4 Ethics and Corrections
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Test your knowledge about ethics in corrections by answering the following questions. Check your answers on page 534 after reading the chapter.

1. Ethics and morality are the same thing. (True or false?)

2. What is the difference between deontological and teleological approaches to ethics?

3. The ethical-formalism framework includes the belief that there is a universal law that includes clear rights and wrongs. (True or false?)

4. Utilitarianism follows the principle that what is good is that which results in the greatest utility for the greatest number. (True or false?)

5. Most religions include a universal set of rights and wrongs. (True or false?)

6. Noble-cause corruption is the idea that it is okay to do the wrong thing if it is for the right reasons. (True or false?)

7. A correctional officer who engages in unethical behavior for personal gain is practicing official deviance. (True or false?)

8. There are characteristics of correctional work that make it more susceptible to ethical violations. (True or false?)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain the differences between ethics and morality
- Describe the different ethical frameworks
- Analyze why people are motivated to commit ethical violations
- Identify why corrections workers might be prone to ethics violations and how they might be prevented

A NOVICE BOWS TO SUBCULTURAL PRESSURE

Mary K. Stohr

When I first started as a correctional officer at an adult male prison in Washington State, I was the second woman hired (and the first was hired a month before me). I was relatively well educated (two bachelor’s degrees) and had worked at all kinds of jobs since age 10 but never in corrections. I was young (25), scared, and naive. My first reports were rejected by my sergeant as too wordy, and I was thought to be too soft on the inmates. (I called the inmates Mr. this and Mr. that and treated them with courtesy.) After about four weeks on the job and in an effort to help me, a well-meaning sergeant took me aside and said, “Stohr, I’m worried about you. I’m not sure you can do this job. You’ve got to learn to write better [meaning less and in a more spare fashion—he might as well have said, ‘Just the facts, ma’am’], and you’ve got to treat the inmates with less respect, or you aren’t going to make it on this job.”

We were in a back area of the control room, and he pointed to an inmate at the control room window—we’ll call him Mr. Smith. He said, “That man Smith, he’s a dirty baby raper [which I took to mean that Smith was a child molester]. He’s been hanging around the window when you’re here because you are too nice to him. You’ve got to treat him differently, or he’ll take advantage of you.” Essentially, he said you don’t have to be mean (he wasn’t that kind of man), but you shouldn’t be friendly either.

Well, I took this sergeant’s advice to heart, as I knew he was trying to help me, and there were a few of the staff at the prison who wanted to see me and the
other woman fail. I also paid attention to his advice, as he was well respected and had welcomed me to the job. (He was an uncle to the first woman hired.) I diligently studied the reports of other officers and tried to imitate them. As a result, my reports were suddenly accepted. But the thing I did that was small and that I regret was that I treated Mr. Smith with less respect than he probably deserved; not that he wasn’t a child molester (I read his file when I became a counselor and had access to it), but he was still a human being, he was in my care, and how I acted was not professional. The next time Mr. Smith came to the window for his meds, I did not meet his eyes; he became Smith without the Mr., and I was quite abrupt with him. This kind of behavior characterized most of our interactions from then on. The sympathetic sergeant witnessed this and literally patted my back and said, “Stohr, you’ll be alright,” and that was it; I was accepted into the subculture, at least by him, but I wasn’t entirely happy about it or proud of myself.

INTRODUCTION: TO DO THE RIGHT THING!

As you likely gathered from Chapters 2 and 3 on the history of corrections, ethical abuses have always been a problem for corrections workers. Their jobs are largely hidden from public view, somewhat cloaked in secrecy, with enormous amounts of discretion, and they deal with people in their care who have few rights and protections. Moreover, as we will discuss throughout this book, these are jobs (e.g., correctional officers, sergeants, lieutenants, and captains; probation and parole officers; correctional counselors; and numerous other positions) that do not always have professional status in terms of pay, training, experience, or educational requirements (these problems are all particularly true for correctional officers, less so for the other positions listed here) that would ensure the best people are always hired and that they use their discretion wisely. Therefore, unqualified people are sometimes in these demanding correctional jobs, and because of this, they are more likely to make bad and sometimes unethical choices.

