# Exploring Learning During a Business Ethics Simulation

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore a simulation incorporating online collaborative technologies in a business ethics course to examine whether it affects student learning. A qualitative case study method of inquiry was used to develop an in-depth description and analysis of student learning during a business ethics simulation using data collected through a questionnaire, student ratings of the simulation, focus groups, and a review of videos by the researcher. The results of this study provide insight into themes that may affect students' moral sensitivity and judgment. Three key themes emerged during data analysis: 1) working in groups, 2) watching YouTube videos, and 3) experiencing less nervousness. Working in groups appeared to affect moral sensitivity because the students were exposed to more perspectives from classmates who helped them interpret the case simulation and identify ethical issues. The students reported being able to rewind and review the YouTube videos was helpful to learning. The videos also provided more perspectives and multiple approaches for reasoning which may have affected students' moral sensitivity in their effort to interpret the simulations and identify ethical issues. Students reported being less nervous while recording their YouTube video than if they had to complete the assignment in-class in front of their peers. In addition, students came to class with their YouTube video completed, they had time in class to reflect on other students' performances during class time, rather than focus on their impending performance. The findings of this study add to the literature in the area of business ethics by describing how the integration of technology for ethical simulations may affect student learning. With the three themes identified, the results of this study have implications for college instructors who are teaching business ethics courses.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

Goldman Sachs, Enron and the Tom Petters' Ponzi scheme are all recent examples of business ethics scandals reported in the media. Business ethics scandals affect many stakeholders including shareholders, employees, retirees, customers, and the community. People lose their jobs, retirees lose their life savings, businesses lose credibility, and sometimes communities are devastated.

The Wall Street investment bank Goldman Sachs paid record bonuses in 2009 after receiving $10 billion in government bailout funds due to the subprime mortgage crisis. Goldman Sachs allegedly played a role in contributing to the subprime mortgage crisis. In April 2010 the Greek government experienced a financial crisis because it was having trouble refinancing its debt. Goldman Sachs allegedly helped the Greek government hide its debt and then speculated Greece would eventually default (Keteyian, 2010). Greek citizens rioted in the streets as a result of the financial crisis. As people around the world watched their retirement savings shrink, Goldman Sachs employees received record bonuses. Unethical behavior at Enron Corporation caused one of the largest bankruptcies in U.S. history. In 2010 Minnesotan Tom Petters was convicted of creating the largest fraud in Minnesota history. With all of the business ethics scandals in the media one can ask: How can institutions of higher education help business students consider the ethics of what they are doing?

In spite of recurring ethical scandals hope does exist in business ethics classrooms. Exposing college students to business ethics education can increase their awareness of ethical issues and lead to more ethical decision making (Association to

Advance Collegiate Schools of Business [AACSB], 2004; Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008; Sims, 2002a). According to Sims (2002a), "teaching ethics in business schools can be effective in developing students' moral reasoning skills, ethical sensitivity and ethical behaviors" (p. 393).

How students learn about business ethics is changing. For centuries students traditionally learned about ethics in a face-to-face environment, but growth in the 21st century of online learning offers a new modality where students can learn about ethics. Many students currently enrolled in college courses are part of the Millennial Generation. Howe and Nadler (2009) defined Millennials as people born between 1982 and 2004, making them the first generation to come of age during the new millennium. Millennials have been immersed in technology throughout their lives. Prensky (2001) designated Millennial generation students as "Digital Natives" because they are "native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the internet" (p. 1). According to Prensky (2001), "Digital Natives" have spent their lives surrounded by cell phones, video games, and computers, and he asserted because of their immersion in technology students now think differently than their predecessors.

Millennials seem to prefer to communicate visually through photos and videos (Berk 2009; Oblinger, 2008). They tend to be avid users of online collaborative technologies including video sharing sites, podcasts, blogs, wikis, instant messaging, online video games, virtual worlds, and social networking sites. Students are using online collaborative technologies to communicate and express themselves. Online collaborative technologies offer a means of helping students to learn in a modality that

these students seem to prefer. According to Zull (2004), in order to encourage learning, students should work on activities and topics that naturally appeal to them. Online collaborative technologies are a promising example of 21st century technology that appeals to college students and could help students learn about business ethics.

Ethics education is essential because business professionals will face ethical dilemmas throughout their careers. A nationwide survey of employees by the Ethics Resource Center (2007) reported "56% of employees personally observed conduct that violated company ethics standards, policy or the law" (p. 1). The most frequently reported unethical behaviors were lying, abusive behavior, and conflicts of interest. Several recent examples in the media reinforce the importance of exposing students to ethical issues. Goldman Sachs, Enron, and the Tom Petters' Ponzi scheme are all recent examples of business ethics scandals that have harmed multiple stakeholders including shareholders, employees, retirees, customers, and the global community.

One of the biggest business ethics scandals of the new century was the bankruptcy of Enron Corporation in 2001. At the time, Enron's bankruptcy was the largest corporate bankruptcy in U.S. history until it was surpassed by WorldCom in 2002 which also engaged in unethical and illegal behavior. Investors, including employees, lost over $60 billion in investment value, much of which was held by middle class Americans in their mutual fund retirement accounts. Over 25% of Enron's 20,000 employees were laid off and employees lost an estimated $1.2 billion of retirement savings (Goodpaster, Nash, & de Bettignies, 2006). Enron executives engaged in unethical and illegal behaviors that

cost thousands of employees their jobs and retirees lost their life savings. The Houston community also suffered as a result of the collapse of Enron.

