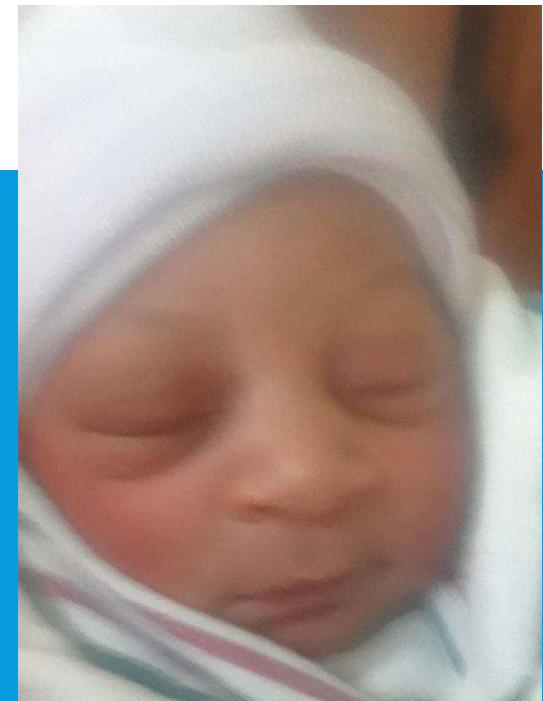


THE ETHICS OF INTERCULTURAL TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Dan Voss and Bethany Aguad

STC Florida Chapter

Educational Workshop, November 21, 2019



MIKE MURRAY 'MAKE A DIFFERENCE' SCHOLARSHIP LEGACY

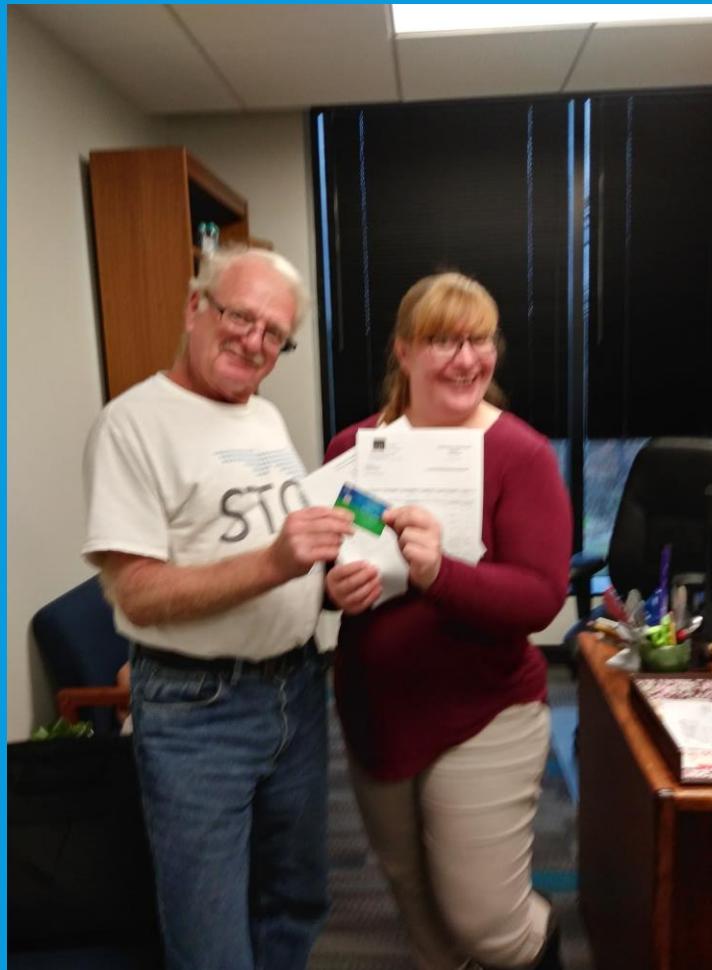


- UCF School of Communication Sciences and Disorders to Benefit
- Be Like Mike: Make a Difference
- Contributions to the Mike Murray Make a Difference Scholarship Fund can be made via check or credit card to the UCF Foundation.

TALES FROM THE INTERGALACTIC CRYPT, PART 1



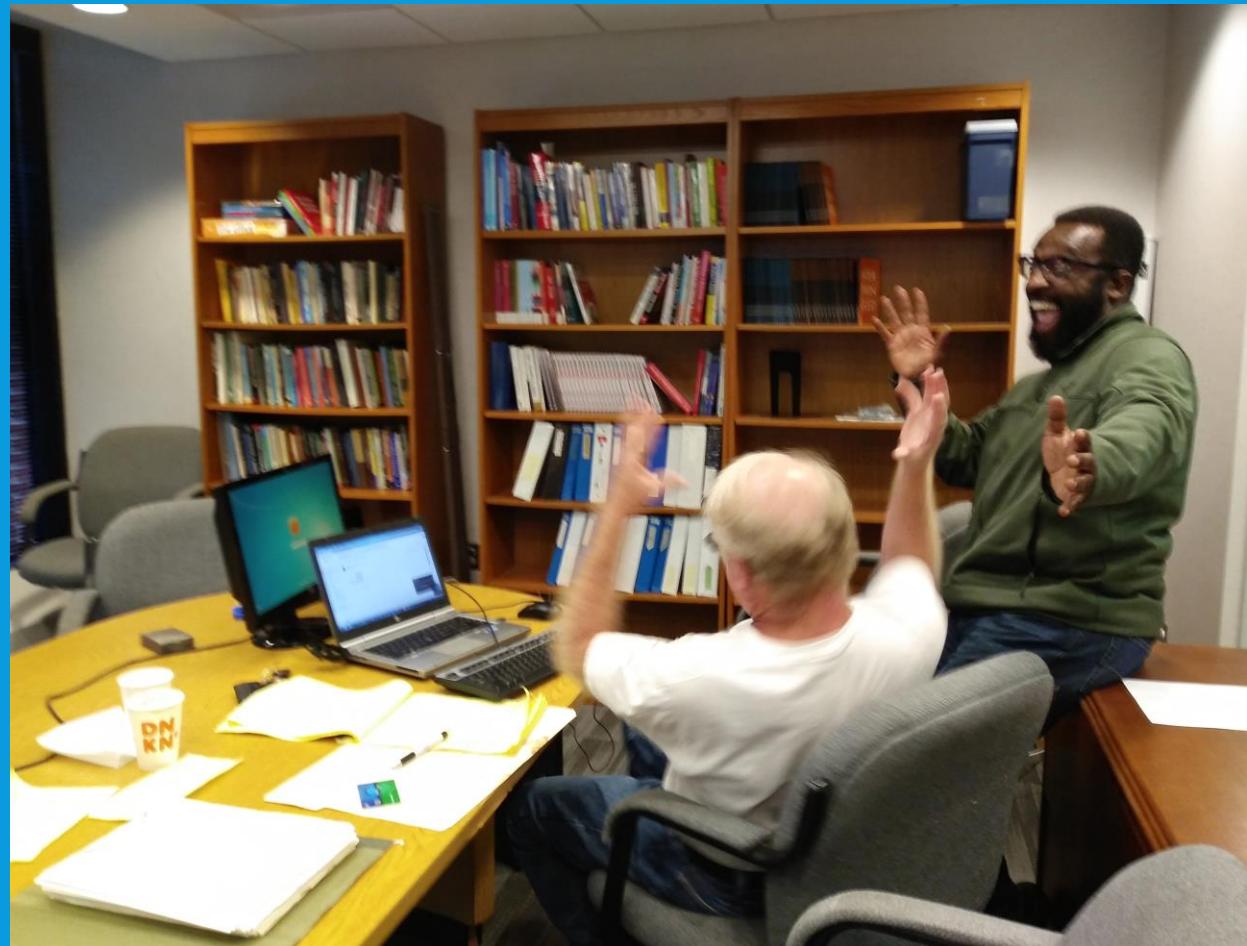
TALES FROM THE INTERGALACTIC CRYPT, PART 2



