

Ethical Mindfulness: Why We Need a Framework for Ethical Practice in the Academy

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Abstract: *This conceptual article proposes the use of ethical mindfulness (EM) as a framework to promote more ethical practices among faculty, which can be especially important during times of uncertainty and volatility. First, we address some of the ethical challenges specific to faculty, focusing on the context surrounding academic work. Second, we highlight ethical sensemaking and the reasons why it may be difficult to change our ethical behavior. Finally, we describe the EM framework in further detail using our own experience as examples, and we argue this practice is one way we can try to change our behavior for the better.*

Keywords: *Ethical mindfulness; ethical decision-making; faculty; unethical behavior; ethical sensemaking*

Introduction

As faculty working within higher education institutions, we recognize that our work context consists of varying levels of “volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity” (VUCA) at any given time (Bennet & Lemoine, 2014, p.311). Events such as state budget cuts, dropping enrollments, and even natural disasters can drastically increase

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those levels within an institution, and subsequently our own work contexts. The result is that faculty are trying to make decisions, at times ethical decisions, in an environment that can make it difficult to determine the best courses of action (Bennet & Lemoine, 2014). Even during times of relative stability, our ethical practice can falter—within a chaotic context, ethical decision-making can prove to be more challenging (Bennet & Lemoine, 2014).

The professoriate is not immune to unethical behavior. Recent empirical literature has highlighted unethical practices in which faculty engage, ranging from interpersonal interactions (e.g., bullying or harassment) to research infractions (e.g., authorship or plagiarism) (McFarlane et al., 2014). Much of the literature focuses on larger ethical transgressions, but there are also those smaller day-to-day acts of ethical decision-making that can happen throughout professional work (e.g., which students we choose to mentor, how we respond to request for extensions, or the extent we volunteer for service) that need attention. There are also times when our inaction has ethical implications, like being a bystander to an act of bullying or allowing others to shoulder more responsibility. Those smaller acts make up the larger fabric of our work lives; if we do not reflect on those decisions, we could establish and normalize patterns of unethical practices (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004).

To address this issue, we pose the following guiding questions to ourselves and the professoriate: If we want to be ethical professionals a. what may hinder us from making ethical choices?; and b. How can we be better in our everyday professional practice?

This conceptual article is our answer to these two questions. To answer the first question, we address some of the ethical challenges that faculty can experience, focusing on the institutional context and nature of academic work. We also highlight ethical sensemaking (Sonenshein, 2007) and the reasons why it may be so difficult to change our ethical behavior, even when we want to. To answer the second question, we offer a revised version of Guillemain and Gillam's (2015) ethical mindfulness (EM) framework as a means to try to change our behavior for the better. Because EM challenges the very heuristics we use to make ethical decisions, it may be one of the ways we can improve our own ethical practice.

This paper is significant for two reasons. First, this article calls attention to the idea that unethical practices are not limited to the few “bad apples” in the Academy, but that all faculty can be susceptible. It recognizes that parts of academic culture, our roles and responsibilities can shape our ethical decision-making. Second, this article adds to the literature that looks to improve our ethical practice by providing a framework that asks us to challenge our personal beliefs and worldviews as part of the process.

Ethical Challenges for Faculty

We write this article from the position that we believe that most people, including those in the professoriate, want to be ethically and morally good (as opposed to people being knowingly and deliberately harmful or malicious). This belief aligns with studies that indicate people often believe themselves to be “moral, competent, and deserving” (Chugh, Bazerman, & Banaji, 2005, p. 3). However, the desire to be good and enacting good do not always coincide with one another.

When exploring the literature, we see that there is rich data on faculty misconduct like faculty bullying (Lester, 2009; Valentim, 2018), mobbing (Prevost & Hunt, 2018), inappropriate teaching behavior (Morgan & Korschgen, 2001), and questionable research practices (Swift et al., 2020). Aside from being its own ethical problem, transgressions serve as a broader issue in academia since faculty mentor and socialize newer members (Austen & McDaniels, 2006), and part of this socialization is setting the norms for ethical and acceptable behavior. Similarly, faculty can be role models of unethical behavior for others, as research indicates that people are more likely to emulate unethical leadership behavior than ethical (Padilla et al., 2007).

