to bring it up lightly with Sophia the next time they see each other. So, naturally, that next friday they go to eat and James asks her. She explains that she’s had continuous issues with family and poor living conditions, and fell into a rough spot in life. The conversation ended there, with her changing the subject quickly.

After a couple more months of going out as friends, winter approaches and Sophia exclaims to James about the terrible roommate problems she's having, and how she might be evicted if it continues. Her voice has a sense of urgency and anxiety in it, and the following day she asks James if she and her 7-year-old child could move in with him temporarily until they find a permanent place to stay. James, having a small apartment to himself, says yes. The days go by, and James almost becomes a sort of father figure for Sophia’s little girl. After a couple months of experiencing this-- more than he would have anticipated them staying for-- James asks Sophia again to be his girlfriend. This final time, she says no, and explains to him that she’s lost feelings for him. Upon hearing this, James becomes extremely aggravated, and tells them to pack their things and leave in the following week. The two of them since this point have not spoken since.

**Study Questions:**

1. Was it ethically just of James to assume that there was any romantic obligation between them when saying yes to Sophia moving in?

2. Should intentions have been made clearer at the beginning of their friendship in order to avoid something like this? Is a situation of this nature too complex to predict at the beginning of a friendship?

3. How might this case be different if Sophia did not have a child?

4. By repeatedly putting off a relationship with James, yet advancing in their friendship as if it was one, was Sophia using James?

**Case 13: Reuniting with VR**

Virtual reality is a very powerful tool that now with modern technology can even resurrect the dead. Jang Ji-sung, a grieving mother whose 7-year-old daughter Nayeon died four years ago in 2016 due to leukemia, was able to meet her daughter one last time on a Korean television show. The show called “Meeting You” provided Ji-sung with touch-sensitive gloves and audio which enabled her to touch, play with and hold conversations with her daughter. This technology provided Ji-sung an opportunity to say goodbye to her daughter, and her daughter even consoled her, telling her that she was no longer in pain. This interaction seemed to have a positive effect on Ji-sung as she said at the end of the reunion that she was “really happy in the moment”.

The Munhwa Broadcasting Company - the company that broadcasts the tv show - worked on Nayeon’s avatar for eight months, making sure that her face, body, and voice were as accurate as possible. They stated that their goal was to help “console the family” and present a “new way to keep loved ones in memory”. While this may have been their intent, the situation does raise some serious ethical questions.

Dr. Blay Whitby, a philosopher and technology ethicist at the University of Sussex said, “we don’t know the psychological effects of being reunited with someone this way” and “that a lot of psychiatrists would regard this as potentially unhealthy.” Not only that, but this reunion was broadcast and posted on youtube. In just under a week, it received over 13 million views on the platform. While many have sympathized and offered support for the concept, this case does raise further ethical questions such as whether or not the company is exploiting the grief and pain of the mother. Or whether or not the deceased should be resurrected with VR at all due to the manipulation of what they say and do and also for the simple question of whether or not they would have wanted to be resurrected.

**Study questions:**

1. Is it ethical to resurrect the dead, whether they wanted to be brought back to life via VR or not? Does the answer change if the family consents to this? Does the answer change if it has a positive impact on the family?
2. Is it ethical to control what the deceased say or how they act even if it has a positive impact?
3. Is it ethical to broadcast something so sensitive and emotional, especially when the family is grieving?
4. Does the positive intent of the producers outweigh the fact that this technology could be used to exploit people’s pain for profit or that it could be used for emotional manipulation?
5. If the psychological effects of reuniting with deceased family members this way are unknown, should people be allowed to do this? If so, should it be a one-time thing like this was or should it be more than that? If the family gets emotionally attached to the VR avatar, should they be able to keep this technology?