Enron used a variety of accounting maneuvers including the use of special purpose entities to hide debt and losses from bad investments. Enron had a competitive work culture where employees were encouraged to take risks. A variety of executives engaged in unethical and illegal behaviors, and many Enron executives went to prison including CEO Jeffrey Skillings and CFO Andrew Fastow.

Arthur Anderson, LLP served as Enron's external auditor and the firm eventually collapsed, resulting in nearly 85,000 employees losing their jobs. Although only a relatively small percentage of Arthur Anderson, LLP employees worked on the Enron audit, nearly all of them lost their jobs (Delroy, Burns, Manor, McRoberts, & Torriero, 2002). Enron employees worked with a variety of outside advisers including attorneys, auditors and bankers to create the complex set of financial structures that ultimately led to Enron's bankruptcy.

On April 8, 2010, businessman Tom Petters was sentenced to 50 years in prison after being convicted of running a $3.65 billion Ponzi scheme (Phelps & Browning, 2010). The unethical and illegal behavior of Petters and his associates resulted in the largest fraud in Minnesota history. Petters defrauded a wide spectrum of investors including over 100 clergy members, not for profit organizations, and hedge fund managers. Some victims lost their jobs while others lost their entire life savings. Minnesota Teen Challenge, a drug and alcohol program for teens and adults, lost $5.7 million it invested with Petters. The program was forced to lay off 22 employees who

provided services for drug and alcohol recovery clients (Phelps, 2009). Petters lived a lavish lifestyle that included million dollar homes and luxury cars. Petters was turned in by one of his executives, Deanna Coleman, a 15-year employee. Coleman participated in the fraud and also lived a millionaire lifestyle but she felt increasingly guilty about her role in the scheme so she contacted the U.S. Attorney to become an informant (Phelps & Tevlin, 2008). Petters and his associates offered investors high investment returns on loans to finance the purchase of electronics that would be resold to large retailers. The government demonstrated the electronics inventory never existed. Petters paid early investors with proceeds from later investors. The unethical and illegal behavior of Petters and his associates ruined the lives of hundreds of people including employees, retirees, and other investors.

The actions of Goldman Sachs, Enron and Petters demonstrate the significant impact that unethical behavior has on stakeholders. Students can learn from the mistakes of Goldman Sachs, Enron and Petters by identifying ethical issues, reasoning through possible courses of action, and indentifying the impact on stakeholders.

**Statement of the Problem**

Business ethics scandals have a significant impact on stakeholders including shareholders, employees, retirees, customers, and the community. Exposing students to business ethics education in college can increase their awareness of ethical issues and lead to more ethical decision making (AACSB, 2004; Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008; Sims, 2002a).

Face-to-face ethics education has been around for centuries, while online ethics education has been available only recently. Currently, online education is experiencing significant growth. A 2009 survey of online learning noted online enrollment grew at an annual growth rate of 19% over the past six years which is much faster than the 1.5% annual growth rate for overall higher education enrollments (Allen & Seaman, 2010). A great deal is known about learning in face-to-face business ethics courses (Sims, 2002b; Trevino, 1992; Waples, Antes, Murphy, Connelly, & Mumford, 2008) while comparatively little is known about learning in business ethics courses incorporating online technologies. A few authors have written about online learning and business ethics (Ottewill & Wall, 2002; Painter-Morland, Fontrodona, Hoffman, & Rowe, 2003; Walker & Jeurissen, 2003), but little is written about using advanced methods such as online collaborative technologies or Web 2.0 tools. This presents an opportunity and need to discover how online collaborative technologies can help college students learn about business ethics.

In order to address the literature gap, this study explored the learning experiences of students enrolled in a single business ethics course that incorporated online collaborative technologies.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to explore to what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies affect student learning in a business ethics course. In order to gain a better understanding, this study explored student learning during a simulation in a single business ethics course.

**Research Questions**

1. What do students identify as significant experiences in a business ethics simulation?
2. To what extent if any does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies promote ethical thinking among college students?

**Research Overview**

To increase our understanding of how online collaborative technologies can help students learn about business ethics, qualitative research was conducted using a case study format. Creswell (2009) noted that a case study is a qualitative strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth an event, program, or activity of one or more individuals. A case study research design was used to examine the learning that took place in a business ethics simulation incorporating online collaborative technologies. The case consisted of a single business ethics course taught at the College of St. Scholastica, a private Catholic liberal arts college in the upper Midwest, during fall semester 2010.

The college was founded by Benedictine sisters and they selected five values to guide daily life on campus including (a) community, (b) hospitality, (c) respect, (d) love of learning, and (e) stewardship. The values were informed by *The Rule of St. Benedict* written by St. Benedict in the 6$^{th}$ century. *The Rule* serves as a practical and spiritual guide for people of all denominations to guide daily living (Saint Scholastica Monastery, 2010). Students at the college are exposed to the Benedictine values throughout their college experience. Students learn about the Benedictine values in new student orientation, the values are painted on the walls, and many professors discuss them in

class. The campus chooses one value to focus on each year and presentations and discussion groups explore the chosen value. The Benedictine values inform the education of students at the college throughout their four-year experience.

