Preface: Multiple Perspectives on the Ethical Issues of Globalization

This introduction to the book will provide an integrative and structured overview of emerging ethical issues of life in virtual worlds with a focus on the content of the volume. First, it will present a short discussion of the effect globalization has had on developments in applied ethics. Then it will summarize, contrast, emphasize, and seek to integrate the various contributions made by the various authors. The emphasis in this chapter, as for all chapters in the book, will be on bringing the effects of the globalized economy on standards of ethics in business into focus.

In the 21st century human society has become a global community in which technology, commerce, and industry has forged new links across national and cultural borders. While globalization offers large scale changes to national governments, education, and international business, it also promises change at the level of the individual human being. The effect of globalization on the individual raises ethical questions that demand answers. Does globalization harm human beings? What is fair treatment and how should this affect how globalization is regulated? Does globalization produce instances of the exploitation of certain groups such as populations in the developing world, children, women, and those living in poverty? How can ethically informed policy decisions be made in a world of heterogeneous values, cultural practices, and moral norms? As the global market grows by leaps and bounds, research is needed that proposes norms and practices that ensure the appropriate level of ethical concern for those who both contribute to the process of globalization and are being affected by globalization. This volume presents a comprehensive selection of research aimed at both offering solutions to these questions and further delineating the scope and nature of the ethical issues of globalization in the hope of guiding the further research needed to offer solutions to the ethical dilemmas of globalization.


The chapters of this volume broadly fall into two topical categories: chapters that model new approaches to ethical decision making that are sensitive to the global context, and chapters that analyze particular ethical issues for which a global context prompts us to reconsider based on the realities of who is harmed or exploited by practices associated with globalization. Philosophical models for global
ethics are developed from numerous cultural and historical contexts including Indian Vedic philosophy, Roman Catholic social thought, philosophical cosmopolitanism, value emotivism, and embodied ethics. Each of these chapters offers an approach to global ethics that is both innovative and heavily informed by ethical traditions from across the globe. Among the particular ethical issues parsed by chapters in this volume include the effects of globalization on business strategy, business regulatory policy, Information Technology, labor practices, healthcare, tourism and women and, additionally, considers the ethical implications of those effects. Often it is shown that initial assumptions and predictions concerning what is ethical is not always accurate and that often policies and practices intended to benefit individuals in fact cause harm and produce inequalities. These conclusions force us, then, to reconsider what in fact we ought to do in the course of advancing the project of globalization. Instead of exclusively questioning the ultimate ethical value of globalization, this volume takes the development of a global community as a fact of life in the 21st century. The aim of the scholarly work of this volume’s contributing authors is to put forward empirically grounded ways of understanding both the effects that the process of globalization has on ethical practices in organizations and how studying these effects can reciprocally shape the course of economic globalization.

In Chapter 1, “Globalization and International Labor Standards, Codes of Conduct, and Ethics: An International HRM Perspective,” Dennis Briscoe examines the ethical challenges that the process of globalization presents to the field of human resource management. Briscoe argues that cultures and legal systems have not evolved at the same rate as the global economy and, as a result, it is not always clear how to ethically manage human resources in an international context. To illustrate this point, the chapter offers examples of ethical dilemmas faced in international human resource management and analyzes the nature of programs and policies that meet with ethical criticism. Additionally, the chapter assesses numerous responses to the problems associated with international human resource management, such as international regulations and proposed ethical guidelines. The chapter concludes that, while many attempts have been made to ethically improve international human resource policies, more progress is needed and that essentially it is up to managers and their organizations to reform company ethical guidelines in response to always evolving international standards.

In Chapter 2, “Embodied Ethics for Our Interdependent World: How Our Micro-Level Choices Lead to Macro-Level Impacts,” Julianne Maurseth proposes a model of ethical decision making that is geared specifically to counteract the difficulties that globalization poses for ethical choices that is informed by human empathy. By becoming increasingly aware of human physical responses to moments of ethical choice, Maurseth argues that human beings can achieve increased levels of self-reflection and self-assessment. In doing so, humans become more aware of their own empathic connections to other human beings in a way that facilitates ethical insights that are not predetermined by cultural norms.

