



ISSUES IN RECREATION AND LEISURE

ETHICAL
DECISION
MAKING

DONALD J. MCLEAN
DANIEL G. YODER

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Ethical Decision Making

Donald J. McLean
and
Daniel G. Yoder



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P.O. Box 5076

Champaign, IL 61825-5076

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475 Devonshire Road Unit 100

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Europe: Human Kinetics

107 Bradford Road

Stanningley

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Australia: Human Kinetics

57A Price Avenue

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5062

08 8277 1555

e-mail: liaw@hkaustralia.com

New Zealand: Human Kinetics

Division of Sports Distributors

NZ Ltd.

P.O. Box 300 226 Albany

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0064 9 448 1207

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Issues in Recreation and Leisure

Preface

Can you tell me, Socrates—is virtue something that can be taught? Or does it come by practice? Or is it neither teaching nor practice that gives it to a man but natural aptitude or something else?

Plato

Since the time of the ancient Greeks, philosophers have debated whether it is possible to teach people to be ethical. It is the premise of this book that all individuals working in leisure services can improve their ability to deal with moral issues. The techniques of moral reasoning presented in these pages can help you make better ethical decisions, act fairly and consistently, and experience less personal and professional trauma. Our goal is not to present solutions to moral dilemmas but to enable leisure and recreation providers like yourself to systematically manage ethical issues. While intuitive understanding of right and wrong are important elements for making ethical decisions, all of us can benefit from learning a logical problem-solving method and then honing our newly acquired skills for resolving dilemmas. Indeed, traditional professions have increasingly recognized that fact and now require their members to receive formalized instruction in applied ethics. Leisure and recreation providers must not only do the same but also take a leadership role in promoting ethics in the workplace.

Teaching and learning applied ethics is a complex task requiring students and instructors to master a comprehensive understanding of how moral dilemmas can be justly resolved. In this book you will learn techniques and guidelines that you can use to develop sound approaches to ethical problem solving. Along with understanding techniques for dealing with dilemmas, you will also develop an appreciation of your own roles and responsibilities as a leisure and recreation provider. You will learn that your ability to resolve ethical dilemmas is enhanced when you are able to use your judgment to marry techniques of moral decision making to the broader values and service traditions unique to the leisure and recreation field.

The existing ethics-oriented literature in recreation and leisure studies has primarily focused on the macro issues of leisure values and lifestyles and the roles and status of leisure and recreation providers. Little effort has been given to exploring the micro issues of how these providers should implement their value systems on a daily basis to resolve actual ethical dilemmas. It is as though academics believe that by understanding the broad philosophic foundations of the leisure field, practitioners will intuitively know how to deal with moral dilemmas when they arise. We believe that this trickle down theory of moral knowledge is unlikely to provide much practical guidance unless it is complemented with training in applying moral theory to actual leisure and recreation dilemmas. It is perhaps wise to remind ourselves that the root of the word *ethics* means *habit*, and that Aristotle conceived moral reasoning as primarily a practical matter of learning good habits rather than a theoretical discipline focused on increasing one's knowledge of abstract concepts.

Most North American recreation, park, tourism, and sport management programs in higher education have similar curricula. Four years of leadership, programming, and administration classes cover the "what is" of the field. Then, a capstone class addresses prominent leisure-related issues, exposing students to the "what should be" of the field. This book is ideal for such classes as well as for upper-level undergraduate and graduate philosophy of leisure courses and professional ethics classes.

Features and Benefits

Several features of this book make it an ideal selection for a variety of recreation-related courses.

- This text carefully and concisely blends essential theoretical elements with practical applications in diverse situations, so students do not need two or three expensive and redundant books for the class.
- This book contributes to meeting multiple standards in the National Recreation and Park Association accreditation guidelines relating to ethical professional practice and service delivery.
- Each chapter begins with goals for what you should learn in that chapter and ends with discussion questions to help you better understand what you have learned.
- Numerous examples and vignettes illustrate how the principles can be applied. These illustrations correspond to different sectors in the field, including several situations you are likely to encounter in your own career.