Twenty three undergraduate students participated in the study. The course used a hybrid model of delivery incorporating both face-to-face and online instructional methods. As part of a normal class assignment students working in groups completed a simulation that involved students role-playing characters in a case study. Students created a video clip of their group role-playing the characters in the case study as they analyzed the ethical dilemma using multiple ethical theories. Students spent time rehearsing and planning before video recording their ethical dilemma. Students created a story board that included an outline and dialogue for each scene. Students suggested a course of action to address the ethical dilemma. Videos were uploaded to YouTube and students posted feedback online of each other's work. Multiple sources of data were collected including a questionnaire, focus group interviews, student ratings of the simulation, and a review of videos by the researcher.

This study was guided by the Four Component Model (FCM) proposed by Rest (1986) and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) proposed by Kolb (1984). According to Kolb (1984), learning proceeds as a cycle and results from the integration of four learning modes: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation. The ELT was chosen in this study because it has informed the theory and practice of experiential learning in a variety of disciplines including business education (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Experiential learning is an effective

strategy to help students learn about business ethics (Baetz & Carson, 1999; LeClair, Ferrell, Montuori, & Willems, 1999; Sanyal, 2000; Sims, 2002a; Sims & Felton, 2006).

The FCM (Rest, 1986) was chosen to guide this study because it is widely used in ethics research (Rest & Narvaez, 1994; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau & Thoma, 1999). The FCM addresses the limitations of Kohlberg's single-variable theory by providing a more comprehensive account of moral behavior (Walker, 2004). Kohlberg's theory focused primarily on one process of morality: moral judgment. Rest (1986) built upon Kohlberg's work with the FCM that described the inner psychological processes that lead to moral behavior including (a) moral sensitivity, (b) judgment, (c) motivation, and (d) character (Rest et al., 1999). This study focused on the first two components of Rest's model, moral sensitivity and moral judgment. Most theorists include moral sensitivity and moral judgment as the necessary first steps in ethical decision making (Ritter, 2006). Trevino, Weaver, and Reynolds (2006) noted the link between moral sensitivity and moral judgment has rarely been studied. In addition, much has been written about moral judgment; however, there is a need for more research that focuses on moral sensitivity (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005).

**Significance of the Study**

This study offered an opportunity to explore the learning that took place in a business ethics course which incorporated online collaborative technologies. This study informs college instructors, deans, and others interested in helping college students learn about business ethics.

The study's findings advance understanding of how students learn by providing an in-depth, descriptive analysis of students' perception of their own learning in a business ethics course which incorporated online collaborative technologies. The study may also have implications for understanding the role of online collaborative technology use in disciplines outside of business ethics.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study was conducted at the institution where the researcher teaches, but he did not teach the course. Student perceptions of the researcher could affect their willingness to participate in interviews, so participation was voluntary.

**Delimitations of the Study**

This study focused on one section of a business ethics course taught at a private Catholic liberal arts college. The study was not designed to generalize about all students enrolled in business ethics courses. This study analyzed selected theoretical components of ELT (Kolb, 1984) and the FCM (Rest, 1986); it did not seek to analyze all of the components of these theories.

**Definition of Terms and Concepts**

*Business Ethics:* "The study of what constitutes right and wrong (or good and bad) human conduct in a business context" (Shaw, 2008, p. 6).

*Experiential Learning Theory:* Learning is defined as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41).

*Millennial Students:* All people born between 1982 and 2004, making them the first generation to come of age during the new millennium (Howe & Nadler, 2009).

*Online Collaborative Technologies:* Web 2.0 technologies that allow users to interact and share information on the Internet. Users collaborate to create and change web content. A partial list of examples include (a) blogs, (b) Google Docs, (c) online discussion boards, (d) social networking sites, (e) social bookmarking sites, and (f) video sharing sites such as YouTube, and (g) wikis.

*User-Generated Content:* Includes the various forms of media content on the internet which are publicly available and created by end users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Examples include audio, photos, text, and videos.

*Web 2.0:* Internet content and applications that are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

*YouTube*: A video sharing website where users can upload and share videos. Users can post comments on videos. In order to promote sharing of videos, YouTube provides specific codes to users that can be embedded in third-party websites such as blogs and social networking sites.

**Summary**

Business professionals face ethical dilemmas throughout their careers. Exposing students to business ethics education in college can increase their awareness of ethical issues and lead to more ethical decision making (AACSB, 2004; Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008; Sims, 2002a). How students learn about business ethics is changing. For centuries students traditionally learned about ethics in a face-to-face environment, but growth in

the 21st century of online learning offers a new modality through which students can learn about ethics.

Millennial generation students come to college fluent in many technologies and they seem to prefer to communicate visually through photos and videos (Berk 2009; Oblinger, 2008). Students are using online collaborative technologies to communicate and express themselves. Online collaborative technologies offer a means of helping students to learn in a modality that students seem to prefer. Online collaborative technologies are a promising example of 21st century technology that may help college students learn about business ethics.

# Chapter 2. Literature Review

Little is known about how online collaborative technologies can help college students learn about business ethics. The following review explores several bodies of literature related to ethical development and college students learning business ethics. The bodies of literature focus on moral development, experiential learning theory, business ethics education, online learning, and millennial students.

## How Students Learn About Business Ethics

In order to understand how students learn about business ethics, moral development theories and experiential learning theory are discussed. Kohlberg (1969) and Rest (1986) developed theories of moral development that have guided the development of ethics research and course development.