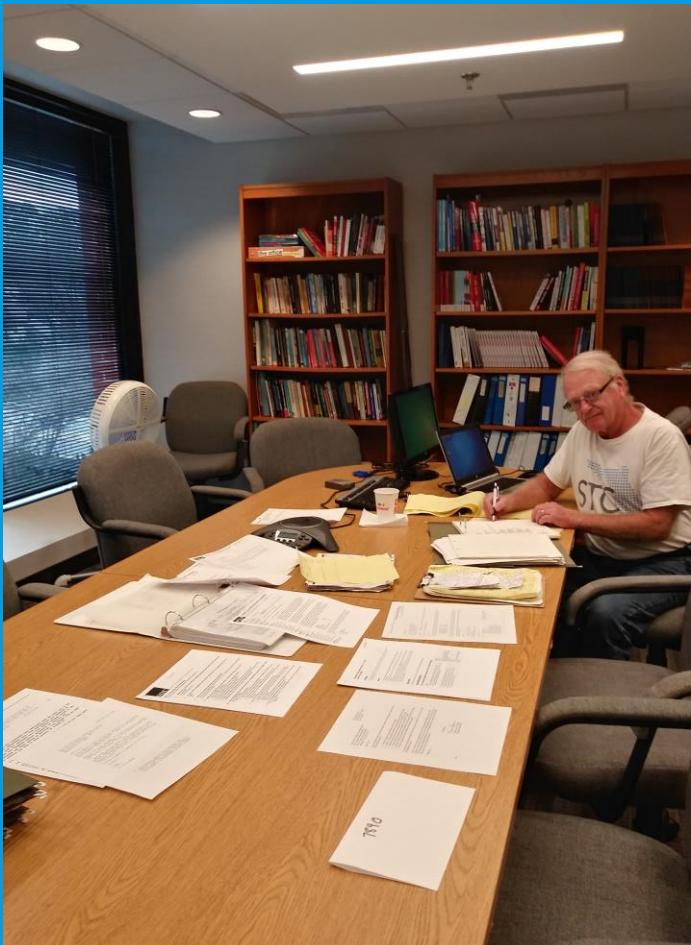
TALES FROM THE INTERGALACTIC CRYPT, PART 3



TALES FROM THE INTERGALACTIC CRYPT, PART 4



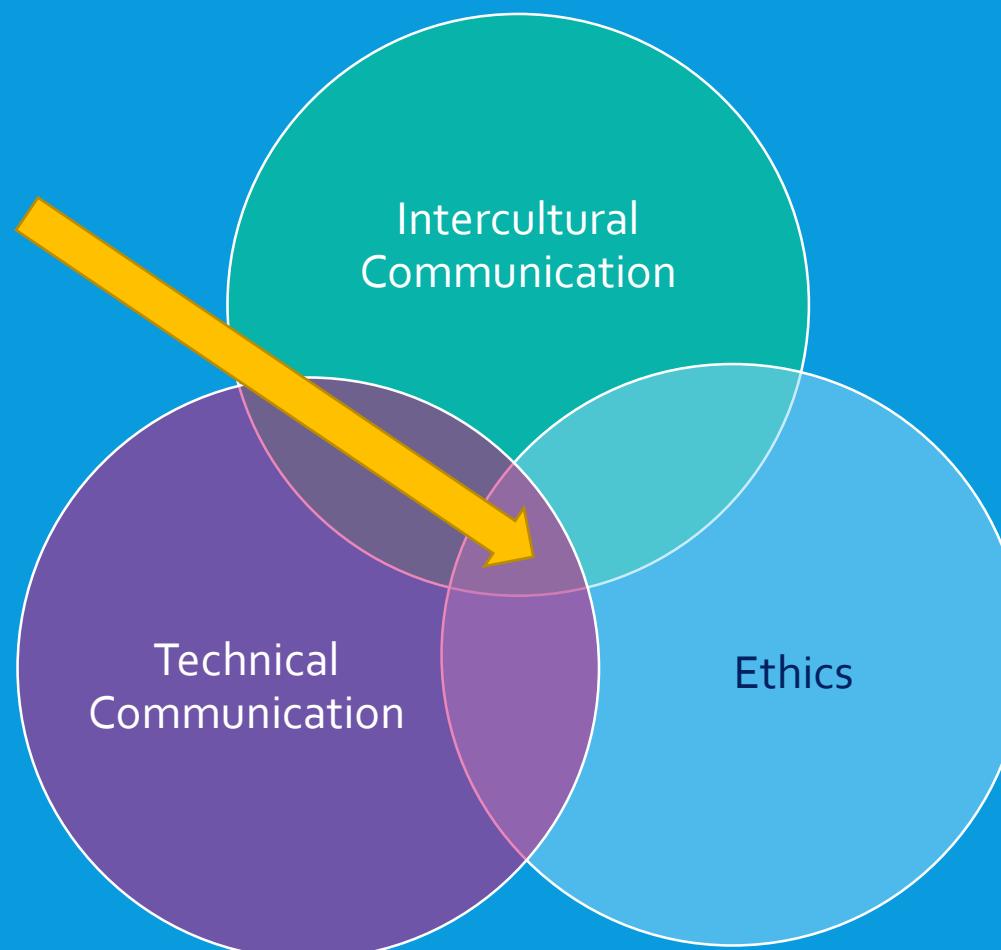
TALES FROM THE INTERGALACTIC CRYPT, PART 5



AGENDA

- Defining ethics
 - Four classical ethical models
 - Universalism (absolutism) v. relativism
 - The ethics of technical communication
 - The ethics of intercultural communication
- Value analysis: identifying and resolving ethical conflicts across cultures
 - Generic value models: hierarchical and concentric ring
 - Engineering and technical communication value models
 - Cultural filters
- Workshop with ethical scenarios

OUR TOPIC: A SPECIALIZED NICHE, YET IMPORTANT



DEFINING ETHICS ... GOOD LUCK! ☺

- Ethics = Doing what is *right* to achieve what is *good*.
- Which leaves two questions:
 - What is right?
and
 - What is good?
- Yes, that's the tricky part!