- Ethical dilemmas are common themes in popular culture, especially movies. While some movies treat ethical situations superficially, others expose these individual and societal struggles. Throughout the book, Related Films sidebars encourage you to reflect on relevant films you may have already seen or inform you of movies that may help you develop a more comprehensive understanding of the particular situations.

- A three-step model for ethical decision making and acting, the crucial link between theory and practice, is thoroughly explored. Familiarity with the model is the first step in developing the habits that lead to ethical thought and action.

- Eight detailed case studies allow you to actually practice using the model. These cases are the result of the authors' experiences in a wide range of leisure service settings in the United States and Canada over the past 20 years. Questions at the end of each case study help you negotiate your way through what may seem like impossible dilemmas. These questions also give you the opportunity to reflect on the problem-solving process, perhaps even to customize the basic model that will work most effectively for you in your particular occupation.

- Each chapter contains Learning Activities that you can undertake in and outside of the class to enhance your understanding of important concepts.

- Finally, this textbook has been tested in classrooms since 2003. Both authors teach ethics classes, one at the undergraduate level and the other at the graduate level. Through classroom trial and error and a great deal of student feedback, we have refined the material, clarified key components, determined and then emphasized material that resonates with students, and eliminated material that is irrelevant or lackluster.

How to Use This Text

The format of the book provides flexibility for instructors to choose both the thematic areas they wish to teach and the depth to which they want to investigate a particular topic. This is especially important given the variations in park and recreation curricula in North America. Courses that meet 1 hour a week might use only the initial chapters and focus on one particular area of service delivery. This approach would be particularly advantageous for a course in professional ethics that is intended to target the needs of a particular group of students (e.g., professional ethics for therapeutic recreation students). A course that meets 2 hours a week might cover more, possibly all, the subfields of service delivery. Instructors of

courses that meet 3 hours a week would be well served by using the entire book—the introductory chapters, subfield chapters, detailed case studies, and appendix. In addition, the way the book integrates literature from both leisure studies and applied ethics provides several supplemental sources for instructors to turn to should they want to investigate a particular ethical principle or debate in greater detail.

To most effectively serve students and instructors, the text is divided into three parts and an appendix. Throughout the course of the book and within each of the three parts, we progress from the general to the specific. This is consistent with our commitment to blending theory and application.

Part I

The first part of the book lays out several themes to build a solid foundation for the material that follows in parts II and III.

- Chapter 1 disputes the widespread belief that this field is little more than trivial pleasure pursuits. In reality, we are in a position to profoundly influence individuals and groups through our thinking and actions.
- Chapter 2 argues that the line between good and evil is not so easily discerned and acting ethically is not as easy as it may seem. Milgram's experiment is used to show the fine line between good and bad, while Kohlberg's theories of human development are examined to give insight into levels of ethical judgment. Rest's Defining Issues Test allows students to gauge their own moral development.
- Moral reasoning is the subject of chapter 3, and we offer three basic approaches to determining moral actions. The uses and limitations of consequence-based, rule-based, and virtue-based approaches to ethics are explained.
- Drawing upon the first three chapters, chapter 4 offers a logical model for ethical decision making and acting. Stage 1 helps students identify the moral dilemma, stage 2 addresses what is praiseworthy and what is blameworthy, and stage 3 helps students devise a moral action plan. A detailed example illustrates the key components of the model.

Part II

The second part of the book focuses on several prominent issues within well-established subfields of leisure services. Because new areas in leisure services develop every few years, this section does not attempt to be fully

inclusive. We include chapters on community recreation and therapeutic recreation, for example, but we do not devote a chapter to correctional recreation that takes place in jails and prisons across North America. Although correctional recreation has its share of ethical dilemmas, including whether incarcerated individuals even have a right to recreation, this emerging subfield is so new that a lengthy treatment is not warranted at this time. In addition to pointing out key ethical topics, each chapter in this part considers the most common pitfalls that thwart the making of good ethical decisions in that particular subfield.