Moral reasoning is judgment about what is right and wrong; moral development is the maturity level of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969). Kohlberg built upon the work of Piaget and developed a theory of cognitive moral development that proposed a stage theory of moral reasoning. Kohlberg divides moral development into three major levels and six stages summarized below:

Pre-Conventional Level:

Stage 1: The Stage of Punishment and Obedience. Right is literal obedience to rules and authority, avoiding punishment, and not doing physical harm.

Stage 2: The Stage of Individual Instrumental Purpose and Exchange. Right is serving one's own or others' needs and making fair deals in terms of concrete exchange.

Conventional Level:

Stage 3: The Stage of Mutual Interpersonal Expectations, Relationships, and Conformity. The right is playing a good (nice) role, being concerned about other people and their feelings, keeping loyalty and trust with partners, and being motivated to follow rules and expectations.

Stage 4: The Stage of Social System and Conscience Maintenance. The right is doing one's duty in society, upholding the social order, and maintaining the welfare of society or the group.

Post-Conventional and Principled Level:

Stage 5: The Stage of Prior Rights and Social Contract or Utility. The right is upholding the basic rights, values, and legal contracts of a society, even when they conflict with the concrete rules and laws of the group.

Stage 6: The Stage of Universal Ethical Principles. This stage assumes guidance by universal ethical principles that all humanity should follow. (adapted from Kohlberg, 1981, pp. 409-412)

Each successive stage represents a higher level of reasoning. The moral reasoning of many adults would fall into stage 4 while few adults achieve stage 5 level of reasoning (Trevino, 1986). Sims (2002b) noted "the stages proceed from self-oriented thinking and from a punishment reward orientation to an abstract principle orientation"

(p. 135). Kohlberg's theory of moral development has influenced the thinking behind many significant initiatives in ethics education (Rest, 1986; Sims, 2002b).

An alternative to Kohlberg's theory was proposed by Gilligan (1982), who criticized Kohlberg's theory as being biased against women because his research subjects were all male. When confronted with an ethical decision Gilligan proposed males tend to exhibit an ethic of justice while females exhibit an ethic of care. Gilligan's claims have been disputed and the preponderance of evidence shows both males and females reason based on care and justice; however, Gilligan's work has increased the awareness that care is an important part of moral reasoning (Nucci, 2008).

Another approach to moral development is the virtues approach that advocates teaching students certain virtues and values (Breitborde & Swiniarski, 2006). The popular "Six Pillars of Character" advocates students should learn the following six values: (a) trustworthiness, (b) respect, (c) responsibility, (d) fairness, (e) caring, and (f) citizenship (Josephson Institute, 2010). The pillars help students distinguish what is right and wrong and define good character. Kohlberg rejected the focus on virtues and values due to a lack of consensus on what virtues should be taught and because people can share the same values and yet arrive at different decisions (Nucci, 2008).

Kohlberg's theory has also been criticized for its reliance on justice-based philosophical theories (Trevino et al., 2006). Psychologists have criticized the rigid stage progression of Kohlberg's theory (Siegler, 1997 as cited in Trevino et al., 2006). To address these criticisms, Rest et al. (1999) proposed an alternative to Kohlberg's theory.

Kohlberg's theory focused primarily on only one process of morality: moral judgment. Rest (1986) built upon Kohlberg's work with the FCM of morality that described the inner psychological processes that lead to moral behavior (Rest et al., 1999). In order to behave morally a person needs to be performing all four psychological processes (Rest, 1986). Rest's model is widely used in ethics research (Rest & Narvaez, 1994; Rest et al., 1999).

Rest's model suggested four inner psychological processes together result in observable behavior. The FCM consists of the following processes:

1. Moral sensitivity (interpreting the situation, role-taking how various actions would affect the parties concerned, imagining cause-effect chains of events, and being aware that there is a moral problem when it exists)
2. Moral judgment (judging which action would be most justifiable in a moral sense)
3. Moral motivation (the degree of commitment to taking the moral course of action, valuing moral values over the other values, and taking personal responsibility for moral outcomes)
4. Moral character (persisting in a moral task, having courage, overcoming fatigue and temptations, and implementing subroutines that serve a moral goal). (Rest et al.,1999, p. 101)

Rest developed the Defining Issues Test (DIT), a widely used ethics research instrument that measures component 2: moral judgment. The DIT is based on Kohlberg's theory of cognitive moral development. The DIT is comprised of six moral dilemmas,

with 12 items per dilemma. Participants rate each of the 12 items in terms of decision making importance. After rating all 12 items the participants are asked to rank the most important of the 12 items in making a decision. The ratings and rankings are used to derive participants' P scores (ranging from 0 to 95) which are interpreted as the extent to which a participant prefers postconventional reasoning. The DIT is the most commonly used instrument to measure cognitive moral development (Trevino & Weaver, 2003). In 1999, Rest and colleagues stated they used a "Neo-Kohlbergian" approach to update the instrument and designated it the DIT-2, consisting of five dilemmas. The DIT-2 is shorter and incorporates different dilemmas (Rest et al., 1999).

Most developmental models focus on moral development being related to age. Research using the DIT revealed age alone does not account for increases in moral judgment (Rest et al., 1999). Rest noted years of formal education is a larger predictor than the age of person in regards to moral development (Rest & Narvaez, 1994). Rest (1986) stated, "moral education programs designed to stimulate moral judgment do produce modest but significant gains…adults show more change than younger participants in moral education programs" (p. 177).