So, what is it about faculty work that can pose a challenge to ethical decision-making and practice? We argue that the combination of higher education culture and context, coupled with faculty members’ roles and responsibilities, could contribute to some of the intended or unintended unethical practices in academia. In terms of institutional culture and context, we argue that for all of its positives and strengths, higher education organizations can create their own culture that can inhibit ethical behavior (Salin & Hoel, 2011), especially when those

organizations experience high levels of VUCA (Bennet & Lemoine, 2014; LeBlanc, 2018). As for the faculty role, we argue that the faculty are often in a position of power and leadership, and with that position comes additional challenges to ethical practice.

Institutional Culture and Context.

The institution and institutional culture of higher education may normalize unethical practices. Keashley and Neuman (2010) found in their review of the literature that reported incidences of bullying were high in academic settings than in other sectors of employment. This may be due to the type of working environment and culture of the professoriate. In studies examining unethical research practices, researchers found that the factors that play a role are competition for funding and resources (Anderson et al., 2007), unclear or conflicting roles, and a publish or perish culture (Davis et al., 2007; Mumford et al., 2007). The literature on workplace bullying notes three types of climates that foster bullying: win-lose cultures, blaming cultures, and sacrificing everything for work cultures (Pilch & Turska, 2015; Wright & Smye, 1998). With many higher education institutions functioning within a neoliberal, academic capitalism framework (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), and the lack of work-life balance for many faculty (Denson et al., 2018), we surmise that there are many faculty working within at least one of these cultures with these factors.

There is another element of higher education culture pertaining to faculty life that we feel is important. Generally speaking, it may be taboo in academia to tell faculty what they should and should not do. As we think about the work that academic scholars do, inadvertently, we also look at the purposes of higher education as a whole. Gutmann (1987) notes that one of higher education's core purposes is to uphold a democratic society—not by an emphasis on instilling within students values like tolerance or truth-telling. Rather, the purpose is to serve as “protection against the threat of democratic tyranny,” also understood as preventing the control of the creation of ideas (Gutmann, 1987, p.174). Scholars like Gutmann (1987) and Bok (1982) argue that academic freedom and freedom of the academy are means by which higher education institutions can work towards that purpose. This freedom to pursue instruction and scholarship is key to faculty work (Boyer, 1990). However, it can be translated to how scholars act in their professional

roles and their ability to act with impunity (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). For example, there have been several scandals of tenured faculty at prestigious institutions behaving unethically for years, but institutions have been ineffective in stopping them (see Anderson's 2018 article "Academia's #MeToo moment: Women accuse professors of sexual misconduct").

Taking these institutional cultures and placing them in contexts experiencing high levels of VUCA may compound the ethical challenges that faculty may experience. Watt and colleagues (2017) discuss how organizations with high VUCA elements are excellent places for unethical behavior like toxic leadership to grow and flourish. In organizational environments with high levels of chaos, safeguards against toxic leadership like individual and collective accountability may not be available (Padilla et al., 2007; Watt et al., 2015). The result may be a fracturing of academic community or reduction in citizenship behaviors that normally can support an ethical environment.

Faculty Role.

It is not just the academy's institutional culture and norms that make us susceptible to unethical behavior. It is also the overall role and position of faculty in the institution. Ideally, the academic community can be envisioned as a collegial and cooperative community (Gappa & Austen, 2010). In practice, it can also be a community where power dynamics are often at play (Cowin et al., 2012).

Most faculty, both tenure-lined and non-tenure track, are in positions of power at their institutions (Robison & Gray, 2017), at least in the classroom setting. Even in the most democratic classrooms, the faculty member chooses to acknowledge their power and change the dynamic (hooks, 1994). The ability to make that choice in and of itself is a level of power and privilege. Moving beyond the classroom, as in any organization, some faculty have more power than others. For example, tenured faculty often have more power than non-tenure-track faculty, despite that at most institutions non-tenured faculty outnumber tenured significantly (Kezar & Maxey, 2014). We can see power dynamics between faculty and graduate students, as well as between faculty with similar ranking but different access to resources. There is also the

reported divide between faculty and administrative staff. This idea moves outside of the institution as well, with scholars having leadership positions or being experts in their field of research.