NICOMACHEAN ETHICS: ARISTOTLE

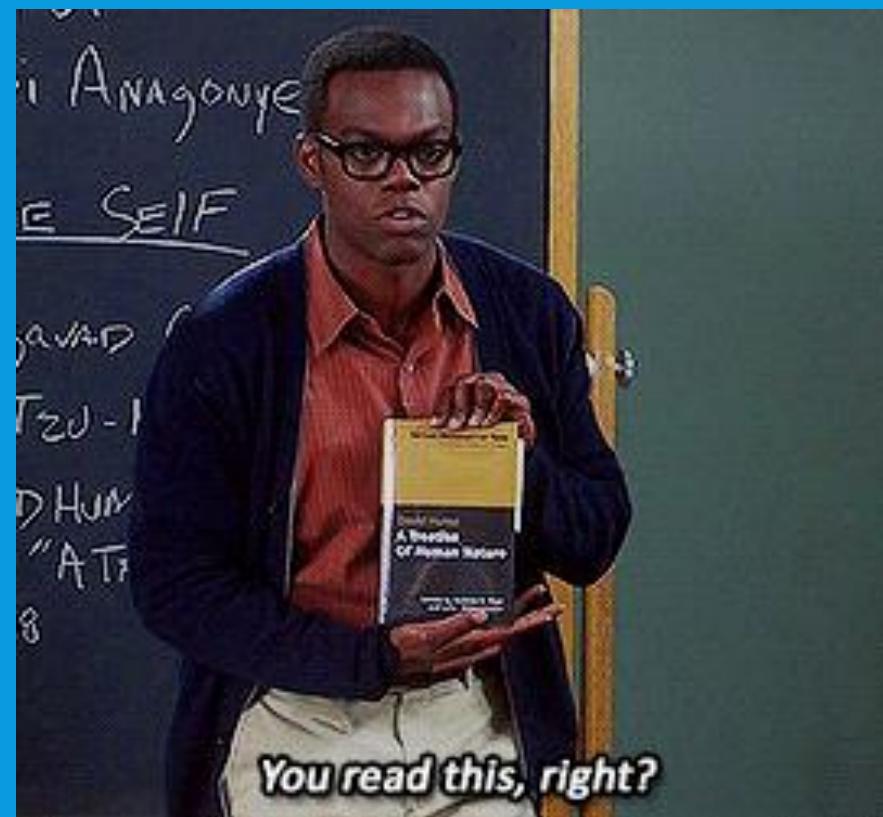
- Based on virtue: the pursuit of “the highest good.”
- Good = “That at which all things aim.”
- Human good = the “activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.”
- This is a flexible, open, and practical ethical model.
- Unfortunately, the definition of “good” varies substantially across nations and cultures.



*...It's like...who died and left Aristotle
in charge of ethics?*

CONFUCIANISM: KONG ZI

- Virtue-based, like Aristotle
- Humanist-oriented: every individual should “pursue virtue.”
- “Proper behavior” = balancing tradition (ritual propriety) with consideration of the individual.
- “What you do not wish upon yourself, do not extend to others.” Parallels the “Golden Rule” of Christianity.
- **The problem is, there is still no way to reconcile differences in definitions of “virtue” across cultures.**



UTILITARIANISM: JOHN STUART MILL

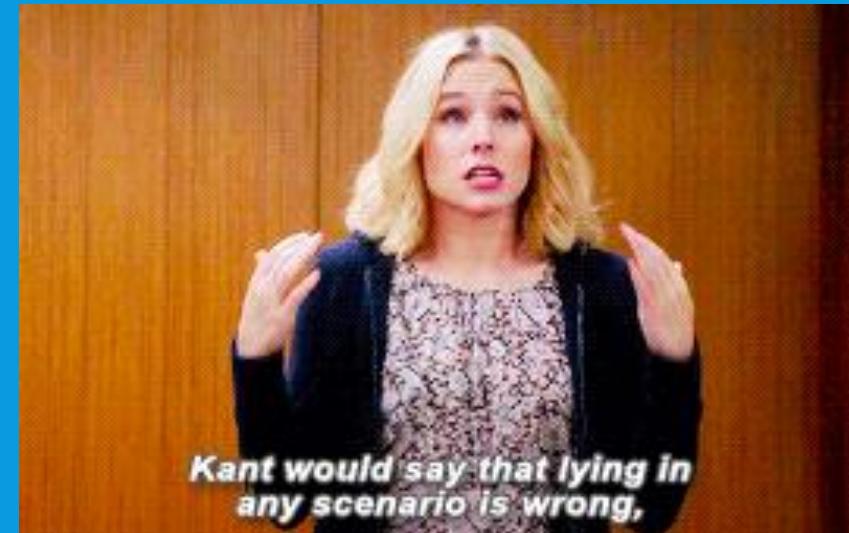
- “It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measurement of right and wrong.”
- In *On Liberty*, Mill wrote “the rights of the individual extend insofar as they do not impinge upon the rights of others.”
- U.S. Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, “Your right to swing your fist in the air ends where my nose begins.”
- “Consequentialist” model: judges individual actions by the impact on “the common good.”



- While flexible, this model can lead to violation of the rights of the individual for the perceived “common good.”

THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE: IMMANUEL KANT

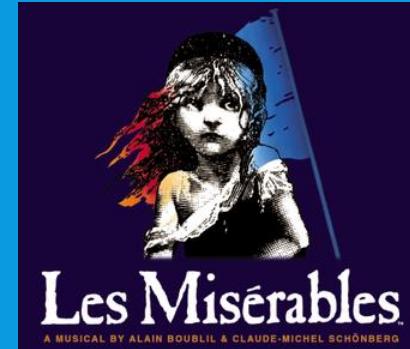
- Kant's model was based on universal laws that transcend cultural differences.
- Under the categorical imperative, individuals were expected to act in accordance with those universal laws.
- This is sometimes referred to as "moral absolutism" or "moral universalism," as opposed to "moral relativism."
- Universalism is stable in that the rules are set and are not negotiable.



- The problem, of course—particularly across cultures—is who sets the rules?

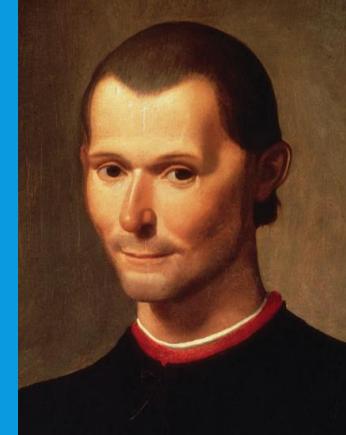
MORAL ABSOLUTISM OR MORAL RELATIVISM? YOU PAYS YOUR MONEY; YOU TAKES YOUR CHOICE.

- *Moral absolutism (universalism)* sets the rules in granite. It's stable, but it cannot accommodate the gray areas, which can create injustices when applied in the individual case.



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- *Moral relativism* allows for individual and cultural differences. It can handle the gray, but gray is a “slippery slope” which can lead to situational ethics, as in “the end justifies the means.”