It cannot be overemphasized, however, that the vast majority of correctional staff, whether a correctional officer working in an adult facility or a probation officer working with youth in the community, are ethical in their work practices, meaning that they do the right thing. It is those few bad apples who leave a negative impression of corrections work and workers. Luckily, there are things an organization and its managers and workers can do to minimize abuse of power and resources by staff and to correct the misbehavior of some staff. The development of codes of ethics, the professionalization of staff, and the routinization of policies and procedures are all key to preventing ethical abuses. In this chapter, we will review those efforts to reduce corruption and abuses in corrections, which might be both unethical and illegal (see In Focus 4.1), but first, we will discuss what ethics are and are not and the source of ethical and unethical behavior.

DEFINING ETHICS: WHAT IS RIGHT (AND WRONG)?

As mentioned in the foregoing, ethics is the study of what is right and wrong, and to be ethical is to practice in your work what is “right” behavior. But you might ask (rightly!), What is right behavior? In a larger sense, it is what is legal (what the law is), and in an organizational sense, it is what is legal, too, but also what is allowed and not allowed according to codes of ethics and policies and procedures of that workplace. So a person could sexually harass others in the workplace (for example, make negative comments about them or undermine their work because of their gender), but this behavior, though unethical and perhaps prohibited by the workplace code of ethics and policies and procedures, may not rise to the level of illegal behavior.

Morality, we should note, is not the same as ethics, as it concerns what is right or wrong in the personal sphere, whereas ethics is concerned with the professional sphere. People
A Lack of Ethics: Florida’s YSI Private Prisons for Youth

In Florida, all of the juvenile prisons in the state are operated by private companies, and Youth Services International (YSI), a for-profit company owned by former hotelier James F. Slattery, operates about 9% of them (Kirkham, 2013, p. 1). YSI also operates detention centers and boot camps. Slattery’s company has been able to secure these contracts and many others in other states such as Georgia, Maryland, Nevada, New York, and Texas, worth over $100 million in the Florida contracts alone, despite the fact that the Justice Department has investigated complaints about them in several of these states. Auditors in Maryland found that YSI workers have encouraged fighting between inmates, and staff reportedly routinely fail to report “riots, assaults and claims of sexual abuse” (Kirkham, 2013, p. 2). A Bureau of Justice Statistics report indicated that a YSI facility in Palm Beach, Florida, had the “highest rate of reported sexual assaults out of 36 facilities reviewed in Florida” (Kirkham, 2013, p. 2). YSI had only 9% of the state contracts for youth beds in the state of Florida, but it had 15% of the cases of excessive force and injured youth (Kirkham, 2013, p. 8). Local public defender’s offices and the Southern Poverty Law Center have complained about the handling of youth and conditions at YSI facilities with little response by the state. In an investigation by a Huffington Post reporter, where official records were reviewed and former employees were interviewed, Kirkham (2013) found the following:

- Staff underreported fights and assaults to avoid scrutiny and the possible loss of contracts.
- Staff abused youth in the facilities by hitting and choking them, sometimes to the point of fracturing bones.
- Turnover of staff was high.
- Food was restricted and prepared incorrectly or in an unsanitary manner, and youth were encouraged to gamble with others to win their food portions.

When the reporter asked why, with this dismal record of care, YSI was continually offered contracts, the answer he received from those concerned about the treatment of juveniles both inside and outside of the state of Florida was that YSI supported the political campaigns of Florida’s and other states’ politicians with hefty donations. The company has donated more in Florida to politicians than two of the largest companies in the state, donating more than $400,000 to state candidates and committees over the last 15 years, according to the HuffPost’s review. The recipient of the largest share of those dollars was the Florida Republican Party, which took in more than $276,000 in that time. Former Florida Senate President Mike Haridopolos, an avid supporter of prison privatization, received more than $15,000 from company executives during state and federal races. (Kirkham, 2013, p. 6)

According to sources cited in the article, margins are narrow in the operation of correctional facilities (in other words, there is not a lot of fat in publicly operated prisons or jails), so if private-prison companies want to make money for their owners and investors, it means that they have to cut staff pay or benefits, slash programming, or feed people less, and it appears that all three of these things are happening at YSI facilities, indicating unethical (if not illegal) behavior by politicians, company managers, and correctional officers on the line.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Based on the above narrative, what factors led to the abuses reported in the YSI facilities?
2. What steps can be taken to reduce the incidence of such abuses in like facilities?
3. How is staffing tied up in the nature and amount of the abuse?