As faculty with power, it is vital to recognize our position includes a leadership role and that all faculty are leaders, albeit to different extents and in different situations (Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Robison & Gray, 2017). With a leadership position comes an additional set of challenges to ethical practice. First, research indicates that people in power tend to justify their actions through self-serving rationalizations at the cost of ignoring other people's plight and concerns (Keltner et al. 2006). In light of this finding then makes many of our own decisions and choices suspect, and some additional care may be warranted.

Second, leaders can also experience "instant entitlement bias" where they feel that they deserve a larger share of the reward or credit because of their position, even if it was designated arbitrarily (De Cremer et al., 2009). A concrete example of this phenomenon could be seen in the authorship in faculty-student partnerships where graduate students are at a distinct power disadvantage (Oberlander & Spencer, 2006; Welfare & Sackett, 2010). This bias may also play a role in how tenure-lined faculty make decisions that negatively affect non-tenure-track faculty (Kezar & Maxey, 2014), or how faculty choose to treat non-academic staff and administration (Keashley & Neuman 2010).

The third ethical challenge for faculty may be the lack of an ethical sounding board to review their decision-making. Research indicates that people are less likely to communicate to leaders about any issues or problems they are experiencing (Detert & Burris, 2007; Milliken et al., 2003). Another study found that leaders at the center of social professional networks often overestimate how much people agree with their ethical decisions (Flynn & Wiltermuth, 2010). People working with faculty, may feel uncomfortable expressing their concerns, especially if they are in precarious employment positions or unequal power dynamics. Even among colleagues with similar positions, our culture of collegiality and autonomy may prevent a dissenting voice (Keasley & Neuman, 2010). For scholars whose research focuses on ethical topics like social justice or equity, and even ethics itself, there might be an additional reason for people to remain quiet. If they are considered experts in that

field, any ethical dissent could be considered a challenge to their expertise.

We want to stress that it is not just faculty who are susceptible to unethical behavior. As people, despite our best intentions, we do not always engage in ethical practice. In their work, Bazerman, Chugh, and Banaji (2005) highlight unconscious biases that people may have that prevent them from making ethical decisions. This includes implicit stereotypes, in-group favoritism, conflicts of interest, and overclaiming credit (Bazerman et al., 2005). Bandura (1999) discusses how people morally disengage themselves so that they can make unethical decisions. However, given the types of culture that faculty experience and the nature of their work, we felt it important that these aspects are highlighted.

The Cyclical Nature of Ethical Sensemaking

Why not just “think” our way to better ethical practices and decisions? It seems that given enough time, information and reasoning, most faculty would be able to make ethical decisions most of the time. Most traditional descriptive models of ethical decision-making focus on the ways people make rational decisions with the best information they have at hand: deliberate, conscious decision-making (Rogerson et al., 2011; Sonenshein, 2007). Aligning with the trend in descriptive ethical decision-making models, prescriptive ethical decision-making models also follow suit by focusing on rational processing.

Many prescriptive ethical decision-making models focus on rational deliberation, usually with a rational-actor model implied within its steps (i.e., with enough information available, people will make the best choices). There is an abundance of literature exploring both the ethical decision-making process and ways for professionals in education to think about ethical dilemmas. For example, many applied ethics scholars suggest a series of steps to help make that decision (see Cooper, 2012; Hamrick & Benjamin, 2009; Wood & Hilton, 2015). Other scholars provide useful frameworks for examining dilemmas, like Shapiro and Stefkovitch’s (2016) multiple ethical paradigm model. Most of them share similar “steps” that include clarifying goals (short and long term), gathering facts, exploring available options and perspectives, weighing

consequences, making decisions, and finally monitoring outcomes for modification (Sam & Gupton, 2018).