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**Case 14: Cancel Culture – is Commenting Okay?**

In recent years, a small group of Youtube creators have discovered a new type of fame. They have a cult-like fan base consisting of millions of followers; and earn millions from publicity campaigns and ad revenue on their online content. The internet celebrities are often young, in their late teens or early twenties, and are idolized by an audience of the same age and even younger. Yet, in the midst of their success, some of these creators falter, committing infractions like posting culturally insensitive content online, using derogatory racial terms, or using their power to take advantage of others. Following the exposure of actions like these to the public, viewership sharply drops, and news of their wrongdoing spreads across the internet. These actions usually start as criticism of the media being produced, but often snowball, becoming criticisms of the creators themselves. This backlash has come to be known as “cancel culture”, effectively, to be “cancelled” is to be boycotted, viewers unsubscribe and cease to watch content, condemning the creator’s actions on social media platforms. Insults thrown online devolve into personal attacks and death threats. Verbal harassment and loss of their fanbase can greatly affect the creators’ income and mental health. In response to these changes, many of the individuals publish apology videos, alleging their actions to be a “lapse in judgement”, and asking for their former status back. Unfortunately, by this time it is usually too late.

Allison is a 16 year old who is interested in Youtube creators and often watches their content. One day while on Twitter, Allison sees a post about a creator she follows. Old videos and posts show the creator making racist jokes about Africa and the African American community. After seeing the racist comments that have been brought to light, Allison feels angry and disappointed in the creator she once supported. Along with thousands of others Allison goes to social media to address the creator. She unfollows them on all social media platforms and tweets at them expressing how disrespectful, rude, and disappointing their racist comments were. Later, she “likes” some other tweets that comment on the incident, one of which comes from an account of another former fan, who says they think that the creator should die.

A few weeks later, the creator that was seen making racist jokes in the viral videos posts on social media about how much the public backlash has affected them. They apologize for their actions, and go on to discuss how much the negative and hateful comments have influenced

their mental health. They say that looking at social media made them feel like the whole world was against them, and that the death threats made them feel deeply scared and worthless, even leading them to pursue therapy to work through the backlash they faced. Allison sees the video and starts to feel guilty. When she posted on social media, she had only hoped that the creator would learn their lesson; she hadn’t wanted to hurt them. Allison feels especially regretful about liking a tweet with a death threat in it, as the Youtuber stated in their apology video that such comments were the ones that had the biggest negative impact upon them. Allison tries to talk to a friend about the guilt she is feeling, but her friend says that she shouldn’t feel guilty about what she posted or liked because the creator had deserved it as punishment for their actions. Allison isn’t so sure about her friend’s response, but decides to keep it to herself.

**Study Questions:**

1. Did the Youtube content creator deserve the response they got? In being a public figure, does one inherently accept the criticism and hate of the public? In having a young audience do Youtube content creators carry more responsibility to act responsibly?
2. Would the acceptability of the response change if the inciting incident was different? For example, if the Youtube creator had filmed a dead body or if they had sexually assaulted someone?
3. Should the fact that the infraction happened in the past rather than recently affect the amount of blame placed on the Youtube content creator? Is one ever free of responsibility for their past actions?
4. How much should one individual, such as Allison, be held responsible for a mob attack on an individual?
5. If Allison had continued to follow the Youtube creator after their racist comments came to light, would she assume any moral responsibility for their actions?

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**Case 15: Honor Code Manipulation**

Elijah is the student body president at a public high school in America. He’s a good student and generally friendly to others, but he doesn’t get along with one of his classmates, James. He knows for a fact that James cheats on a lot of homework assignments in BC Calculus, either by plagiarizing online sources or by convincing other students to let him copy their work. However, he’s also pretty sure that James doesn’t cheat on any of the tests, which comprise 90% of the grade, and that James does well in the class.

Through his friends, he hears that James has recently gotten caught cheating in his AP chemistry class. As a result, the entire chemistry class is heavily punished, making the already difficult class almost impossible to do well in. Elijah isn’t in AP chemistry himself, but many of his friends complain about how it’s was unfair. While Elijah agrees that the punishments were a bit severe -- no more homework grades, banning calculators on tests, and no curves for tests -- he’s also aware that at least half of the students in that class were copying homework. Copying homework has been considered commonplace for many years now.