tend to base their beliefs about what is right or wrong, ethical or unethical, and moral or immoral on what they have learned from any number of sources. For instance, it is not difficult to figure out what the right thing is to do in the case of the death of Mr. Echevarria (as showcased in the Policy and Research box) because what we have learned from our family, schools, religious teachings, workplace policies, or other sources have helped us determine our own sense of right and wrong in such instances.
It is not clear how much of an ethical foundation most humans are born with, though it is clear that several institutions try to instill one in their members. The family is likely the most influential social institution to inculcate ethics and morality. Educational institutions, both K–12 schools and colleges, all in some way or another and usually in many ways, discuss what is right and wrong in many different situations. Diverse religions all convey a sense of right and wrong, and a key concept emanating from many of them is the golden rule, or “do unto others as you would have done unto you.” Other institutions such as the military, social and professional clubs, even kids’ sports teams, and, of course, the work environment itself—all strive to instill a moral or ethical framework in their members. The larger culture and life experiences doubtless also contribute to one’s sense of right and wrong.

Much of the research on ethics also reviews the theoretical bases for decisions involving ethics (Braswell, McCarthy, & McCarthy, 1991; Pollock, 1994, 1998, 2010; Rohr, 1989; R. C. Solomon, 1996). The philosophical touchstones that are referenced as guides to human decision making are ethical formalism, utilitarianism, religion, natural law, the ethics of virtue, the ethics of care, and egoism.

Moral behavior is shaped by both deontological and teleological ethical systems, and these touchstones are subsets of them. Deontological ethical systems are concerned with whether the act itself is good, and teleological ethical systems are focused on the consequences of the act. If the act itself is moral or ethical, then someone who is guided by a deontological framework is not concerned about the consequences of the act. It is enough to just act in a moral fashion. Someone who is guided by a teleological ethical system does not care so much about the rightness or the wrongness of the act but about whether the consequences of the act are good. Pollock (1998; 2010) defines the ethical frameworks that derive from these ethical systems in her book, Ethics in Crime and Justice: Dilemmas and Decisions.

**ETHICAL FORMALISM**

She defines ethical formalism as “what is good is that which conforms to the categorical imperative” (Pollock, 1998, p. 48). Under this system, there is the belief that there is a universal law that includes clear rights and wrongs. The philosopher Immanuel Kant (1774–1804) noted that there is a categorical imperative that requires that each person act as he or she would like all others to act (very much like the golden rule mentioned in the foregoing). Kant also believed that people must seek to be guided by reason in their decision making. Ethical formalism falls under a deontological system, as the focus is on the act and its rightness (or wrongness), rather than on the consequences of the act and their goodness (or badness). It is a position that does not account for gray areas: An act is either right, or it is wrong. So some acts, such as murder, lying, and stealing, are always wrong, even when the end of these acts is good.
In a series of articles appearing in the New York Times, reporter Michael Schwirtz (2014a; 2014b) documents the abuse and neglect suffered by mentally ill inmates incarcerated in the Rikers Island jails. Rikers Island jails are a complex of 10 jails on an island in the East River of New York City. Twenty officers from Rikers have been prosecuted for assaults on inmates in the last five years. In mid-March 2014, a mentally ill inmate died from being left in an overheated cell at Rikers. But the particular subject of these articles is a 25-year-old inmate named Jason Echevarria, who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. He was placed in a special mental-health unit at Rikers because of his diagnosed mental illness and because he had behavioral problems when in the general population of the jail. He had a record of attempted suicides while incarcerated at Rikers (Schwirtz, 2014a; 2014b).

Because there were problems with raw sewage coming out of toilets, on August 18, 2012, inmates were given a packet of powdered detergent that they were to use to clean up their cells (Schwirtz, 2014a, 2014b). By policy, inmates were supposed to be given detergent that was diluted by several gallons of water, but an inexperienced officer instead gave the full packets to inmates. Echevarria swallowed the toxic detergent, and as a result, his tongue and mouth skin were severely damaged as he vomited; he experienced extreme pain and expelled blood from his mouth over the course of several hours. A correctional officer claimed that he responded to Mr. Echevarria’s cries for help by reporting his health problems to his captain, who told the correctional officer not to talk to him about this again unless the inmate was dead. Despite this warning, the correctional officer claimed that he reported to the captain twice more about the inmate’s distress and even tried to call for medical assistance at least once but was prevented from doing so by the captain. Both the captain and the officer came off their shifts without getting any medical assistance for the inmate. Mr. Echevarria was dead the next morning. The captain was demoted to an officer position, was arrested by the FBI, and is being prosecuted for violating the civil rights of Mr. Echevarria. The officer was fired and has filed a wrongful-termination suit, disputing the captain’s claim that he was never told about Mr. Echevarria’s health crisis.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Why aren’t correctional facilities well suited to handle the mentally ill?