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THE ETHICS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

- Cultures differ in their interpretation of certain key values in technical communication, including legality, privacy, teamwork, social responsibility, and cultural sensitivity. – Flammia and Voss; Allen and Voss
- Ethics are intangible, subjective. It's a difficult mix. –Paul Dombrowski



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DEFINING VALUES ... GOOD LUCK! ☺

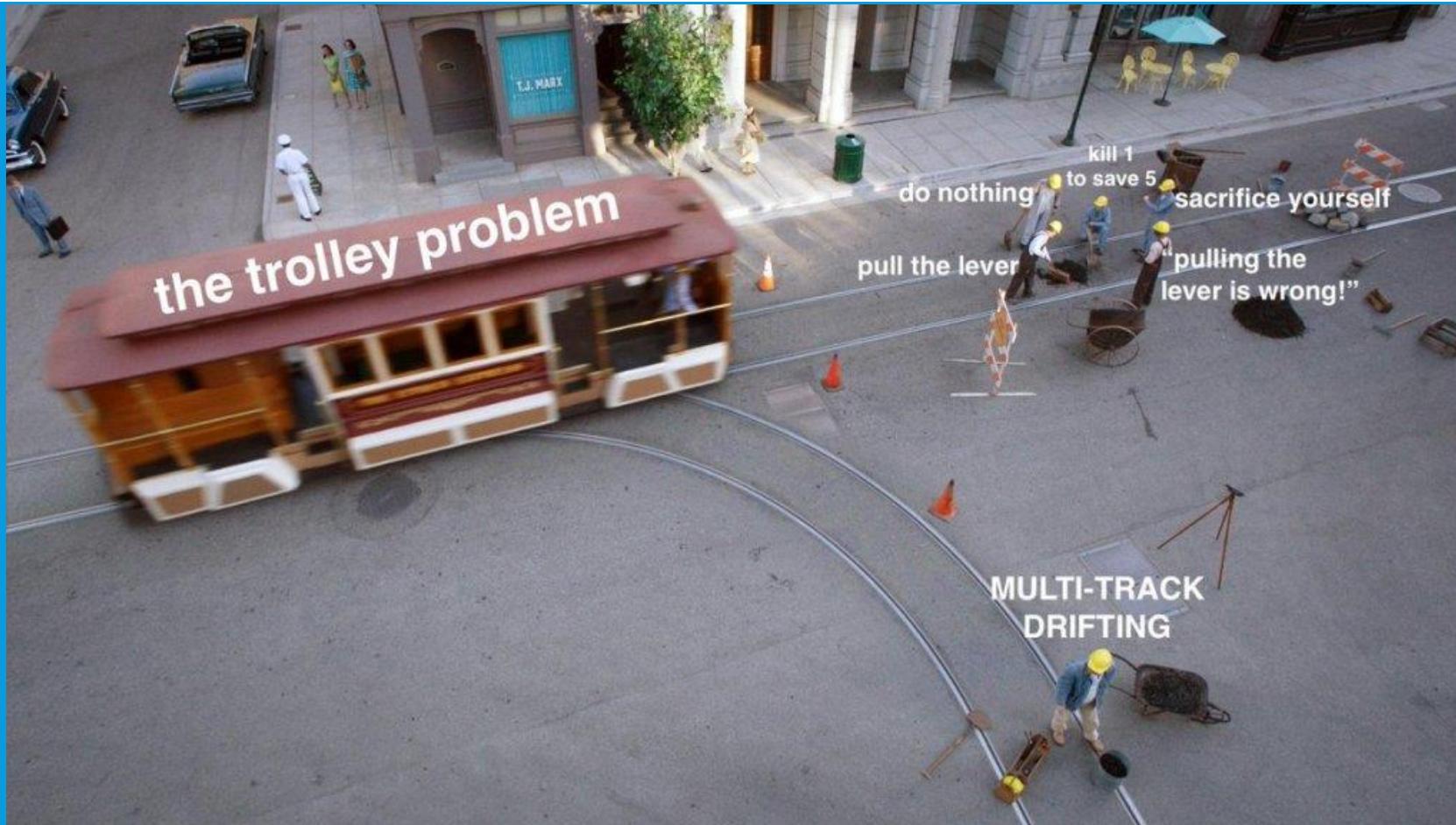
- *A value = a belief.*
- Not all values are ethical. Judged against different moral standards, a belief can be “right” or “wrong,” “good” or “evil.”
- A value model = a system of beliefs.
- Everyone has his/her personal value model. They differ widely.
- Different nations, communities, and cultures have different collective value models.
- Even within a given collective value model, specific values can come into conflict.
- And across different collective value models, conflicts are even more likely.