The challenge with rationalizing ourselves into ethical behavior is that it may be necessary but not sufficient to change how we act. In the previous section, we see that we have implicit biases that we carry through our decision-making process that shape our practice. We also carry with us the social norms and expectations of the institutional culture, the work, and our past experiences. These are non-rational aspects of our decision-making, but they inform our current and future decision-making (Soneshein, 2007; Weick, 1995). This sensemaking process is cyclical, where our past decisions and outcomes inform the heuristics we use to make future decisions (Weick, 1995).

Ethical Sensemaking.

Sensemaking is the cognitive process of working “to understand novel, unexpected, or confusing events” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p.58). It also is how people actively participate in creating frameworks to help them understand an event or information that is different from what they are used to (Weick et al., 2005). When we think about events that can increase the VUCA elements in our working environments, sensemaking becomes even more important because we understand what is “normal” and acceptable under new and confusing circumstances.

Weick (1995) describes how sensemaking incorporates seven properties: grounded in identity, retrospective, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focused on cues, and driven by plausibility. Though each of these properties can help us understand how we come to understand our experiences, he argues that it is also where we can make mistakes in our sensemaking, causing errors in our judgment (Weick, 1995). For example, because sensemaking is focused on and by extracted cues, the information we find salient to the issue at hand is guided by our context, previous experience, and our dispositions (Weick, 1995). However, what that means is that we can miss important cues if they are outside of our experience. Similarly, our sensemaking is “driven by plausibility rather than accuracy” (Weick, 1995, p.55), where we gather enough information to create a narrative that we are comfortable with using and forge ahead with our decisions. The challenge to our sensemaking is that

it has the guise of reasoned and rational decision-making when so much of our sensemaking may be non-rational.

It follows then that our ethical decision-making also follows suit. According to ethical sensemaking theory (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015; Sonenshein, 2007), ethical decision-making is not a purely rational and deliberate act of reasoning and evaluation. Instead, ethical sensemaking acknowledges that there are nonrational processes that affect our decisions and behaviors. Research indicates that nonrational processes play an important role in our ethical practice. For example, Guillemin and Gillam's (2015) work emphasizes the role emotion plays in ethical practice, like the distinction between feelings of moral regret (feeling of doing something "prima facie wrong, but ethically justified overall") and moral distress (the feeling of doing something morally unjustified). (Guillemin & Gillam, 2015, p.729). Studies indicate that if we choose to ignore ethical issues long enough, the result could be an ethical insensitivity or even blindness to ethical issues (Palazzo et al., 2012). Nonrational processes also include our beliefs, expectations, and biases that are a product of our socialization and interactions with others (Weick, 1995).

With the challenges presented to our ethical sensemaking, how can faculty hope to improve their ethical practice? If our sensemaking is ongoing and retrospective, we can only understand a situation by looking back on it, but we are also constantly being pushed into newer situations (Weick, 1995). We try to make sense of new things by using our previous sensemaking, but we can be left making the same errors. What might be needed is a disruption to our sensemaking process, an interruption in the constant flow and the potential for an epistemological repositioning. We propose that one way to disrupt our sensemaking: ethical mindfulness.

Ethical Mindfulness

Originally proposed as a framework to attune researchers to the potential ethical decisions and dilemmas that may arise during their studies (Guillemin et al., 2009), we expand the idea of EM to attune faculty members to their ethical practice in all aspects of their work. As part of trying to be a more ethical professoriate, faculty would need to

recognize, consider, and take responsibility for their decisions' ethical implications. As noted earlier in the article, we build upon Guillemín and Gilliam's (2008) model of practice, more specifically to counter some of the challenges to our ethical sensemaking and to more explicitly include a space to learn from our ethical errors.