2. Instead of incarcerating the mentally ill, what should public policy be instead?

**UTILITARIANISM**

Utilitarianism is defined as “what is good is that which results in the greatest utility for the greatest number” (Pollock, 1998, p. 48). So morality is determined by how many people were helped by the act. The philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) believed...
that people will do a “utilitarian calculus” as regards how much pleasure or pain a given act will garner, and they will act on that to maximize pleasure. But when one’s pleasure conflicts with the greater good for society, then one must bow to the greater good, under a utilitarian perspective. As utilitarianism is focused on the end—whether it is moral or immoral or ethical or unethical—achieved by an act, it falls under the teleological system.

**RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE**

People who employ a [religious perspective](#) to guide their decisions believe that “what is good is that which conforms to God’s will” (Pollock, 1998, p. 48). This is a perspective that weighs what is right or wrong based on one’s religion and covers all facets of living and relationships with others. How one treats others, how one lives his or her life, and one’s understanding of the meaning of life itself are all influenced by this religious perspective. Under this perspective, both the means and the ends are foci of interest and are perceived through the lens of what one believes his or her god or gods would want. Most religions include a universal set of rights and wrongs, much like ethical formalism, and they have, as mentioned already, a form of the categorical imperative or the golden rule. Although there is widespread agreement across religions on some matters, there is much disagreement about social practices, such as drinking alcohol, dancing, certain kinds of foods, behavior on holy days, how appropriate clothing is, and the political and social status of women and other minorities, such as members of LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex) communities.
NATURAL LAW

Adherents of an ethical framework based on natural law believe that “what is good is that which is natural” (Pollock, 1998, p. 48). Behavior is or should be motivated by what is universally understood to be right and wrong. Using reason, all humans can figure these rights and wrongs out. The major difference between a natural-law believer and someone who is guided by a religious perspective is that, in the latter case, the supreme being or beings are the ones who determine what is right and wrong, whereas under a natural-law perspective, these rights and wrongs are just clear and knowable through reason. Under this perspective, we know what truth and decency are, and so we just need to act on our natural inclination in that direction. These natural laws about what is right and wrong are believed to be cross-cultural and true over time; they are not relative to time or place. Moreover, out of these natural laws flow natural rights, such as those accorded to citizens under the Constitution of the United States.

ETHICS OF VIRTUE

Believers in the ethics of virtue think that “what is good is that which conforms to the golden mean [the middle ground between positions]” (Pollock, 1998, p. 48). Instead of focusing on the nature of an action, the question here is whether the person is virtuous or good. The end to be achieved is to live a good and moral life by performing virtuous acts. Such virtues include “thriftiness, temperance, humility, industriousness, and honesty” (Pollock, 1998, p. 43). Models of virtue provide examples for those interested in living with integrity and according to a code of ethics.

ETHICS OF CARE

Relatedly, an ethics of care is centered on good acts. It is a deontological perspective. Those who subscribe to this framework believe that “what is good is that which meets the needs of those concerned” (Pollock, 1998, p. 48). Under this perspective, the care and concern for others is paramount. This is a perspective that is regarded as more “feminine,” as it is believed that women, as a group, are more attuned to the needs of others. Carol Gilligan (1982) found in her research on moral development that women’s perspective differs from men’s in this area. Women are more likely to be concerned about the care of others as guiding how they behave. Peacemaking and restorative justice are thought to derive from the ethics of care framework.

EGOISM

The last ethical framework that Pollock (1998) mentions is one based on the individual—namely, egoism. Under this framework, the needs of self are most important, so acting to satisfy one’s own wants and needs under this framework is acting ethically. As the act is the focus here, egoism falls under the deontological perspective. Even when acting on behalf of others, it is believed that one is acting out of enlightened egoism, or helping and caring for others so they will do the same for you when you are in need of assistance.