The FCM by Rest (1986) was chosen to guide this study because it is widely used in ethics research (Rest & Narvaez, 1994; Rest et al., 1999). The FCM describes the inner psychological processes that lead to moral behavior including (a) moral sensitivity, (b) judgment, (c) motivation, and (d) character. The study focused on the first two components of Rest's model, moral sensitivity and moral judgment. Most theorists include moral sensitivity and moral judgment as the necessary first steps in ethical

decision making (Ritter, 2006). Trevino et al. (2006) noted the link between moral sensitivity and moral judgment has rarely been studied. In addition, much has been written about moral judgment; however, there is a need for more research focusing on moral sensitivity (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005).

Rest's FCM has furthered the understanding of the inner psychological processes that contribute to moral behavior. An effective way for students to learn about business ethics is through experiential learning (AACSB, 2004; Sims, 2002b; Sims & Brinkmann, 2003). Sims (2002b) noted, "experiential learning theorists including Dewey, Lewin, Piaget and Kolb maintain learning is most effective (i.e., most likely to lead to behavioral change) when it begins with experience" (p. 162).

**Experiential Learning Theory**

Learning is the process of gaining knowledge, understanding, or skill through study, instruction, or experience (Learning, 2010). Learning theories help explain how people learn. Kolb (1984) takes a constructivist approach in ELT, which holds knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.

Constructivism holds that learning is an active process in which students construct new knowledge based on their current and past knowledge and experiences. By reflecting on prior knowledge, students construct their own views of the world through experiences occurring in their physical and social environments. Constructivism was influenced by the work of Dewey, Vygotsky, and Bruner (Breitborde & Swiniarski, 2006). Kolb (1984) explained ELT defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the

combination of grasping and transforming experience" (p. 41). Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning proposed learning proceeds as a cycle and results from the integration of four learning modes: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation. Concrete experience occurs by having an experience and or by doing something. Concrete experiences become the basis for reflections and observations. In abstract conceptualization mode "reflections are assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn. The implications can be actively tested and serve as guides in creating new experiences" (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194). Learning is most effective when all four modes in the cycle are completed; for example, reflection itself does not promote learning unless an individual acts on it. Sims (2002b) noted, "the underlying premise of Kolb's cycle, or learning sequence, is that learners, learn best when they are active, take responsibility for their own learning, and can relate and apply what they have learned to their own context" (p. 210).

**Connections between the FCM and ELT**

There are similarities between the FCM and ELT. Both the FCM and ELT have four components that interact within each theory. Sensitivity and judgment in the FCM is similar to reflective observation and abstract conceptualization in ELT. Sensitivity involves interpreting what actions are possible and who will be affected by those actions. Judgment involves a person being able to make a judgment about what is the morally right thing to do in a situation (Rest, 1986). Reflective observation in ELT involves learners being able to reflect on and observe their experiences from many perspectives.

Abstract conceptualization occurs when learners create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories (Kolb, 1984).

The design of the simulation in this study was guided by ELT, and interview questions in the data collection phase were guided by the FCM. The purpose of this study was to explore how a simulation that incorporated online collaborative technologies helped students learn about business ethics. Both the FCM and ELT support the purpose and design of this study.

**Business Ethics Education**

Shaw (2008) defined business ethics as "the study of what constitutes right and wrong (or good and bad) human conduct in a business context" (p. 6). Business professionals will face ethical decisions throughout their careers. Exposing students to business ethics education in college can increase their awareness of ethical issues and lead to more ethical decision making (AACSB, 2004; Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008; Sims, 2002a). Sims (2002a) observed, "teaching ethics in business schools can be effective in developing students' moral reasoning skills, ethical sensitivity and ethical behaviors" (p. 393). Two additional reasons to teach business ethics are that Congress passed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX) in 2002, encouraging ethical behavior; and business school accreditation standards require higher education institutions to incorporate business ethics into the curriculum.

The SOX Act encourages ethical behavior for publicly traded entities by requiring corporations to implement a "Code of Ethics" for senior financial officers (Hartman & Desjardins, 2008). SOX was passed by Congress in 2002 after Enron Corporation's

bankruptcy, at that time the largest bankruptcy in America's history. Section 406 of SOX is titled "Code of Ethics for Senior Financial Officers" and requires companies to include standards that promote:

1. Honest and ethical conduct, including the ethical handling of actual or apparent conflicts of interest between personal and professional relationships.
2. Full, fair, accurate, timely, and understandable disclosure in the periodic reports required to be filed by the issuer.
3. Compliance with applicable governmental rules and regulations. (Hartman & Desjardins, 2008, p. 5)

Through SOX the federal government is encouraging business executives to act in an ethical manner.

**AACSB Accreditation and Ethics Education Requirements**

The AACSB is the international accreditation body for higher education business schools. AACSB (2004) requires business schools to incorporate ethics into their curriculum. Colleges and universities are given flexibility in how they incorporate ethics which creates diverse opinions among institutions.