In Chapter 3, “Unintended Consequences of Business with 4 Billion: Lessons Learned from First Generation BOP Strategies,” Nancy Landrum analyzes the ethical consequences of “base of the pyramid” business strategies. The chapter begins with a presentation of “base of the pyramid” business strategy, which is described as the intentional selling to individuals in the lowest rung of economic prosperity in order increase their standard of living through producing and distributing products in ways that are sensitive to individual cultures and local environments while remaining profitable endeavors. The chapter goes on to present instances of “base of the pyramid” business strategies that have in fact caused unintended harm to the individuals, cultures, and environments that they were meant to benefit. The chapter concludes by presenting examples and guidelines for second generation “base of the pyramid”
business strategies that are meant to correct the unintended consequences of the initial BOP model for ethical global business strategy.

In Chapter 4, “Racing to the Bottom? The Effects of Globalization on Global Ethics,” Barbara Ritter, argues that, while globalization has positive economic effects, it has often resulted in a “race to the bottom” in terms of ethical business standards. That is, companies and nations will competitively lower ethical standards in response to the economic opportunities afforded by globalization. The chapter presents examples from and analysis of cases of “race to the bottom” practices in developing nations. It goes on to assess the situation in the American workplace and whether or not “race to the bottom” practices are problems exclusive to the developing world. The chapter concludes that there is a need to shift how firms view how business ought to be done, transitioning from the framework first proposed by Milton Freidman to one that focuses on corporate social responsibility as central principle for business practice.

In Chapter 5, “Globalization in Benedict XVI’s Caritas in Veritate,” Patrick Flanagan presents an approach to ethics in the sphere of global business developed from the perspective of a major world religion, Roman Catholicism. In the chapter Flanagan traces the complex history of the Roman Catholic Church’s social teaching concerning ethical practice in business based on Catholic theological views about the inherent dignity of the human person. The chapter goes on to consider Caritas in Veritate, the most recent Papal encyclical concerning economic globalization, which advocates “people-centered” ethics and an international regulatory organization.

In Chapter 6, “ICT Ethical Issues, Globalization and Knowledge Society,” Maslin Masrom and Zuraini Ismail parse the ethical issues of information and communication technology and the phenomenon of economic globalization. The chapter argues that, given the importance of knowledge as a commodity in a globalized economy fueled by 21st century Information Technology, the new global economic community can be understood as a “knowledge society.” Employing this “knowledge society” concept, the chapter frames the ethical issues of global information and communication technology. The chapter begins by presenting the important contemporary ethical issues of information technology including, the “digital divide” between rich and poor, cybercrime, digital technology, human rights, and gender equality. The chapter goes on to introduce the notion of “knowledge society” and concludes by arguing that employing the “knowledge society” concept can help frame discourse in such a way that can advance societal transformation, wealth generation, and ethical research in which ICT ethical issues are the mainstream foci of investigation.

In Chapter 7, “An Eastern Approach to the Global Challenge of Corruptibility,” Dennis P. Heaton and Ravi Subramanian present a model for the development of ethical character that employs Eastern psychological views about transcendental consciousness. This, they argue, can be utilized to realize the ethical stance of “incorruptibility” defined as reliable resistance to temptation to behave unethically and a firm conviction to work for the benefit of the public good over personal group benefits. The chapter begins by arguing that “corruption” is a pervasive ethical failing that is evident in the history of economic globalization. It goes on to present evidence in support of the contention that current attempts to overcome pervasive corruption in global business have not been as effective as could be desired. In response to this challenge to overcome corruptibility, the authors present a model of moral development derived from the Vedic literature of Southern Asia, which can be practically implemented through the Yogic practice of transcendental meditation. The chapter concludes presenting evidence for the effectiveness of the proposed Eastern approach to ethical self-governance.

In Chapter 8, “Health Ethics in a Global Context,” Win Phillips and Cheryl Rathert present a comprehensive selection of ethical issues in the field of healthcare and consider them within the context of
globalization. The chapter begins by parsing the effects that economic globalization specifically has had on the healthcare industry. The chapter goes on to consider the effects of globalization on health determinants such as increased food production, access to pharmaceuticals, and the reduction of poverty. The authors offer a balanced account of how globalization has not completely been either beneficial or detrimental to the overall health of the world. The chapter then parses the effects of globalization on healthcare practices and standards. To provide an ethical framework to assess the issues that the chapter brings up, the authors then present various meta-ethical theories such as deontology and utilitarianism from which one can assess the effects of globalization. The chapter continues by applying these ethical frameworks in order to consider activities that affect multiple individuals and societies across the globe and concludes by providing some suggestions for further research.