WHY PEOPLE BEHAVE UNETHICALLY

Despite the influence of these ethical frameworks, there are several reasons why people behave unethically. The most obvious and perhaps the most common reason is for personal gain or out of selfishness. For instance, the owner of YSI, which manages private prisons for juveniles in Florida, clearly benefits financially from cutting staff salaries and inmate food (this has to be unethical, right?), and not surprisingly, the result is poorly...
Operated and, at times, dangerous facilities (see Focus 4.1). The captain supervising the Rikers jail mental-health unit when Mr. Echevarria died, if he did what he is accused of—ignoring the desperate health needs of an inmate—behaved both criminally and unethically for selfish reasons: He did not want to be bothered (see Research and Policy box). The remedy for such a motivation is multifaceted and will be discussed momentarily.

**Official Deviance**

Another reason people in corrections might behave unethically is official deviance. Official deviance is defined by Lee and Visano (1994) as actions taken by officials which violate the law and/or the formal rules of the organization, but which are clearly oriented toward the needs and goals of the organization, as perceived by the official, and thus fulfill certain informal rules of the organization. (p. 203)

Lee and Visano (1994) studied officials’ behavior in both the United States and Canada, and they found that many deviant acts by criminal justice actors are not committed for personal gain but are committed to help the organization or to be in compliance with subcultural goals. If the subculture values secrecy and protection of fellow officers, as is true for subcultures in corrections, then one might be called upon to lie, even on the witness stand and under oath, to protect that officer when he or she is charged with wrongdoing (Stohr & Collins, 2014). The important point here is that the organizational member who lies or engages in other acts of official deviance gains nothing from engaging in the deviance; it is the organization or other organizational members who benefit. The penalty for organizational members who refuse to engage in official deviance might be shunning, harassment, or even firing for unsubstantiated reasons. The remedies to reduce official deviance are noted in the following (after the discussion of noble-cause corruption).

**Noble-Cause Corruption**

A third reason why criminal justice workers and corrections workers, in particular, might engage in unethical behavior might be that they are motivated by noble-cause corruption. Crank and Caldero (2000) define the noble cause for police officers as a profound moral commitment to make the world a safer place to live. Put simply, it is getting bad guys off the street. Police believe they’re on the side of angels and their purpose in life is getting rid of bad guys. (p. 35)

Crank and Caldero (2000) identify two noble-cause themes that explain police officer behavior: “The smell of the victim’s blood” and “the tower” (p. 35). What they mean by the smell of the victim’s blood is that police officers are motivated to act to protect and save victims. But in the course of trying to protect victims, they may step over an ethical line and lie, plant evidence, or abuse force so as to catch the “bad guy” by whatever means. And it is always the ends (e.g., catching the “bad guy”) that are more important than the means (e.g., acting professionally and ethically) with noble-cause corruption.

What Crank and Caldero (2000) mean by “the tower” is that police officers, when confronted with a shooter in a tower, will run to the tower (they will act in the face of danger) when everyone else is running from it. Because they are inclined to run to the
tower—metaphorically, at least—and also because their job requires that they act in dangerous situations, they may cross the ethical and legal line by overreacting or making rash decisions. They will “run to the tower” because they want to make things right. Crank and Caldero (2011) and others (e.g., Bartollas & Hahn, 1999; O’Connor, 2001) think that the police are motivated by their desire to make the world right. They tend to see the world in black and white, and when a suspect interferes with this perception, the police might engage in unethical behavior because it is inspired by acting in the cause of “rightness.” The problem is that the police are not always right, and they cannot always see what is right (as with all of us).

Noble-cause corruption, as an explanation for unethical behavior by corrections workers, makes a great deal of sense. One of the authors, when working in a male prison as an officer many years ago, was told right away which inmates were in for “child molesting,” though this information was supposedly confidential between the counselors and their clients (see the related story that appears at the beginning of this chapter). It was boldly stated that such inmates were not to be treated with respect by staff and were to be regarded with an additional dose of suspicion. Interactions with other correctional professionals over the years, in all kinds of correctional settings, reinforced this experience that correctional staff are motivated in their actions by “the victim’s blood,” especially when that victim is a child.