His school holds an assembly to discuss academic dishonesty and the principal authorizes that any student who knows of any instances of cheating needs to report it to either a teacher or a counselor. As the student body president, Elijah feels that he needs to set a good example for the other students and report the instances that he knows about. He is considering going forth about James copying homework from other students in Calculus. However, he knows that if he didn’t have a personal issue with James, he most likely would not think to report him. After all, he’s sure he knows of other people who cheat, but he only notices James because he doesn’t like him. He’s also worried about the consequences to innocent students if he chooses to report the situation. It’s likely that not only the math teachers but all of the teachers at the school will feel a lack of trust for the students and make their classes more difficult.

Ultimately, he decides not to say anything, but he feels incredibly guilty. He convinces himself that this is in the best interest for most of the students who don’t cheat and that the only person who is harmed when James cheats is himself.

**Study Questions:**

1. Was Elijah right in not notifying the authorities about James cheating?
2. Does Elijah have any obligation to protect his friends who aren’t being academically dishonest?
3. Say that Elijah’s peers were copying homework from each other due to the teacher being unreasonable and giving them 3+ hours of homework a night. Would this change the situation?
4. Are there any situations in which academic dishonesty could be considered morally acceptable?
5. As the student body president, does Elijah have a higher obligation to following school rules or to protecting the students? How does this obligation compare with that of a normal student’s?
6. If James was cheating on the tests, would that be a different situation?

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**Case 16: Feathers and Furs**

One of the most highly debated topics in the marketing industry, is the treatment and use of animals in products. Kelly, a 15-year-old, has recently moved up north from a rural town to a private school due to her parents’ jobs. With a drastic change in her environment, she quickly notices how the majority of her schoolmates wear Canada Goose, a winter clothing brand famous for selling high-priced parkas with its signature red circular patch on the arms. Soon enough, Kelly finds herself wearing one as well. Yet, recently Kelly has come across footages and pictures on social media by advocates of animal ethics voicing their disapproval against the use of animals in product brands. One of the most prominent posts she has seen were the ones about Canada Goose. While she is horrified by what she has seen of the cruelty of animals, she is hesitant to give up her parka since it was bought at a high price, and wearing it gives her a sense of belonging to her new school. However, a classmate of Kelly, Marie, has recently seen Kelly’s parka and harshly criticized her for promoting an industry that creates profit at the expense of animals’ wellbeing and even lives.

Canada Goose’s winter parkas easily sell at around $1,000 each, marketing its products as protectors from “unspeakably cold conditions.” For a few years, the People’s Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has been releasing articles encasing photos and videos that reveal a gruesome process of the acquisition and use of wild animals for their high-priced products. The fur trimming on the hoods of the parkas are authentic coyote fur; wild coyotes that have been trapped in laxly regulated bear traps in which the animals may be left to fend for themselves for weeks. Regularly, cats and other animals will come across these traps as well. The photos from PETA show coyotes that have been shipped off to slaughterhouses where their furs are skinned off and their dead bodies are tossed aside. Their feathered counterparts, geese, are also a contributor to these high-priced products, providing the cocooning warmth of the coats that Canada Goose so highly values. Like the coyotes, the geese are acquired and suffer gruesome deaths. Trappers toss them into pens as the geese on the bottom of the pile are frequently suffocated to death. In the slaughterhouses, they’re kept in cages of limited space to the extent that they can barely even lift their heads, forming bruises on their already broken wings until their final moments arrive.

Canada Goose isn’t the only brand out there who uses animals to create their products. There are numerous other well known brands, and even less known companies that easily get away with similar processes of animal use. For example, PETA has also released evidence from undercovers showing Patagonia workers whipping and harshly shaving the wool of sheep, pregnant ones as well. Some people defend the use of animals for products saying that animals are unable to experience the same emotional processes as humans do and thus arguing that they can’t feel emotional and perhaps physical pain. Yet, is this just a valid excuse to utilize animals for the pleasure and satisfaction of human want?

**Study Questions:**

1. Is it ethical for someone, in this case Kelly, to justify an animal product because it brings her a sense of security in terms of social conventions?

2. Does the ethicality of animal use in products change depending on what the product is or how the animal is acquired and/or kept?

3. What kind of obligation, if any, should consumers have in knowing the process in which their products are created? Are consumers responsible for economically supporting animal-cruelty brands?

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