THE TROLLEY PROBLEM



Credit: The Good Place by NBC

APPLYING VALUES

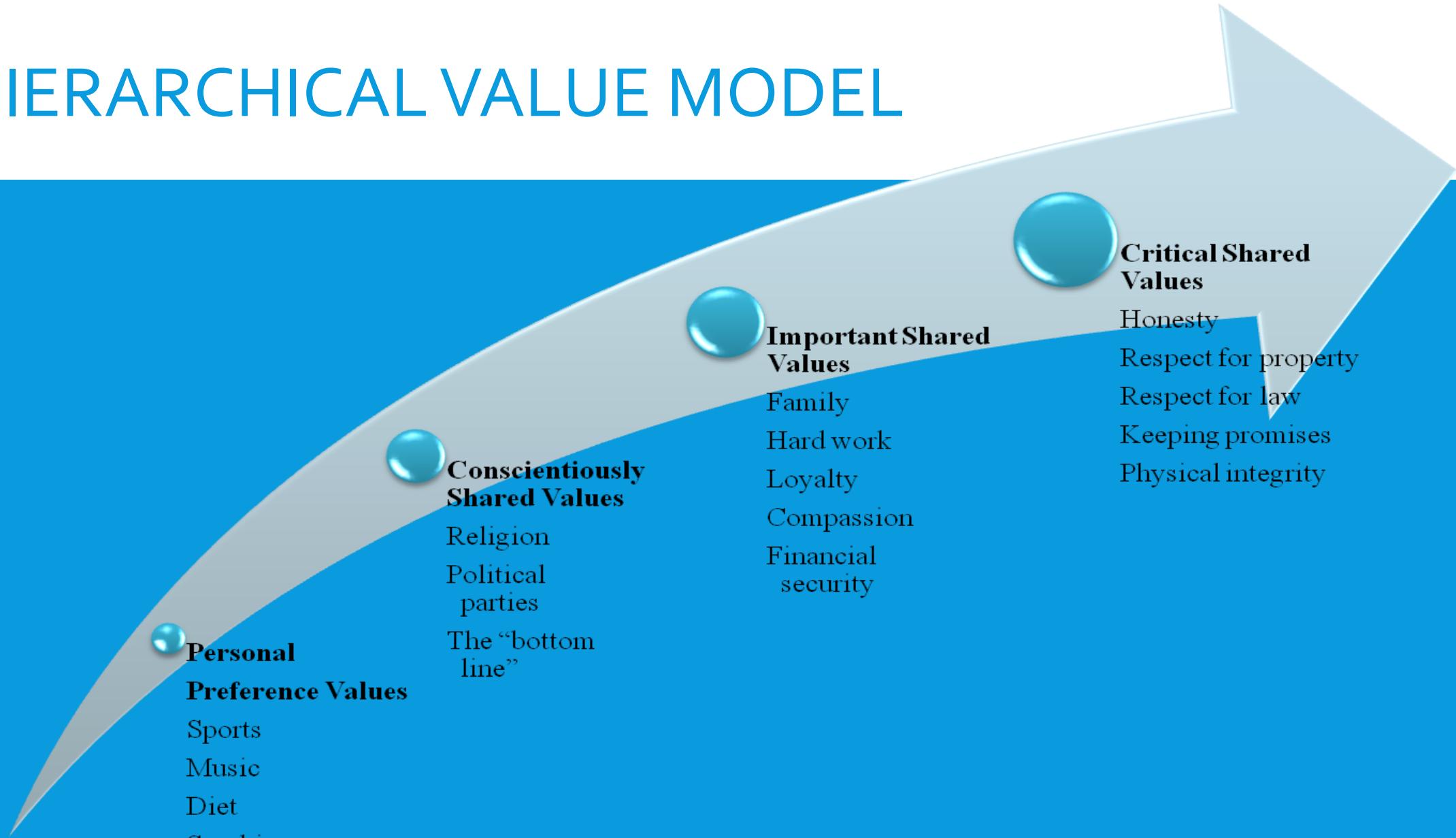


USING VALUE ANALYSIS TO IDENTIFY AND RESOLVE ETHICAL CONFLICTS

1. Determine the issue and identify the stakeholders.
2. Determine the stakeholders' interests.
3. Identify the relevant values that bear on the issue.
4. Determine the values and interests that are in conflict.
5. Apply a value model to rank values according to importance, to weigh the values and interests that are in conflict.
6. Resolve the conflict in favor of the higher (more important) value so as to do the most good or the least harm.

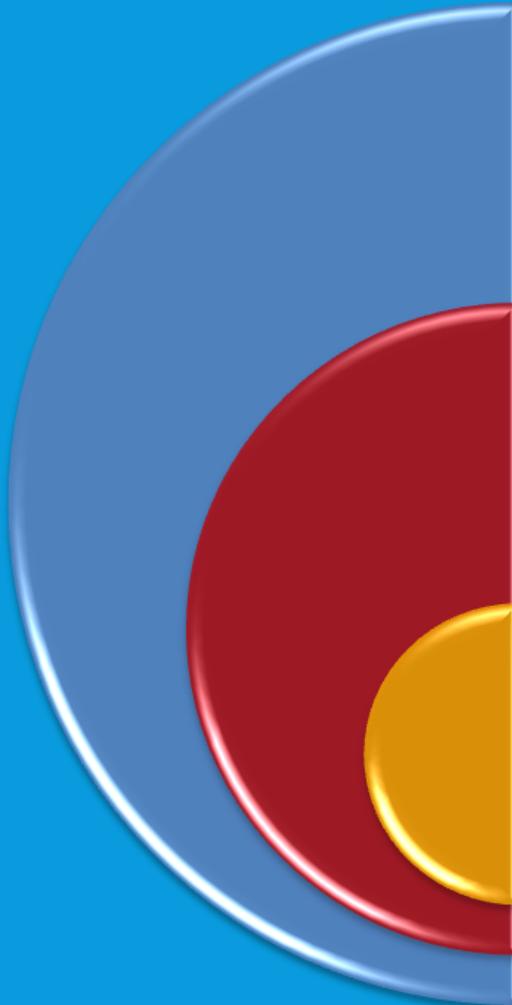


HIERARCHICAL VALUE MODEL



Dr. Lynn Payne, University of
Virginia

CONCENTRIC-RING VALUE MODEL



Peripheral Values

- Favorite Sports
- Fashion Tastes
- Recreational Preferences
- Ice Cream Flavors

Authority Values

- Political Affiliations
- Organized Religion
- Corporate Loyalty
- Patriotism

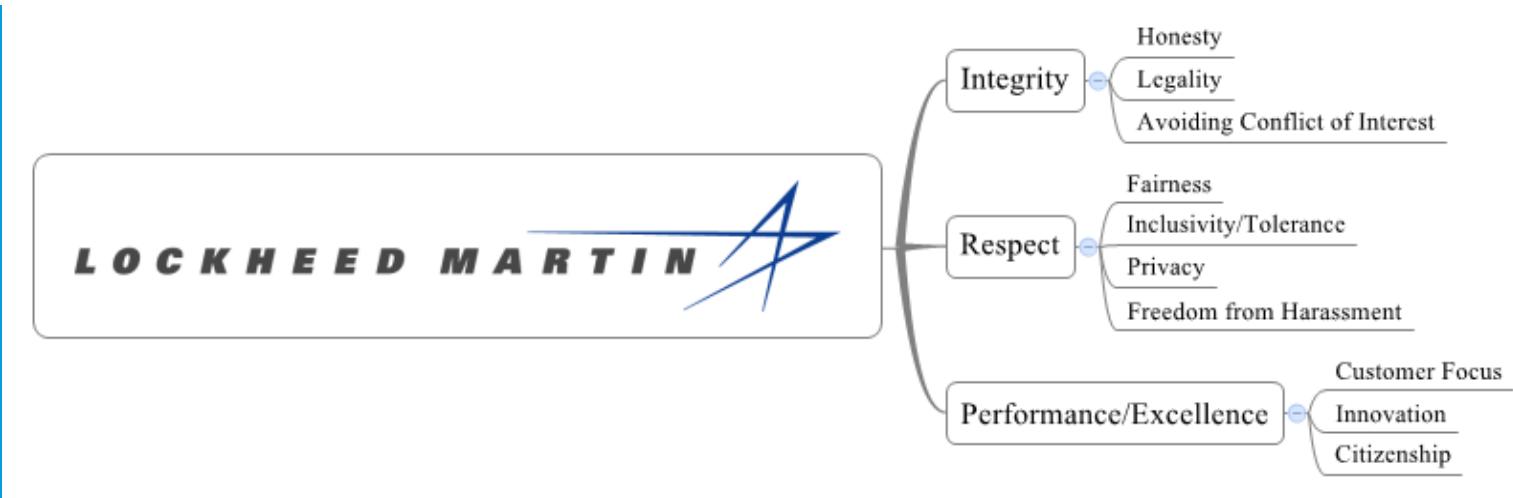
Core Values

- Honesty
- Value of Life
- Love of Family
- Respect for Others
- Personal Religious Faith