People who are attracted to work in corrections are also doers and people who want to make the world right. They will not hesitate to “run to the tower” to accomplish this feat either. The authors know of several stories of officers in federal prisons, state prisons, and jails who were thrilled to be called to engage in the quelling of altercations in corrections. These are stories of correctional staff who enthusiastically “ran to the tower” to “make the world right,” but at least in a few of these cases, those officers admitted that more force by staff was used to stop fights and put down disturbances than was strictly necessary. Once the fists started flying, the adrenaline took over, and the sense that force was being used to do good made its use, even its excessive use, justified.

Noble-cause corruption, as with official deviance and deviance for selfish ends, is all the more likely to occur in environments where the behavior of actors is hidden and little supervised, and the clients are powerless. These factors all accurately describe correctional environments. Most correctional work is done in some isolation from the larger community, and this is particularly true of prisons and jails. Even community correctional officers operate in environments in which the interactions are personal, and their content is not documented. Supervisors’ span of control is stretched, and they don’t always have adequate time to review an individual actor’s behavior. Correctional clients are some of the most powerless people in the United States. By law, they have very few rights and legal protections, and thus, they are subject to the behavior of both ethical and unethical correctional personnel. Top all of these organizational and individual characteristics off with the fact that correctional staff have a great deal of discretion (defined here as the ability to make choices and to act or not act on those choices), and there is only one more ingredient necessary to make the perfect admixture for unethical behavior: the influence of a negative subculture.
Subculture

In fact, a key feature of correctional environments that would make staff and management more prone to engage in unethical behavior is the presence of a strong negative subculture. Subcultures are subsets of larger cultures with their own norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and history. They can be positive in their promotion of prosocial values and support of their members, but they can also be negative when they promote antisocial values and in correctional work (or police work, too), unethical behavior. In an ethics training course conducted by one of the authors and a colleague for probation and parole managers, the participants identified several barriers to ethical practice in their workplaces. Most of these barriers Kauffman (1988, pp. 85–112) identified in his study of correctional officers, and Pollock (1994, p. 195) did so in her text on ethics and the negative side of subcultures (see In Focus 4.2).

 HOW TO PREVENT UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR AND PROMOTE ETHICAL WORK PRACTICES

As you can see, a few of these subcultural values are positive in that they provide support of coworkers, but the ones that support coworkers, even if they are wrong or engaged in wrongdoing vis-à-vis their clients or the work, are negative and promote an unethical work environment. Most of the managers at that ethics training session reported that
unethical behavior was common on the job and ranged from the routine, like rudeness to clients and their families, to the rare, like lying on reports and verbal and physical abuse of clients. The subcultural values listed before, however, made it difficult for managers to address the unethical behaviors.

This is why the organizational and individual remedies to prevent unethical behavior, whatever its motivation and in spite of the subculture, are multifaceted and include at least these:

1. Hire people who are less likely to be motivated by personal gain. To do this, correctional organizations need a well-developed selection process, with extensive background checks on potential hires (Stohr & Collins, 2014).

2. Pay people a professional wage, as then they will be less likely to be tempted to engage in unethical behavior for personal gain.

3. Encourage professional development of employees through further education, training, and engagement in professional organizations, as employees who are immersed in a professional and learning subculture are more likely to encourage positive change in others and improve the workplace, and they may be less likely to be tolerant of a workplace subculture that fosters unethical behavior.

4. Develop an ethics code with employee input, and review it regularly in the department. By involving a cross-section of staff in the development of an ethics code, more staff are likely to feel like they “own it” and therefore support it.

5. Require extensive training in ethics at the beginning of employment and throughout the employee’s career. More and ongoing training will reinforce the need to behave ethically, and it will undercut negative subcultural influences.

6. Supervise people sufficiently, and check up on what they are doing and how they are doing it.

7. Provide support for positive changes in the workplace that will enhance the ability of workers to do the job right. Sometimes, staff will claim that they cannot act ethically because there are not enough resources (e.g., time or staff) to do so; by ensuring there are enough resources—and this is hard to do in the public sector these days—managers make it possible for employees to do the work the right and ethical way.

8. Discipline violators of ethics, and if the violation of the rules or law is serious enough, fire them. Doing this will reinforce a positive subculture that is supportive of ethical work practice.

9. Promote those who behave ethically, and include ethics-related measures in evaluations. By doing this, managers will motivate all to support ethical practice.