In Chapter 9, “Women and Globalization,” Mercedes Sánchez-Apellániz, Miriam Núñez, and María José Charlo-Molina analyze the effect of globalization on women and assess its ethical importance. The chapter begins by arguing that the most important variable in assessing the ethical impact of globalization on women is quality of life. The authors go on to analyze the economic and socioeconomic factors that contribute to quality of life. Evidence is then presented indicating that globalization has in fact been detrimental to women’s quality of life across the globe by increasing existing inequality. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research in order to better understand the cultural and institutional changes needed to ensure globalization has a positive impact on women.

In Chapter 10, “Fighting Hunger the Rights Way: Using Videogames and Children’s Human Rights Education as a Means of Promoting Global Citizenship,” Katherine Covell and Robin MacLean offer an innovative method of teaching global citizenship that advances the cause of reducing global hunger. The chapter begins with an explanation of the goals of citizenship education and the specific model of a rights-based approach to citizenship education that is intended to make people into truly global citizens. The authors go on to assess the potential of using gaming media to implement this educational model through a case-study of Food Force, a game developed to educate children about the world hunger. The authors argue that this sort of approach, which is particularly appealing to children, can be effective in increasing awareness and prompting humanitarian action.

In Chapter 11, “Giving Voice to Values: A New Perspective on Ethics in Globalised Organizational Environments,” Mark Edwards, David A. Webb, Stacie Chappell, and Mary C. Gentile propose a model of practical business ethics that aims at facilitating the expression and implementation of the people’s values at multiple levels of social interaction. The “Giving Voice to Values” model is contrasted with “bad apple” and “bad barrel” approaches to business ethics, which either place responsibility for ethical decision making on the character, on the individual, or the overall ethical environment of the organization in question. Instead, the GVV-model proposes that ethical dialog and decision making ought to occur within a context of a shared values-based discussion that is sensitive to the particular ethical opinions of parties under the conditions of globalization and facilitate the achievement of consensus about core-values shared by multiple parties. The chapter presents the practical GVV model and mobilizes numerous cases in support of the effectiveness of shared values-based ethical discussion in meeting the ethical needs of the globalized community. In support of the GVV-model, the authors analyze organizational culture in terms of multiple, inter-related levels of social complexity and apply the GVV-model to each. They conclude by arguing how the GVV-model can contribute to a systematic global ethics that both attempts to achieve value consensus across disparate cultures and provokes ethical action and leadership by example.
In Chapter 12, “Ethical Issues Concerning International Labor Migration: Indonesian Cases,” Al-ouis Nugroho and Ati Cahayani present case studies of Indonesian labor migration in order to illustrate the global ethical issue of labor migration in the developing world. The authors examine the particular cultural atmosphere and economic realities of the Indonesian workforce and go on to parse the unethical practices Indonesian workers confront both in Indonesia when attempting to find work, when they are actually working overseas, and after their return to Indonesia. The chapter concludes with an examination of the implications of Indonesian labor migration through the lens of meta-ethical theory and argues that an emphasis on fairness is required in considering practical suggestions for dealing with labor migration in the global economy.

In Chapter 13, “Ethics of Global Tourism,” Loykie Lomine considers the practice of global tourism and considers whether it is unethical to visit particular destinations and whether some forms of tourism are unethical. The chapter proceeds by examining cases that support the contention that certain destinations and forms of tourism associated with an increasingly global community are in fact unethical. The author goes on to conceptualize the ethics of global tourism via the notions of environmental sustainability and exploitation, arguing that ethically assessing global tourism with reference to these key notions can more clearly identify what is wrong with a given case and illuminate ways in which correction and appropriate redress of the situation can be achieved. The chapter concludes by considering some of the contemporary attempts to regulate global tourist practice and the progress that has been made and still needs to be made to global tourist industry.