- Chapter 5 addresses ethical situations in community recreation and warns about naive legalism, or overreliance on the law.
- Chapter 6, devoted to commercial recreation, considers a wide variety of ethical quandaries that reflect the remarkable diversity of this subfield. The nature of commercial recreation also lends itself to a discussion of the seductive dangers of egoism.
- Chapter 7, on therapeutic recreation, considers special situations in that field and cautions about relying too much on codes of conduct.
- Chapter 8 addresses ethical dilemmas in outdoor recreation and points out that we must be willing to evaluate some of our long-held beliefs if we are to think and act ethically.
- Chapter 9 discusses issues in tourism and warns about the dangers of ethical relativism.

Part III

Part III brings together the previously discussed material, both theoretical and practical, as it looks toward the future.

- Chapter 10 addresses the topic of professionalism and its relationship to leisure services. After considering different definitions and qualities of professions, we examine the characteristics of leisure and recreation services. We ask readers two questions at the end of this chapter—first, if any or all leisure services subfields currently qualify as professions, and second, what the consequences and responsibilities might be for future personnel if the field is granted full professional status.
- The conclusion, chapter 11, is consistent with the rest of the book in that we offer no easy answers. Rather, we advise readers to thoughtfully and systematically resolve the issues they face in their field while considering themselves, other individuals, and society.

• Chapter 12 provides several detailed case studies for you to try out the decision-making model and refine your newly acquired knowledge in a safe environment. The case studies are the result of the authors' experiences and a thorough review of contemporary dilemmas in leisure services. The questions at the end of each case study are an extension of the problem-solving model offered in chapter 4. Although each set of questions is specific to the case study they follow, they follow a basic template. In this final chapter you will find stories about:

- A nature center with several mounts of game animals
- An employee who is less than honest on the water-quality reports at an aquatics facility
- A dispute over who has the right to use a river in the western United States
- A museum display about lynching
- A college athlete who is also a stripper at a local bar
- An agency director who is misusing grant funds
- A struggle over who can do what on public trails
- A girl who refuses to wear her team's jersey with the name of a local bar on it

When students of leisure and recreation sport services embark on their career, they should feel confident that they have the means to systematically resolve the ethical issues they will inevitably face in their professional life. A curriculum that includes courses specifically devoted to ethics provides students with such confidence and greatly enhances their chances of success. Ultimately, this book will assist and encourage faculty to help students from a wide range of disciplines improve their ability to function as ethically mature and competent human beings.

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This book was written at a particularly difficult time for my family: my wife Sheila had been diagnosed with cancer in March of 2002. I cannot begin to express my appreciation for the support that family, friends, colleagues, and students have generously given to us. Their help has kept our daughter Jaime, Sheila, and me going forward with our lives. I would like to extend special thanks to my co-author Dan Yoder, who selflessly took on the lion's share of the writing for this book. I would also like to thank our editors, Gayle Kassing and Ray Vallese, for their patience and understanding. Sherie Brigham deserves thanks for her expert proofreading of the final text. Finally, I would like to give honorable mention to the alumni of my RPTA 399 and 515 classes. You served as both inspiration and guinea pig to what appears in the pages that follow. I wish all of you well in your journey through life.

—Don McLean

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—Dan Yoder

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Foundations

The Need for Ethics in Recreation and Leisure Services

Recreation and leisure services is a relatively new field that is an important part of postindustrial societies. While people have always engaged in play, it was not until the 20th century that a person could expect to earn a living by facilitating the fun of others. The rapid growth of organized leisure services makes the recreation field an exciting place to work. Every year, new forms of recreational activity are introduced as people seek novel and diverse experiences in their leisure time, which means new opportunities for employment are continually created. While the stereotypical career goal of a recreation major is to become a park ranger, students have an incredibly wide range of career options. They may find themselves working in hospitals, community centers, theme parks, museums, corporations, government agencies, nonprofit agencies—the list goes on and on. This range of opportunities makes it difficult to identify a single specific career within the recreation