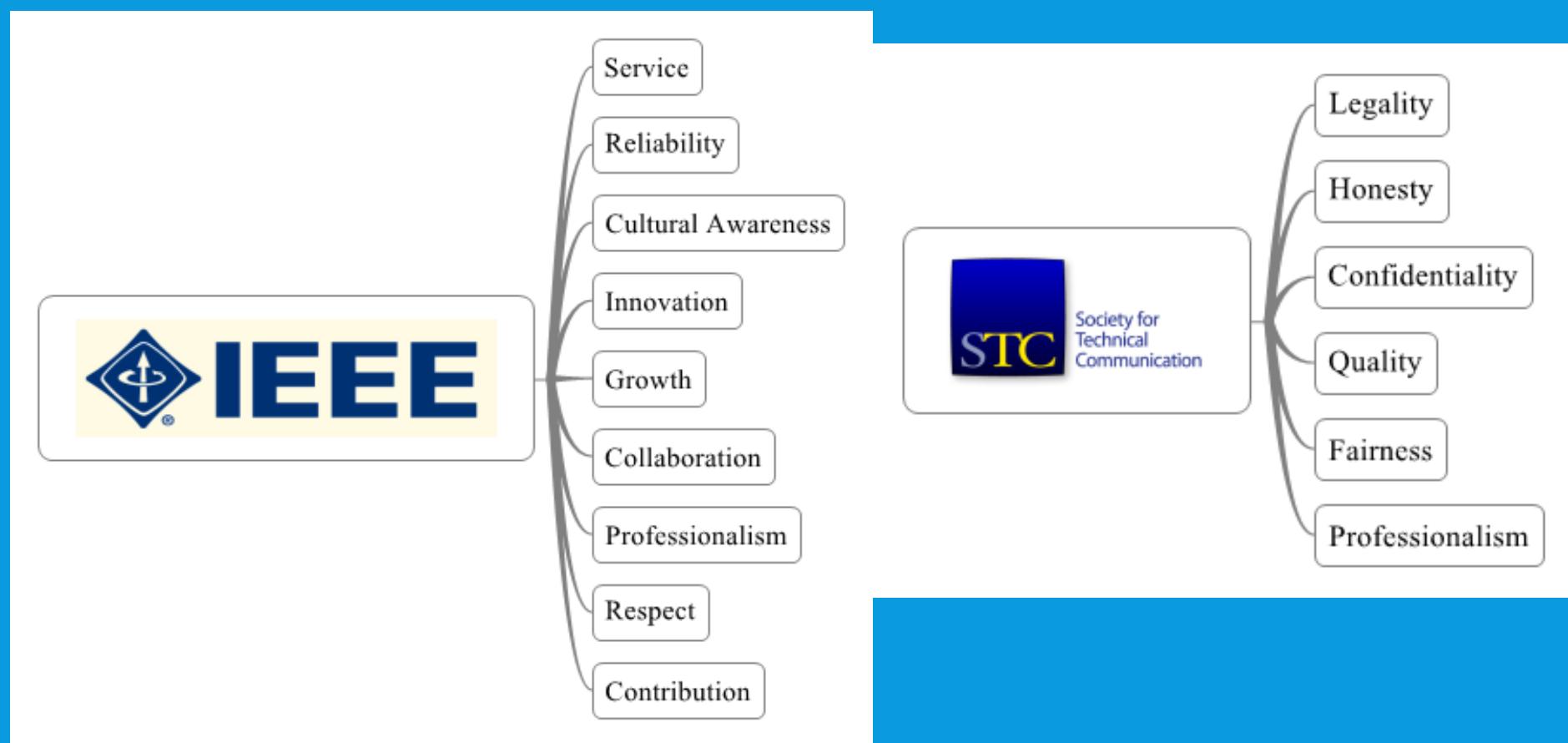
ETHICAL CODES OF TECHNICAL SOCIETIES: NSPE AND ASCE



ETHICAL CODES IN THE AEROSPACE INDUSTRY: HARRIS AND LOCKHEED MARTIN CORPORATIONS



ETHICAL CODES OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION: IEEE AND STC