10. Encourage whistle-blowing (the reporting of wrongdoing or problems in the workplace), and
make it possible for people to do so anonymously. Despite an ethical manager and workers’ best efforts, there is sometimes illegal or unethical behavior going on in the workplace, and because of the power of subcultures, correctional workers need to be able to report this behavior without fear of reprisal.
11. Develop the means for all employees to provide input into the decisions that are made by and for the organization, as doing so is more likely to be a check on management, uses the knowledge workers have, instills ownership of the work by those who do it, and leads to greater job satisfaction, less turnover, and more commitment to the job (Stohr & Collins, 2014).

12. Encourage involvement of outsider review and professional engagement (have an oversight board, support involvement in professional organizations, and provide access to researchers, politicians, and the media), as more openness is more likely to reduce unethical behavior and defuse the power of negative subcultures.

By using these remedies, the correctional manager and, where applicable, the correctional worker are more likely to turn the subculture into a positive support system that promotes ethical behavior. The remedies are also likely to increase professionalism and reduce abuse of clients.

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**WAR ON DRUGS = ATTACK ON ETHICS?**

Wars are a popular thing for politicians to wage. Wars on poverty, crime, and drugs were the brainchildren of several presidents and carried on by others since the 1960s. The terminology of war is powerful and connotes a level of serious attention to a topic that few other terms convey. Campaigns, assaults, and offensives are waged in wars with some urgency behind them. A war means that all available resources and attention will be devoted to that effort, and those who do not agree—well, they are like traitors to a righteous cause. Yet these political wars, somewhat like wars waged with weaponry made of steel, are problematic, as they are fighting social ills—poverty,

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**FIGURE 4.1** Public Views on Drug Policy in the United States

Note: Survey conducted February 14–23, 2014.

crime, and substance abuse—which, though admittedly harmful, are somewhat intractable and very complex and therefore require sustained effort and multifaceted solutions. Because of the nature of the problems, wars on them never seem to end because the problems do not end. Though the Iraq War seemed to never end (lasting at least eight years), consider that the war on drugs was first mentioned by President Nixon in 1971 and has been waged by every president since. We currently spend at least $51 billion each year on the war on drugs in this country, and that does not account for the millions who have passed through correctional doors as enemy combatants in the war and the billions it has taken to pay for their arrest, prosecution, and incarceration; nor does it account for the lost tax revenue and disrupted families and lives the war has left in its wake (the collateral damage). Many scholars, commentators, and even politicians now consider the war on drugs to be an abject failure, in that it has not reduced the supply or use of illicit drugs, and instead, it has galvanized the illegal drug trade and corrupted government officials in this country and Mexico and Central and South America (Cullen, Jonson, & Stohr, 2014). According to the Drug Policy Alliance (2016) (an organization whose

**ETHICAL ISSUE 4.2**

* What Would You Do?  

You are a probation officer with a large caseload of low-level drug offenders (mostly pot smokers). Some may be addicted to marijuana, and others may not, but you need to monitor them and ensure that they attend programming and provide clean urinalysis (UA) samples. The department of corrections you work for is in transition, however, moving from a more law enforcement focus to a greater treatment orientation. They have given you and other officers more leeway in decisions about whether to violate (write up) offenders who commit minor offenses. One of the UAs you take comes up dirty for marijuana, and you are faced with “violating” a client on your caseload who was convicted of felony drug possession. (There was enough to sell.) In all other ways, this client has done well, in that she has made all the meetings, been employed, and attended drug programming. Would you write a violation on this offender? (Doing so may result in jail time or a trip to prison.) Would it make any difference in your decision making if your client has two dependent children who will be placed in foster care should she be incarcerated? Why, or why not? Which ethical framework do you think best fits the decision you made?
mission is to end the war on drugs), the following outcomes have resulted from the war on drugs:

- Amount spent annually in the United States on the war on drugs: **More than $51,000,000,000**
- Number of people arrested in 2014 in the United States on nonviolent drug charges: **1.56 million**
- Number of people arrested for a marijuana law violation in 2014: **700,993**
- Number of those charged with marijuana law violations who were arrested for possession only: **619,809 (88%)**
- Number of Americans incarcerated in 2014 in federal, state, and local prisons and jails: **2,224,400 or 1 in every 111 adults**, the highest incarceration rate in the world
- Proportion of people incarcerated for a drug offense in state prison that are black or Hispanic, although these groups use and sell drugs at similar rates as whites: **57%**
- Number of people killed in Mexico’s drug war since 2006: **100,000+**
- Number of students who have lost federal financial aid eligibility because of a drug conviction: **200,000+**
- Number of people in the United States who died from a drug overdose in 2014: **47,055**
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that syringe access programs lower HIV incidence among people who inject drugs by **80%**. One-third of all AIDS cases in the United States have been caused by syringe sharing: **360,836 people**.
- U.S. federal government support for syringe access programs: **$0.00**, thanks to a federal ban reinstated by Congress in 2011 that prohibits any federal assistance for them. (p. 1)

