

Values, Ethics and Worldviews

Exploring your conceptions of the ideal society

Objectives

- Enhance relationships with your colleagues by discussing values, ethics and worldviews
- Understand how values and worldviews inform conceptions of justice, fairness and sound community-wide decision making

Activity Flow

- Self-assess: understanding you personal ethical reasoning preferences
- Creating an Individual Values Statement
- “Veil of Ignorance” thought experiment

Categories of Ethical Reasoning

-Applier

-Situationalist

-Individualist

-Communitarian

-Calculator

-Relationalist

Your scores suggest which type of reasoning you prefer most and least. All preferences are equally valid.

Individual Activity

- Our ethics are expressions of more fundamental values we each hold. The purpose of this activity is to recognize the values underlying your preferred method of ethical reasoning.
- Consider your strongest ethical reasoning preferences. Ask yourself: what deeper values do these preferences express?
- Write a values statement articulating some of your core values.
- **Sample Values Statements:**
 - I prefer to make decisions based on appeals to rules because I believe treating people equally is always everyone's duty and appealing to rules is the best way to ensure equal treatment.
 - I prefer to make decisions based on interpersonal dynamics because honoring the irreducible value of each person is my top priority and paying attention to relationships is the best way to honor others.

Breakout Activity

- In your breakout group, please share your values statements with one another. Share the ethical reasoning preferences that express your values.
- What new insights about your colleagues do you gain?
- Appoint a spokesperson to share key insights during debrief.

Individual Activity: Veil of Ignorance Thought Experiment

- **Put yourself behind a veil of ignorance: Imagine you will enter a new society, but you do not know who you will be in that society.**
 - You do not know what your gender will be
 - You do not know what your race will be
 - You do not know what intellectual abilities you may or may not have
 - You do not know what physical abilities you may or may not have
 - You do not know what sorts of relationship networks (family, friends, etc.) you may or may not have
- **From “behind this veil,” consider what sorts of rules, principles, policies, laws, norms and/or traditions would you want your new culture to have in place.**

Breakout Activity

- In your breakout group, please share your views of the ideal society.
- What new insights about your colleagues do you gain?
- Appoint a spokesperson to share key insights during debrief.

Breakout Activity

- **Adaptive Preferences:** the unconscious altering of personal preferences in light of what is available, or what we believe is available to us.
- **Example:** a child who grows up in a coastal village in which fishing is the only occupation might not be aware there are other occupations. Thus, as the child matures, he or she does not have enough information to make a fully informed choice about what to do with his or her life. If the child grows into a fisherman/woman, is this truly a free choice or an adaptive preference based on limited knowledge?
- **Discussion questions:**
 - How might adaptive preferences affect equality in a given society?
 - How might adaptive preferences affect individual freedom in a given society?

What is your conception of justice?

“Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought.”

- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*