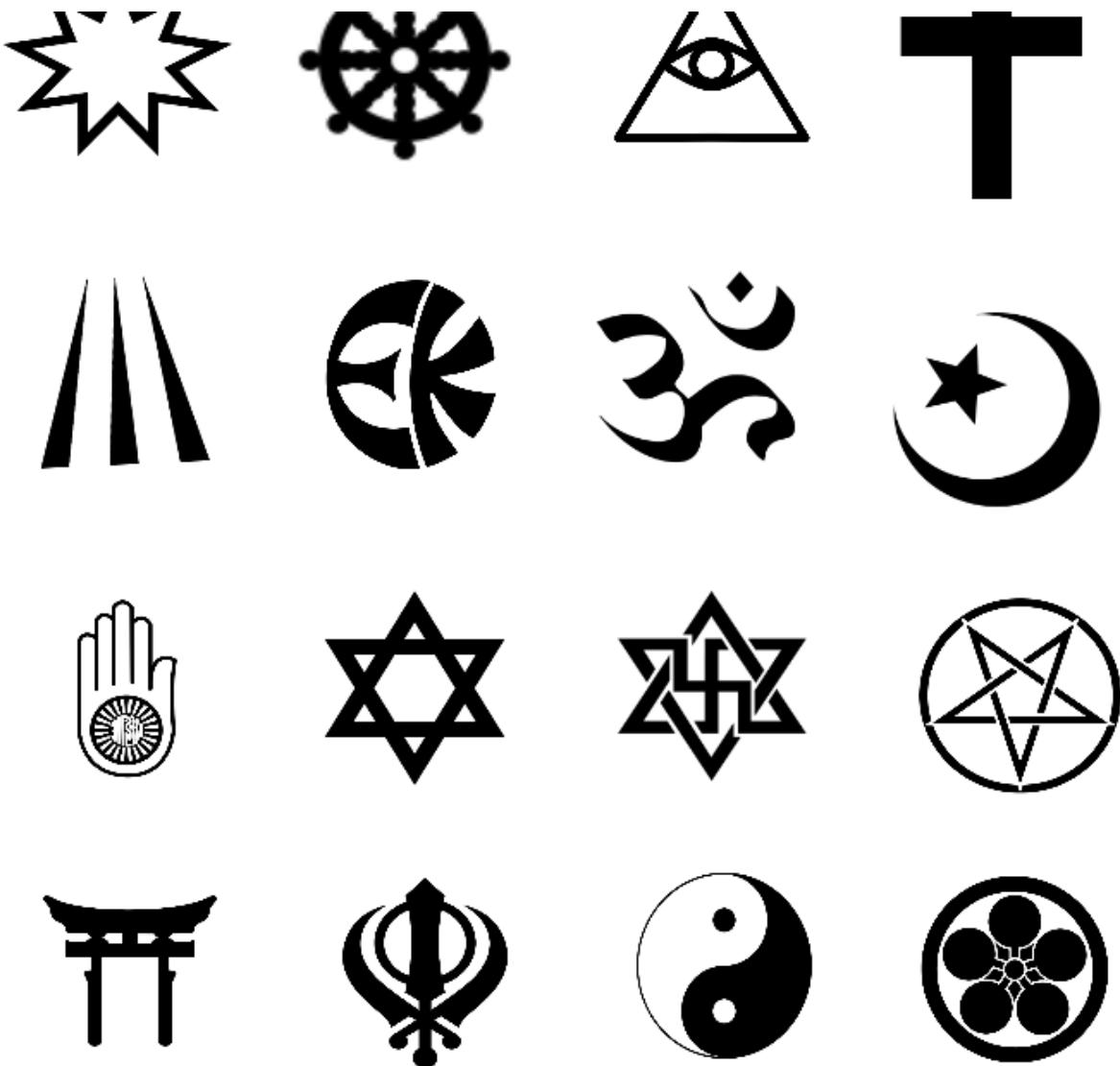


CULTURAL FILTERS: NATIONALITY



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CULTURAL FILTERS: RELIGION

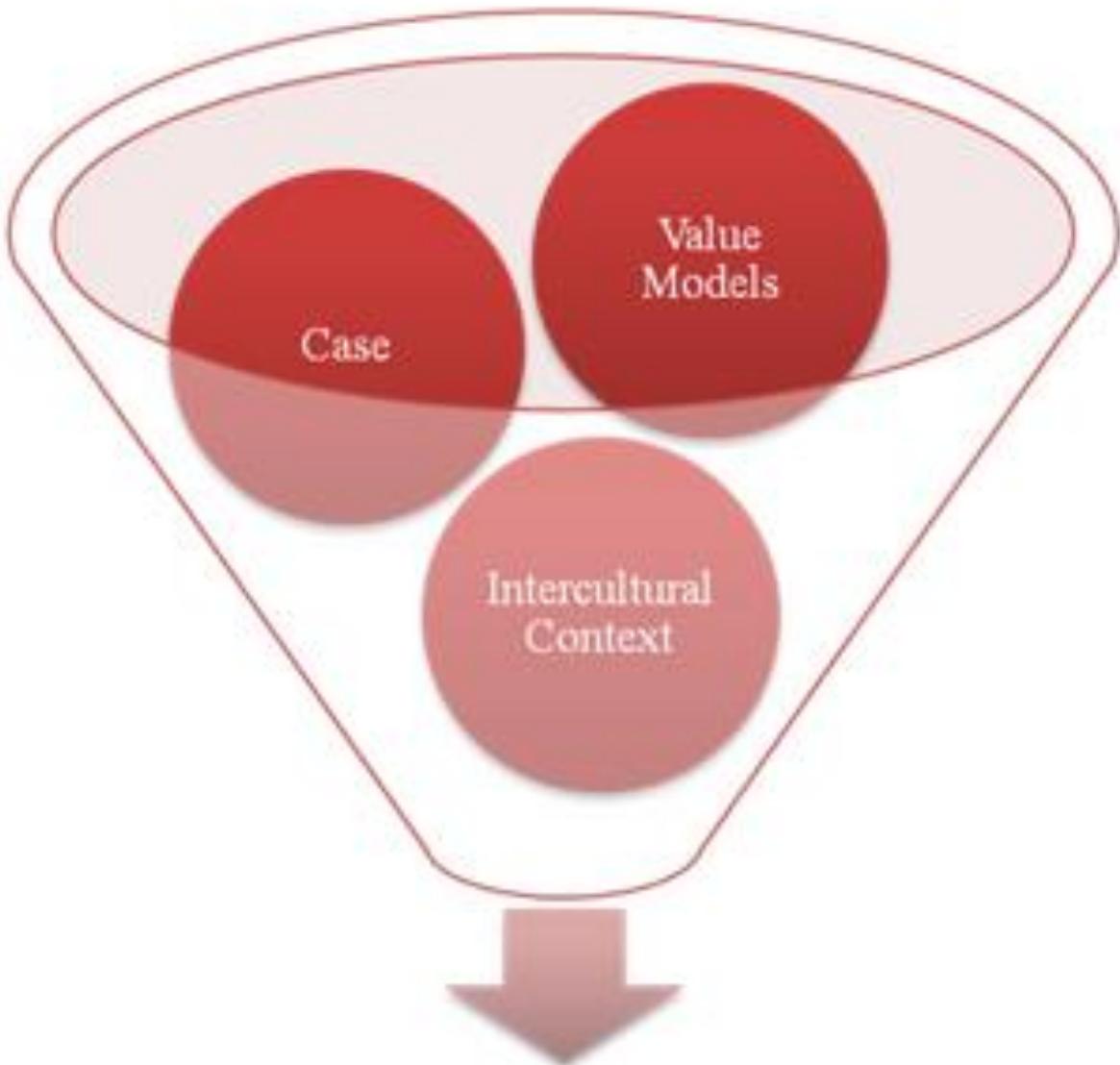


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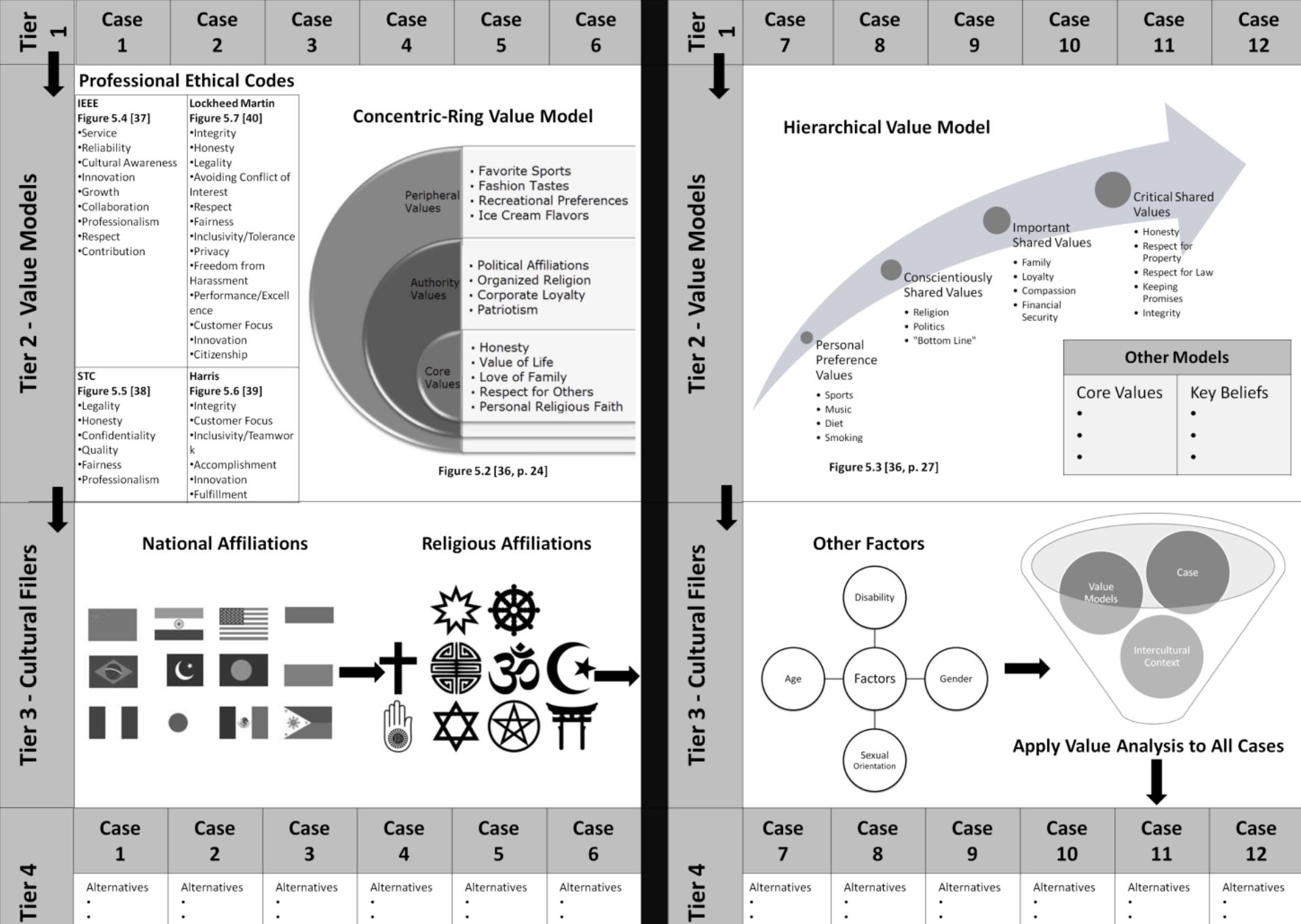
CULTURAL FILTERS: OTHER FACTORS



APPLY THE VALUE MODELS AND THE CULTURAL FILTERS TO ETHICAL CASES



IT'S TIME TO
USE THE
“MONSTER
CHART”! ☺



CASE #1: WHEN IN ROME ...