In April 2010 there were 593 institutions around the world which held AACSB accreditation (AACSB, 2010). Collins and Wartick (as cited in O'Connor & Godar, 1999) noted, "in 1974, the AACSB's Curriculum Standard IVb added ethics to the accrediting standards for business programs" (p. 69). In 2003, after a wave of corporate scandals including the bankruptcy of Enron, the AACSB revised the ethics education

standards to recommend “schools are encouraged to develop ‘codes of conduct’ to indicate the importance of proper behavior for administrators, faculty, and students in their professional and personal actions” (AACSB, 2004, p. 20). The AACSB offers flexibility to colleges when implementing standards that affect areas including ethics. The AACSB (2004) standards state that no specific courses are required, but students should be exposed to learning experiences and acquire knowledge and skills in “ethical understanding and reasoning abilities…and ethical and legal responsibilities in organizations and society” (p. 21). In the interpretation of standard 15 Assurance of Learning Standards the AASCB (2004) stated:

> Accreditation does not mandate any particular set of courses, nor is a prescribed pattern or order intended. The school must justify how curricular contents and structure meet the needs of the mission of the school and the learning goals for each degree program. (p. 22)

The AASCB (2004) recommended students learn about four areas of business ethics education: (a) responsibility of business in society, (b) ethical leadership, (c) ethical corporate governance, and (d) ethical decision making. Ferrell and Ferrell (2008) stated the stakeholder perspective is an appropriate framework for teaching all four areas of business ethics.

Business in society focuses on how actions by business leaders affect multiple stakeholders, including (a) shareholders, (b) employees, (c) customers, (d) suppliers, (e) the community, and (f) the environment. Stakeholder Theory, a prominent theory in business ethics, argues that business leaders must focus on more than just profits for their

shareholders but must also balance the interests of multiple stakeholders (Evan & Freeman, 1988).

Ethical leadership is another area of business ethics education that AACSB recommended students learn about. Ethical behavior modeled by an organization's leaders sends a powerful message to employees and can encourage ethical conduct in organizations (AACSB, 2004). Ferrell, Fraedrich, and Ferrell (2008) observed peers or significant others in an organization can significantly influence a person's behavior. Organizational culture influences behavior in an organization, and it is important that leaders foster an ethical culture through executive behavior, education about ethical polices, and consistent enforcement of ethical policies among all employees. In addition, leaders and employees must be held accountable for their actions (AACSB, 2004).

Students need to learn about federal laws and internal organizational policies that support ethical behavior. As part of ethical leadership students must be aware of policies in organizations that support ethical behavior including codes of conduct and compliance programs. It is essential employees review an organization's ethics policies on a regular basis. Students should learn about federal laws that support ethical conduct including the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines for Organizations and SOX (AACSB, 2004).

Corporate governance is another component of business ethics education outlined by AACSB. Sound corporate governance is essential to deter unethical behavior and to manage risk. Areas of corporate governance students should learn include (a) the roles of boards of directors, (b) understanding of internal control activities, (c) characteristics of

an effective code of conduct, and (d) characteristics of an effective compliance program (AACSB, 2004).

Ethical decision making is the final component of business ethics education. The AACSB (2004) stated "preparing students for ethical decision making should be a key component of the preparation of ethical business leaders" (p. 12). Students are encouraged to consider multiple stakeholders and evaluate decisions based on multiple ethical theories (AACSB, 2004; Goodpaster et al., 2006; Sims, 2002a; Velasquez, Andre, Shanks, & Meyer, 1996).

Ethical theories traditionally taught in business ethics courses include (a) utilitarianism, (b) deontological, and (c) virtue ethics. Ethical theories help people reason through ethical dilemmas. Beauchamp, Bowie, and Arnold (2009) observed "ethical theory and moral philosophy point to reflection on the nature and justification of right actions" (p. 2).

Utilitarianism deals with making decisions for the greatest good for the greatest number of people and focuses on the consequences of decisions (AACSB, 2004; Gibson, 2006; Hartman & Desjardins, 2008; Jennings, 2009). Mill (1863) proposed a principle of utility as "the greatest happiness principle." According to Mill, "actions are right, in proportion to their tendency to promote happiness or absence of pain insofar as they tend to produce pain or displeasure" (as cited in Beauchamp et al., 2009, p. 19). Utilitarianism determines the ethical significance of an action by looking at the consequences of the action (Desjardins, 2006). There are several criticisms of utilitarianism, including the difficulty of measuring happiness and an assertion that the ends do justify the means

(Desjardins, 2006). Utilitarianism is also criticized because it ignores certain duties and principles that people should consider and obey, including the principles of justice and respect (Beauchamp et al., 2009; Desjardins, 2006). In contrast to utilitarianism, deontology rejects the utilitarianism belief that the ends do justify the means. Deontology proposes, regardless of the consequences, there are some things people should, or should not, do (DesJardins, 2006).

Deontology is derived from the Greek word for duty. Deontological frameworks involve using moral standards or principles as a guide to make decisions (AACSB, 2004; Hartman & Desjardins, 2008). Deontological ethics emphasizes duties, obligations, and responsibilities. Deontological ethics focus on the rights of individuals and on the intentions of an act rather than on the consequences of an act. Equal respect for all persons is central to deontological ethics (Ferrell et al., 2008). Kant greatly influenced deontology with the concept of the categorical imperative, which asserted one's primary duty is to act only in those ways in which the maxim (intentions behind our acts) of our acts could be made a universal law. Kant asserted that ethics requires people to treat each other as ends and never as means (DesJardins, 2006). Deontology also emphasizes the importance of respecting individual rights, including the ability to choose freely, and the right to have these choices respected by others. A partial list of other rights include (a) the right to the truth, (b) the right to privacy, (c) the right not to be injured, and (d) the right to what is agreed (Velasquez et al., 1996).