So the point is that the war on drugs has been a huge resource suck, which has distracted our attention from drug treatment and real prevention, punished addicts, disproportionately incarcerated minority group members, and likely cost trillions of dollars over time. (It has been going on for 45 years at the time of this writing.) More to the point, it has challenged the ethical behavior of corrections officials by forcing them to overincarcerate some relatively minor offenders who got caught in its net. Correctional workers in prisons, jails, and detention centers or working in probation and parole and even their managers have little to no control over whom they are given to incarcerate or supervise in communities. But they are affected by the drug war because their facilities and caseloads have been crowded by such offenders, which has made carrying out their tasks very difficult and sometimes ethically challenging. They have been involved in drug monitoring and treatment to a much greater extent than if the war had not been waged. They have had to supervise people who—compared to robbers and rapists—do not really merit the use of incarceration and perhaps even community supervision. Therefore, we would add one more remedy to the list that will help organizations prevent unethical behavior, but this remedy must be understood by policy makers: Consider the likely outcomes of wars or other grand schemes on the ethics of the actors or soldiers tasked with carrying them out, and consider the larger social impact of waging war on your own citizens.
SUMMARY

- Ethical work practice is a messy business, sometimes clear-cut but often fraught with anxiety. The nature of corrections work and the organization’s attendant subcultures often create situations where ethical dilemmas are common and their resolution difficult. Moreover, the kinds of people hired in corrections work, those with a noble-cause bent, are sometimes more susceptible to engaging in ethical abuses, though that is not their intent. Thankfully, there are things that organizations and individuals can do to prevent ethical abuses, but they require some resource commitment and resolve.

KEY TERMS

- Deontological ethical systems
- Discretion
- Egoism
- Ethical formalism
- Ethics
- Religious perspective
- Discretion
- Ethics of care
- Ethics of virtue
- Egoism
- Natural law
- Noble cause
- Official deviance
- Teleological ethical systems
- Utilitarianism
- Ethics of care
- Ethics of virtue
- Natural law
- Noble cause
- Official deviance

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where do we learn our sense of right and wrong? Why do you think that some sources are more powerful in influencing people than others?

2. What makes the correctional workplace more susceptible to unethical behaviors than most workplaces? If you were to work in corrections, how would you make sure that you always made the “right decision”?

3. What can organizations do to prevent noble-cause corruption? Do you think you are a person who could be corrupted this way?

4. Which ethical framework best describes your feeling about ethics? Why do you think this is applicable to you?

5. Discuss how the drug war has affected corrections and how it has threatened the ethical practice of workers.

USEFUL INTERNET SITES

Please note that the sites listed can be accessed at edge.sagepub.com/stohrcorrections.

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): www.aclu.org

The ACLU has been at the forefront of the effort to protect inmates from abuses in corrections for many years. On their website, you will learn about their successes in this area and where they think more effort is warranted.

The Sentencing Project: www.sentencingproject.org

The Sentencing Project has been fighting for decades for the reduction of sentences for crimes in this country. On their website, they feature the areas in which they have achieved some successes and where more attention is still needed.

Southern Poverty Law Center: www.splcenter.org

The Southern Poverty Law Center is focused on identifying and ending hate crimes in this country. On their website, you’ll learn about where hate-centered organizations are located and what they are up to.

Drug Policy Alliance: www.drugpolicy.org

The DPA has been involved in changing U.S. policy on drugs. On their website, they feature how much they have achieved and what still needs to be done.
Sharpen your skills with SAGE edge at edge.sagepub.com/stohrcorrections. SAGE edge for Students provides a personalized approach to help you accomplish your coursework goals in an easy-to-use learning environment. You’ll find action plans, mobile-friendly eFlashcards, and quizzes as well as video, web, and resources and links to SAGE journal articles to support and expand on the concepts presented in this chapter.