You are a technical marketing writer with a sports equipment company which is trying to land a major contract with a small oil-rich Gulf state that is trying to “buy” itself a presence at the Olympics. The competition is very close. Over coffee, a colleague in the marketing department lets fall that your company is likely to be bested by a competitor who is willing to provide a kickback to the procuring officer in the country in question. Both your company policy and U.S. law expressly forbid such an action, but at least one of your competitors is unencumbered by such ethical constraints, creating an unlevel playing field. While your colleague doesn’t say so in so many words, it is obvious to you that he is going to find a way to grease whatever palms need to be greased to stay in the chase. Your products are at least as good as the competition’s and your price is fair. If you lose this competition, it will cost your company at least a hundred jobs. Since you have only three years’ seniority, one of them is likely to be yours. Due to a recent financial setback, your mortgage is six months overdue and the lender is threatening foreclosure. What do you do?

CASE #1: VALUE CONFLICTS ...

Hierarchical Model: Conscientiously Shared Value (bottom line) and Important Shared Value (financial security) vs Critical Shared Values (respect for law, honesty). Note that U.S. companies are governed by U.S. law, even when doing business abroad.

Concentric Ring Model: Authority Value (corporate loyalty) vs. Core Value (honesty)

STC Core Values: Legality, honesty (overriding the unfairness of the situation)

CASE #1: POSSIBLE ACTIONS ...

- *Do nothing.* After all, you don't know your colleague is going to use a bribe to level the playing field, and you have as much to lose as the company, if not more.
- ***Remind your colleague that your company is bound by U.S. law.*** If you have reason to believe he/she is not going to heed that advice, escalate within the organization to ensure the company stays within legal bounds. If you do this, the company has 2 options:
 - If your competitor is domestic and you have proof, report them.
 - If your competitor is international and their government has laws against kickbacks, report them.
- However, If your competitor is international and their government supports their actions, there is very little you can do.

CASE #1: LIKELY CONSEQUENCES ...

- *You'll probably lose the competition* regardless, because even if the U.S. takes action against a domestic competitor, there's a high probability some international firm unencumbered by business ethics and/or government regulations will provide the kickbacks and get the business.
- *You may indeed lose your job.*
- *Both you and your company retain your integrity.*
- *Doing the right thing doesn't always come cheap.*

ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES ... IT'S WORKSHOP TIME! ☺



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CASE #2: MAKE NO ASSUMPTIONS ...

You lead a six-person international virtual team that has been tasked to provide the documentation for a new program for processing charge card accounts for a major software supplier, one of your company's biggest clients. The project has tremendous economic potential for your company. You conduct a weekly conference call where you lay out the instructions for the next phase of the project. Under the "rules of engagement," team members are to voice any concerns at such meetings. Absent questions, concerns, or challenges, the assumption is that everyone is working to the same sheet of music. There a few positive comments at the telecon but no concerns are expressed, so you assume everything is OK. The same pattern continues for three more weeks. At that point, you compile the work from your five international partners—two from the U.S., one from Sweden, and two from Japan. The work of the first three teammates shows clear adherence to your instructions, but the work of the two Japanese team members, while technically competent, goes in an entirely different direction—meaning that either their sections or those of the other team members will have to be extensively reworked. In either case, cost and schedule will be affected, greatly reducing your company's likelihood of gaining a quick profit on the software. That, in turn, will, as a minimum, cost you a promotion you have been seeking, and it might even cost you your job. What do you do?

CASE #3: A DEADLY DOSE ...

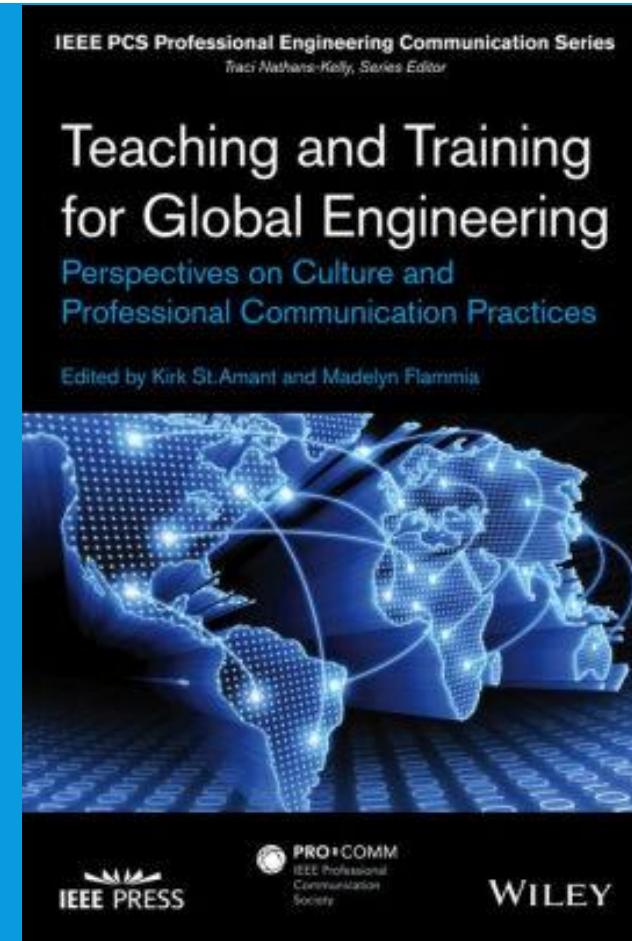
You are a medical technical writer with a large pharmaceutical company. One of your projects is to write the procedures for patients with diabetes who have to administer self-injections of insulin. You do your customary good job on the English version, but the documentation also has to be translated into several other languages. Your boss directs you to find the best price on translation services that will provide "acceptable" quality. For 4 of the 5 languages, you are comfortable that you can do so, but in the case of one nation with a small population and a relatively "obscure" language, you find you have only two choices—a reputable but very expensive firm that works with the one major university in that nation to ensure a faithful translation and a "bargain basement" service you suspect will slap a cheap Internet translation on the procedures and call it done. An inferior translation could result in incorrect injection procedures, posing a potential safety risk to the patients. In fact, you know of a documented incident where an overdose of insulin caused by unclear injection instructions in a translation cost the life of a patient with diabetes. Nonetheless, your boss tells you the market for the product in the fifth country is much too small to get an acceptable return on investment for the higher-price translation and to therefore contract with the low bidder. What do you do?

CASE #4: NO WOMEN NEED APPLY ...

You are a technical writer serving on an integrated product team (IPT) within a civil engineering company. Your company has assigned one of its most qualified civil engineers to lead the IPT for a major bridge construction project in Montana—a woman who recently earned a promotion to senior engineering task leader based on her outstanding performance on two previous bridge-building projects. One of your major subcontractors on this project is a company based in an Arabic country that is philosophically opposed to placing women in management leadership positions. The subcontractor threatens to withdraw its participation from the project if your company does not remove the woman and assign a man to lead the IPT. If they withdraw, they are likely to sign up with your competitor, and since they are the recognized world expert in their specialty, that would not augur well for your company's chances in the competition. The matter is escalated to senior management. Your boss surveys the IPT and, in the process, asks your opinion. What is it?

REFERENCES AND READING

- See handout.
- Many of the resources are available upon request from the presenters.



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