Virtue ethics deals with attitudes and character traits that constitute a good and full life (Gibson, 2006; Hartman & Desjardins, 2008). Aristotle believed virtue allowed a

person to make reasonable choices. Aristotle's most important or Cardinal virtues were prudence, courage, temperance, and justice (Brooks & Dunn, 2010). Fostering virtues enables people to develop to their highest potential. Virtue ethics are prescriptive and can offer advice as to how people should live (DesJardins, 2006). Virtue ethics often rely on professional communities to identify ethical issues and help guide ethical action (AACSB, 2004).

Several authors have formulated their own decision-making model for business ethics (Bagley, 2003; Goodpaster et al., 2006; Hartman & Desjardins, 2008; Jennings, 2009; Velasquez et al., 1996). Many of these models incorporate components of utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics, and stakeholder theory. Bagley (2003) developed the Ethical Leaders Decision Tree that includes the following questions:

1. Is the proposed action legal?
2. Does it maximize shareholder value?
3. Is it ethical?
4. Would it be ethical not to take the action? (p. 3)

Hartman and Desjardins (2008) formulated the following decision making model for business ethics:

1. Determine the facts.
2. Identify the ethical issues involved.
3. Identify stakeholders.
4. Consider the available alternatives.
5. Consider how a decision affects stakeholders.

6. Guidance.
7. Assessment. (p. 88)

Velasquez et al. (1996) proposed a decision making model based on the following questions:

1. What benefits and what harms will each course of action produce, and which alternative will lead to the best overall consequences?
2. What moral rights do the affected parties have, and which course of action best respects those rights?
3. Which course of action treats everyone the same, except where there is morally justifiable reason not to, and does not show favoritism or discrimination?
4. Which course of action advances the common good?
5. Which course of action develops moral virtues? (p. 66)

The *Wall Street Journal* model (as cited in Jennings, 2009) consists of the following questions:

1. Am I in compliance with the law?
2. What contribution does this choice of action make to the company, the shareholders, the community, and others?
3. What are the short- and long-term consequences of this decision? (p. 23)

Goodpaster et al. (2006) developed an ethical decision making model that requires students to analyze decisions through the following four ethical theories: interest based,

rights based, duty based, and virtue based. For each theory students must address the following items:

1. Describe the key factual elements of the situation.
2. Discern the most significant ethical issues at stake.
3. Display the main options available to the decision maker.
4. Decide among the options and offer a plan of action.
5. Defend your decision and your moral framework. (p. 8)

There are several common questions in the above decision-making models including "determining the facts" (Goodpaster et al., 2006; Hartman & Desjardins, 2008). "Determining the legality of a decision" is stated in two models (Bagley, 2003; Jennings, 2009). Considering how the decision affects stakeholders is included in two of the above models (Hartman & Desjardins, 2008; Jennings, 2009).

The simulation in this study used the Goodpaster et al. (2006) decision making model because it requires students to reason through decisions by using multiple ethical theories which is an approach recommended by several authors (AACSB, 2004; Goodpaster et al., 2006; Sims, 2002a; Velasquez et al., 1996).

The stakeholder perspective is an important part of business ethics education (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008). Freeman (1984) laid the foundation for stakeholder theory. Over the past 30 years Freeman and others have continued to refine the stakeholder perspective (Evan & Freeman, 1988; Freeman, 1984, 2009; Freeman, Harrison & Wicks, 2007).

**Corporate Social Responsibility and Stakeholder Theory**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is "the responsibilities that businesses have to the societies within which they operate" (Hartman & Desjardins, 2008, p. 472). DesJardins (2006) attributes the classical view of CSR to Friedman (1970), who argued,

> there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profit so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud. (p. 126)

The classical view of a corporation advocated by Friedman stated the primary purpose of a corporation is to maximize profits for shareholders. The classical view is problematic because emphasis is placed on one stakeholder—the shareholders to the detriment of other stakeholders (Beauchamp et al., 2009; Desjardins, 2006; Evan & Freeman, 1988).

Another theory of CSR is the Stakeholder Theory of Management asserted by Evan and Freeman (1988), which states,

> stakeholder theory does not give primacy to one stakeholder group over another, though there will surely be times when one group will benefit at the expense of others. In general, however, management must keep the relationships among stakeholders in balance. (p. 103)

Freeman (2009) argued that a firm has an ethical responsibility to manage a firm for all stakeholders. Shareholders are but one of the many stakeholders of a firm, and shareholder interests must be balanced among other stakeholder interests. Freeman (2009) identified primary stakeholders as groups who are essential to a firm's existence.

These include (a) employees, (b) suppliers, (c) financiers, (d) communities, and (e) customers. Secondary stakeholders are a broader group and include any individual or group that can influence a firm. Secondary stakeholders include (a) advocacy groups, (b) special interest groups, (c) the media, (d) government, and (e) competitors (Freeman, 2009). According to Ferrell and Ferrell (2008), comprehensive ethics education requires students to identify and understand the interests among a firm's various stakeholders and students need to understand stakeholder pressures can create ethical issues. The stakeholder perspective is an appropriate framework for teaching all four areas of business ethics education including ethical decision making (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008).

**Experiential Learning Exercises**

Sims (2002b) noted, "experiential learning theorists including Dewey, Lewin, Piaget and Kolb maintain learning is most effective (i.e., most likely to lead to behavioral change) when it begins with experience" (p. 162). Experiential learning exercises enable students to practice what they learn and are an effective strategy for helping students learn about business ethics. Students should practice what they learn and apply their knowledge right away instead of waiting until they complete college (AACSB, 2004; Sims, 2002a; Sims & Brinkmann, 2003).