Two key caveats are needed before we continue. First, we are not claiming that EM is a process that will always result in ethical practice for faculty members, nor does it guarantee a moral outcome. Instead, we propose EM as a practice to provide faculty an opportunity to make sense of an issue and challenge norms they may take for granted. The hope is that the practice can lead to better thought-out decisions and choices. The second caveat is that the practice of EM does not replace prescriptive models of ethical decision-making. On the contrary, part of the practice is to incorporate those decision-making processes within its steps. However, ethical practice does not start when a person experiences an apparent ethical dilemma; it is tied with the very act of being and interacting with the world.

There are six activities associated with our version of EM. Guillemín and Gilliam's (2009; 2015) description of EM highlights five key aspects: 1. Being sensitized to "ethically important moments," (Guillemín & Gilliam, 2005) 2. Acknowledging these moments as significant, 3. Articulating the ethical implications, 4. Being reflexive and recognizing standpoints and limitations, and lastly 5. Being courageous. Though they propose this model to improve research ethics (2015), we have expanded the application to incorporate all types of faculty work. We also expand on their EM model by emphasizing critical reflexivity (Gergen, 2009), and adding a step 6. Taking responsibility. What follows are further descriptions of these activities, with examples from our own work experiences as faculty.

The first aspect of EM is a sensitivity to ethically important moments. This activity is vital because research indicates that there are several means by which people can fail to see the ethical implications of any situation, such as motivated blindness, where people choose to ignore ethical issues when "it is in their interest to remain ignorant" (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011, p. 60). There is also ethical fading where ethical components of decision-making become less salient to the person until they cannot see that component (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004), and

moral disengagement where people disconnect themselves from the ethical aspects of their behavior (Bandura, 2002). By acknowledging the ethically important moments, faculty members reassert their values and recognize how many of their decisions are linked to various individuals and communities.

In our own experiences, being sensitive to these moments illustrates how seemingly mundane decisions can have greater ethical implications. For example, as faculty who teach online graduate synchronous courses, we prefer to visually see students as a way to get non-verbal feedback and try and create a sense of classroom community similar to face-to-face courses. A simple solution would be to require that all students turn on their cameras during class time as part of their participation. What presents initially as a pedagogical choice might be an ethical one as we look further into how ideas of technological privilege and student dignity may come in conflict with our ideas of professional integrity and autonomy. This moment becomes even more salient given the contemporary context where online synchronous courses were the only options available to students and faculty.

The second aspect of EM is acknowledging those moments as significant. Just as we recognize that there are numerous opportunities for us to make ethical decisions, Guillemín et al. (2009) note that we also should recognize these opportunities as important. These moments speak to the personal values that we care about, and each moment is an opportunity to reaffirm or reject those values. Recognizing the significance of an ethical moment opens up space to explore the personal bias and cognitive dissonance that we experience (Chugh et al., 2005). In terms of ethical sensemaking, this step also recognizes that ethical moments are the ones that we use to help shape our moral identity and inform our future decisions.

For example, a few months ago, we experienced a significant ethical moment. A graduate student was presenting her research on the Black lesbian experience in a virtual session, a topic stemming from her identity. During the allotted question and answer period another graduate student offered a critique of the study design and casually mentioned that homosexuality is a product of white colonialism and not a part of Black culture. As one of the several faculty present in the public

session, we used our limited time to address the student's research critique but did not directly engage in the more inflammatory comment. By the time we realized that something more should have been said, the moment passed, and the session was over. This moment, though fleeting, is one that we think about often. We think about how we ethically failed and how we could do better the next time we find ourselves in a similar situation.

What is vital during this step is that the faculty view these moments and decisions as ethically relevant rather than brushing them aside as non-consequential. The ability to recognize that we are not our best, might also enable the exact times when we can grow.

The third part of EM is articulating ethical implications. The concept of ethical implications acknowledges that there is something "ethically at stake" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2015, p.729). Meaning the outcome of an ethically relevant dilemma will have consequences for all parties involved. For example, we are often faced with the choice to grant an incomplete for a course grade, which can impact a student's academic, socio-emotional, or physical well-being. There are also opportunity costs to consider. On a larger scale, the decision may even cause them to persist or leave higher education. There may be broader implications for first-generation and BIPOC if we become the barriers rather than facilitators for success. However, we have our professional standards and principles to uphold. We think about our professional ethics, personal values, and mores, and we have to weigh what may be lost or compromised, depending on our decision.