In Chapter 14, “Cosmopolitanism and Ethics: Ethical Dilemmas in the Implementation of the Cosmopolitan Ideal,” Roman Sukholutsky considers the philosophical theory of cosmopolitanism and its potential as a practical model for globally sensitive ethics. The author’s central thesis is that the failure of cosmopolitanism to be adopted at the global level is a result of a failure to develop a praxis-oriented political ideology from the principles of cosmopolitanism. The chapter begins by analyzing the concept of cosmopolitanism defined as global citizenship and argues in favor of the adoption of cosmopolitanism at the global level. The author goes on to diagnose the causes of cosmopolitanism’s failure to be adopted on a widespread scale by contrasting it with political theories and ideologies that have been able to affect the global community in a lasting way. The author analyzes the strengths of political ideologies for the purpose of adoption and concludes by incorporating these insights into the framework of cosmopolitanism in order to propose a model of cosmopolitanism as a political ideology.

In Chapter 15, “Corporate Social Responsibility in Water Services: A Developing Country Perspective,” George Tsogas considers whether the principles of corporate social responsibility are relevant and applicable to the public service industry. The chapter focuses on the public water service industry in the developing world. It begins with a stakeholder analysis of water service in the developing world and goes on to consider the relation of the private sector to the water industry. The chapter then argues how the water service industry presents unique ethical challenges to the field of corporate social responsibility. The chapter concludes with suggestions for how to develop an industry-wide approach to promote corporate social responsibility that is more effective than those simply promulgating individual codes of conduct in individual companies.

In Chapter 16, “A Critical Examination of the Assumptions, Beliefs and Ethical Considerations that Underlie Business Models of Global Poverty Reduction,” Roberts, Rimanoczy, and Lassaga consider and defend “base of the pyramid” business strategies aimed at reducing global poverty and increasing well-being on a global scale. The chapter begins with a thorough analysis of “base of the pyramid” strategy and goes on to discuss objections to the BOP model and replies to the criticisms present in the literature.
From these debates in the literature, the authors distill the fundamental assumptions of the BOP business model and their overall relation to globalization. Based on these results, the authors parse the various ethical considerations of global poverty elimination. The chapter concludes with suggestions as to how to develop a model of corporate global citizenship that can incorporate the results of considering the BOP models strengths and weaknesses.

In Chapter 17, “Band-Aid Pedagogy, Celebrity Humanitarianism, and Cosmopolitan Provincialism: A Critical Analysis of Global Citizenship Education,” Audrey Bryan assesses the educational models of corporate global citizenship employed in the educational system of Ireland. The chapter begins by parsing the current educational models and norms in practice in Ireland and how they are related to the concept of global citizenship as it is considered in the developed world. The chapter then goes on to consider how the notion “global” is conceptualized in Irish education and argues that the current way that it is conceptualized actually makes it less likely that the current curriculum will educate in such a way that could produce positive ethical change. The chapter concludes by suggesting how, what the author calls the “band-aid” approach to education of the ethical issues of globalization, can be reformed so as to produce the positive change that global citizenship is intended to produce.

Throughout all the chapters of this volume, a few clear lessons can be distilled. Globalization is a phenomenon that has the potential to drastically change what it means to live, work, and thrive for individuals in every nation and, as such, globalization has the potential to change how human beings think about what is right to do and how to determine what is right to do. Instead of taking a particular side in the traditional debate between ethical realists and ethical relativists, globalization provides an opportunity to chart a course between these philosophical positions. As is shown in numerous chapters in this volume, what seems to be a universally true ethical standard or practice can in fact violate intuitive norms of fairness and inadvertently harm individuals in a globalized situation. Likewise, accepting particular cultural norms unreflectively can produce similar instances of unfairness or harm. To act ethically in a globalized world, one must both determine what values and norms are common to all people and remain sensitive to the differences present in the global community. From the chapters in this volume, it seems clear that the guiding notions of global ethics are fairness and harm. An ethical practice or principle in the globalized world is one that is fair to all concerned parties and one which does not cause harm. How exactly harm prevention and fairness are realized is an issue that can only be determined through continued research of cases and situations.

The central insight of the work in this volume is that while globalization may force all people to reconsider what they ought to do in particular situations, the central notions guiding ethical practice, norms, and theories remain the same. Fairness and prevention of harm are ethical intuitions shared by the human family yet manifest themselves in human conduct differently across cultures. The ethics of globalization, then, is an opportunity to discover the shared values of all peoples and in doing so bring the human family together in a culturally and economically interconnected community in which these values can be realized.

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REFERENCES


