

# Aims and Purpose

What do we want to achieve today?

- Working definition of Ethical Blindness-
- Use case examples of its presence in the workplace
- Content/tasks for learning module etc



Is a stage where an actor is not aware of ethical dimensions of certain actions... lack of consciousness



Lack of perception in decision making. In other words, making a decision without being fully conscious of it. Alessandro

Ethical blindness is about lack of awareness, not necessarily lack of morality.



Not being aware of or not notice an area of ethical decision making point.

unconscious bias can cause ethical blindness

Ignoring ethical dilemmas (Consciously or unconsciously) -nc

Ethical blindness is where you think some kind of behaviour is 'wrong', but you don't see that you're enacting this behaviour. And/or you just can't see that a certain kind of behaviour is blatantly wrong.

I think I am ethical, but I cannot see past my own biases. Or, maybe I've become immune to ethical issues.

cognitive overload and situation-affects the decision you make



Felicity Small

Shann thinks Ethical blindness arises from unwittingly taking advantage of others

Feeling pressure when making decisions

Not being aware of own personal ethic, ways of reflecting on ethics and options for decision making

Naomi

Ethical unknown unknowns -nc

cannot see the behaviour and its enabling you to think it is ok-rationalisation

Felicity Small

A system, structure or process designed without consideration of ethical dimensions

Felicity Small

- **Moral justification**: i.e. what is culpable is made righteous through cognitive restructuring
- **Euphemistic labelling**: i.e. masking reprehensible activities by calling them something more sanitised, e.g. 'collateral damage'
- **Advantageous comparison**: i.e. comparing our 'bad' behaviour with flagrant transgressions, which therefore make our 'bad' behaviour look less reprehensible
- **Displacement of responsibility**: i.e. blaming 'authorities' rather than taking responsibility for our own actions
- The article talks about the Milgram experiments here, where people applied electric shocks to people that were clearly in distress because a scientist (a person of authority) told them to do so
- **Diffusion of responsibilities**: i.e. our own behaviour is diffused by division of labour, group decision making, or group action
- **Disregard or distortion of consequences of action**: i.e. we avoid facing the harm we've caused and therefore taking responsibility for it, or we minimise it, or misrepresent it
- **Dehumanization and attribution of blame**: i.e. divesting others of human qualities - for example how the Nazi's treated the Jews, or how slaves are treated

From book by Denis Gentlin - Ethical Blindness  
Dennis Gentlin - National Australia Bank  
Whistleblower

Theory says: ethical blindness is a lack of awareness or ability to access to relevant ethical sources, and then the motivation to act ethically... (Langer & Smith, 2025).

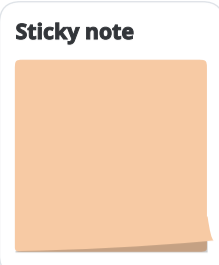
It exist in organisations in the form or rationalisations (It's just the way we do it), routines (not my job), and ambiguity of task (no with my role description, and I had no time to reflect)- (Aleksic & Palazzo, 2023).

Aleksić, D., & Palazzo, G. (2023). Development and validation of ethical blindness scale. *Economic and Business Review*, 25(4), 233-243.

Langer, M., & Smith, N. C. (2025). Was blind but now I see: Understanding ethical blindness in terms of function rather than content <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm?abstractid=5255191>

# Challenges

Key challenges for educators - how do you make ethically relevant information visible for decision-makers?



Contextual factors such as regional, cultural, social, experiential etc

Nige

**As Lucia flagged, different people bring a different lens to an issue. So business students might see 'success' as effectiveness and efficiency, and have no lens of 'ethical'.**

A key challenge is to create the safe space, which allows these discussions...

Building muscularity to enact ethics while under pressure vs intellectual knowledge about ethics

Naomi

Ethical muscularity doesn't exist in isolation: skills in communication, critical reflection, ability to stay with tension, building trust

Naomi



Context matters

Determining who are the decision makers and what is their ethical awareness (target audience/s)

Nige

We need to let the endowments of nature to govern humans to achieve sustainability in response to comment I have circled.

Perception - decision-makers often 'do not notice' that relevant ethical information exists/matters.

**Ethics is not 50 shades of grey but a kaleidoscope of colours**

Truly believing in what you are teaching - some ethics educators are forced to teach rather than choosing to each the module.

The need for these capabilities to live in a context and a team or system

Naomi

A key challenge for educators is helping students recognise when AI use involves ethical issues, especially when these are hidden within technical processes or framed as efficiency gains. This requires making ethical considerations more visible by embedding them into decision contexts, such as through real cases, transparency prompts, and reflective questioning.

Uneven playing field: not all contexts are resourced or rewarded for ethical decision making. Some contexts are soaked with ethical dilemmas that are outside the students decision making or accountability: they are inherited.

Naomi

It's someone elses job, or I'm not senior enough. Failure to step into their own power/responsibility to enact ethics

Naomi

Topic is multi-layered- do we do one topic overview or a range of mini-topics?

Understanding cultures other than our own. Students come from diverse cultures. As educators we must appreciate that difference

Cultural differences are important too-recognising that this will impact their ethical framing and appropriate responses

# Ideation

What would the learning module look like?

Sticky note



Metaphors and stories to explain the issues- the car mirror and the lesson of the blindspot...

Word clouds of issues- to enable them to brainstorm concepts

Scenarios / roleplays (experiential)

visualisation in the case study

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shock and awe- shake them up to trigger their thinking-

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Hit the pause button

Felicity Small

building awareness of limitations

Felicity Small

putting the student in the story

Felicity Small

Ask the students to talk about their lives, contexts they are in, issues they care about, experiences they are having

Naomi

Let the students choose the topic to discuss rather than providing a case study.

Co-design (academics/ business practitioners)

**Ask advice from different types of stakeholders**

Staged delivery- read before class- jot down notes for discussion

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Philosopher's walks.

Campfire discussions

I agree here, I use guest speakers like the Yellow Ribbon Project and speakers from the Police.

Case study- for complexity- that has no clear answer- showing how context matters

Shann says: Systemic ethical blindness is created by group think describing self-serving conflicts of interest as being "good". I can provide many examples. Like corporate chairman controlling AGM's at which the purpose is to hold all directors including then chair as accountable to shareholders. **Does any body disagree with this as unethical?**

My Aim is for ABEN to publish a handbook of antidotes to ethical blindness

# **SIG- Education and Ethics in Practice**

## ***How To* create a learning module...**

### **Define**

What is Ethical Blindness?

### **Knowledge Sharing- Expertise in the room**

How do we, as educators, see it in our own practices and institutions?

### **Ideation**

What would a module on teaching ethical blindness look like?