Articulating ethical implications is an activity where an individual considers multiple prescriptive ethical decision-making processes such as Hamrick and Benjamin's model (2009) or Wood and Hilton (2015). We also incorporate our professional ethics and normative standards such as virtue ethics or care ethics. This part of EM recognizes those rational decision-making processes as our way of articulating ethical implications and consequences of our decisions.

Being reflexive and recognizing standpoints and limitations is the fourth aspect of EM (Guillemin & Gillam, 2015). What is essential is to recognize that faculty decisions are not arbitrary. Our positionality and privilege play a role in academic decision-making. Thus, EM directs

towards considering and acknowledging our biases as part of the decision-making process. Reflexivity is finding the ways to question ourselves and our ways of thinking, and where we stand with others (Bolton, 2010). This action of acknowledging our standpoints and others' standpoints helps clarify our values and community further. Whether related to administration, instruction, or research, faculty members need to consider their relationship or the type of relationship they want with others. Part of reflexivity is to make clear the limitations to our understanding (Bolton, 2010).

However, for our EM practice, we would push the idea of being reflexive even further and move toward being “critically” reflexive. At this juncture, we would argue that within our reflexivity, “we must be prepared to doubt everything we have accepted as real, true, right, necessary or essential” (Gergen, 1999, p. 50). In this space of doubt, the real disruption to our sensemaking process can happen, and it can be an uncomfortable space to exist. It removes the surety of our convictions and directly challenges the idea that we are “moral, competent, and deserving” (Chugh, et al., p. 3). Critical reflexive practice is meant to be uncomfortable because learning can be uncomfortable, especially if it is about any weaknesses within ourselves (Brown, 2020). However, rather than avert or reduce that discomfort, we would argue that it is important to lean into it as part of the process of ethical practice. Similar to how vulnerability can open avenues to learn (Brown, 2020), we argue that this doubt that can leave us open to listening to others and making changes if we have erred in our judgment. Being critically reflexive will not lead to a definitive answer, but it will clarify how various actions will impact all parties involved.

Being critically reflexive means examining our biases and worldviews and thinking about how they may affect our decision-making. An example from our experiences as pre-tenure faculty is the need to re-examine the practices we have been socialized to accept as the norm. The narrative of sacrificing work-life balance for research productivity is a common narrative we experience, and it can be difficult not to impose that narrative on other newer scholars. Similarly, we have to critically explore our motives and intentions related to teaching and advising. Are we more demanding of a student because of high expectations or because of academic hazing? In each of these examples, we pause to critically

reflect on our actions and intentions and align them with our personal and professional values.

Being courageous is the fifth component of EM. There are implications for any decision, but from an EM perspective, those implications reflect the recognition that this is a significant ethical moment that requires considered judgment on the part of ourselves and others before taking action. Kidder and Born (2002), use the term “moral courage” as the ability to act on your decisions and accepting the consequences that may follow. In some cases, being courageous may result in removing the veneer of “neutrality” that academics often use to coat their decisions. Further, being courageous also entails resistance to the pressure to maintain neutrality or the status quo. Ethical decisions may require breaking long-held norms and values. It is crucial to recognize and discuss the power these norms and values hold and to discuss why a transition is necessary.

In our experiences, some of the more demanding acts of courage are the spaces where we have to challenge the decisions and practices of the colleagues we like and respect, especially senior faculty members. Related to the ethically significant moment we mentioned previously, and after later conversations with graduate students, we initiated a conversation with the faculty council about the homophobia some of our students experienced. We had to be transparent in our missteps, and we put the onus on faculty to think about how we may be failing to support our LGBTQIA students and push actionable change forward.

The final component of EM is taking responsibility. While not explicitly included in Guillemain and Gillam’s (2015) original five aspects, we add taking responsibility to the EM practice to make salient that we are held accountable for our choices and actions. Being courageous is essential, but academics also need to be responsible for the outcomes of our deliberations. Taking responsibility also means recognizing that there are times when our judgments were incorrect or that we acted in an unethical manner towards people (either intentionally or unintentionally). If it turns out that we had made mistakes, taking responsibility includes righting wrongs to the best of our ability and re-evaluating the situation and ourselves. If we have been critically reflexive enough, it means we have enough doubt to recognize that there may have been a better course

of action, and taking responsibility is part of the cost of trying to be a better ethical person.

As we re-examined our previous decision to make it a requirement for all students to turn on their cameras during class—after some careful deliberation, dialogue with other higher education professors and students, weighing the benefits and disadvantages, and examining of our ideas of engagement and participant—we determined that we needed to revise our original stance. We decided that our course of action was to be accountable in revising the course policy and be transparent with the students about our decisions. In addition to addressing the original error, we felt it was also important to model this final component of EM for our graduate students.

Conclusion

Employing EM as a practice is not a guarantee for making a correct decision. Rather EM makes us aware that academic decisions are ethical decisions with ethical implications. Ethical mindfulness helps us consider the implications and encourages us to be courageous in speaking truth to power and taking responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Currently, higher education institutions are experiencing high levels of VUCA. They are experiencing massive financial cutbacks due to a lack of enrollment and reduced governmental funding, and those insecurities are making their way into faculty work and decision-making. It might be fair to say that all academic decisions have financial implications. Though financial implications are important, there are also ethical implications in our work, and we cannot allow that component to fade.

Implications for Practice

EM offers multiple implications for practices at individual and organizational levels. At the individual level, we suggest exploring ways to integrate EM into facets of academic life. Begin with examining prescriptive ethical models or narratives and then integrating EM into those models where appropriate. For example, while faculty receive training related to the institutional review board and research ethics, codes of conduct, plagiarism, student information privacy, they are rarely

informed about the broader, more nuanced forms of ethical decision-making. Beyond prescriptive policies, faculty rarely consider the ethics of their work. At an individual level, faculty can critically reflect on their socialization and begin to think of strategies to change their interactions with colleagues and students. Developing a sensitivity to ethical situations and engaging in critically reflective practice can help faculty integrate EM into various areas of their academic work.

At the organizational level, we suggest that faculty leaders examine their college, department, program, or center culture and ask how EM fits with current practices or how those practices might be adapted to integrate aspects of EM. Are academic decisions made with ethical considerations in mind? What institutional mechanisms encourage critical reflection and accountability in decision-making? At the organizational level, EM encourages faculty leaders to move beyond compliance and towards adaptive learning organizations. Towards this end, colleges, departments, and programs might want to develop cultures of discussion and reflection on academic life.

Implications for Research

The EM framework gives higher education scholars some avenues for exploration in terms of research and faculty work. One of the avenues is exploring biases that faculty may have when thinking about work in teaching, research, or service. There is already work on racial and gender bias that faculty both exhibit and have experienced (e.g. Eaton et al., 2020; Jayakumar et al., 2009). Building on that literature and the faculty socialization literature, there is room to explore the different assumptions about work and how that may shape our decision-making and ethical practices. Another avenue is a continued exploration of the professoriate's unethical practices, but rather than focusing on the larger transgressions (McFarlane et al., 2014), it may be useful to explore the organizational factors that hinder or promote ethical behavior specific to faculty work.

Developing EM also means that we must grow accustomed to the uncomfortable space where we must re-examine our motivations, our options, and the consequences of our actions--and ultimately make a choice. That understanding alone places a daunting task upon the individual to be cognizant of their decisions, but it also can place a moral

imperative on the person to “do the right thing” whatever that may be. Though there can never be a flawless individual that always chooses the most ethical outcome, EM as a practice can be a way to continue our own personal vigilance to be ethical in our practice. It re-centers our perspective of work as one filled with a myriad of ethical opportunities. Through reflexive practice found in EM, we can continue to grow and learn personally and professionally. As scholars, we will not always make the best ethical decisions, but we can learn from our past decisions and develop insights shared with our community. In EM, we can always become better with each opportunity.

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