In a study, Hemmasis and Graf (1992, as cited in Sims, 2002b) noted experiential learning (a) helps students remember material for a longer period of time, (b) actively engages them in the learning process, (c) provides experiential exercises that students like, and (d) simulates real working conditions. Experiential learning helps students transfer what they learn in the classroom to real-life work scenarios (Ritter, 2006).

Role-playing is an active experiential exercise that can help students learn about business ethics (Baetz & Carson, 1999; Sanyal, 2000; Sims, 2002b; Sims & Felton, 2006). In a role-playing exercise students are asked to assume the perspectives of key stakeholders as a way to illustrate the ethical dilemmas decision makers can face (Baetz & Carson, 1999). Role-playing actively engages students in the learning process and can leave a memorable impression (Sims, 2002b). Black and Mendenhall (1989, as cited in Sims, 2002b) noted experiential learning activities including role-playing and simulations are more rigorous and engage people more than methods such as lecture and videotapes. According to Brookfield (1990), role plays and simulations engage students' psychomotor, affective, and cognitive learning domains which tend to result in a deeper experience for participants and they remember it longer.

Case studies are commonly used in business ethics education (Beauchamp, 2004; Goodpaster et al., 2006; Piper, Gentile, & Parks, 1993; Sims & Felton, 2006). Case studies expose students to a variety of situations that business professionals confront, including (a) ethical dilemmas, (b) poor ethical choices, and (c) intelligent ethical choices by corporations (Jennings, 2009). Case studies help to focus and dramatize real life problems and require students to apply ethical considerations to each case (Beauchamp, 2004).

A simulation is an experiential learning exercise that allows students to practice what they have learned. Keys, Fulmer, and Stumpf (1995,as cited in LeClair et al., 1999) observed lawyers, doctors, and actors are able to practice their skills before heading into

their careers, whereas business majors often do not have an opportunity to practice their skills before entering the workplace.

LeClair et al. (1999) noted, “simulations give students the chance to explore their attitudes, feelings, and communication skills” (p. 287). Simulations attempt to recreate the “real world” environment incorporating the pressures that employees face including competition, economic, legal, political, and regulatory factors. Simulations also force students to act on incomplete information which reflects the real-world business environment. A business simulation does not teach the “right decisions” but rather the process of making decisions (LeClair et al., 1999).

In this study, students completed a simulation that involved students role-playing characters in a case study. Students reasoned through the ethical dilemma and suggested a course of action.

**Online Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning that once occurred primarily face-to-face is now also occurring online. Online experiential learning exercises include threaded discussions, online simulations, and the use of online collaborative technologies like YouTube.

Group discussions occur online through message boards and threaded discussions. Roper (2007) observed in online courses that student interaction mostly occurs through threaded discussions. Asynchronous threaded discussions allow students to spend more time preparing their responses. Through threaded discussions students can actively experiment with ideas and discuss them with classmates and instructors.

Online simulations offer students an experiential exercise that exposes them to real world problems. Prensky (2009) observed online simulations allow people to "exercise their imaginative capacity in ever-more complex what-if constructions, allowing for more thorough exploration of possibilities and, in turn, wiser decisions" (para. 19).

Web 2.0 tools include Internet content and applications that are continuously modified by users in a participatory and collaborative fashion (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Online collaborative technologies are an example of Web 2.0 tools which allow users to interact and share information on the Internet. A partial list of online collaborative technologies include (a) blogs, (b) Google Docs, (c) online discussion boards, (d) social networking sites, (e) social bookmarking sites, (f) video sharing sites such as YouTube, and (g) wikis.

Online collaborative technologies can be used to facilitate experiential learning exercises. Google Docs and wikis allow two or more people to edit a document online in real time. Educators are using wikis to support writing instruction (Alexander, 2006; Ferris & Wilder, 2006) including peer editing assignments. Wikis can be used for problem solving, information libraries, and project spaces. Ferris and Wilder (2006) noted wikis by their nature lend themselves to collaborative work by students and teachers.

Educators are having students create videoblogs on YouTube as an experiential learning exercise to help students reflect on their learning (Dixon, 2009; Downes, 2008). According to Downes (2008), online video technology is accessible and affordable for

students and video sites “transform learning not merely by providing a new channel for educational content but by creating new opportunities for students to express themselves and to see their own learning reflected back to them in a familiar environment” (para. 13). Experiential learning that historically occurred face-to-face is now also occurring online.

With increasing online enrollments, an important question to consider is: How effective is online learning? According to a recent meta-analysis of online learning the overall finding noted “that classes with online learning (whether taught completely online or blended) on average produce stronger student learning outcomes than do classes with solely face-to-face instruction” (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009, p. 18). Additionally, researchers observed instruction that blended face-to-face and online components had a larger advantage relative to purely face-to-face instruction than did purely online instruction. Researchers also stated when students in online courses spent more time on task than students in the face-to-face courses there was a greater benefit for online learning (Means et al., 2009).

In addition to increased learning outcomes, online learning offers several advantages including increased access to education, reduced commuting costs, flexibility, and opportunities for continuity planning in the event of a global pandemic. Online learning has increased student access to education (Allen & Seaman, 2007). Students can enroll in online classes regardless of where they live. Students can also save money on commuting costs by enrolling in an online course. Allen and Seaman (2008) assert online learning will continue to grow because of rising fuel costs. As gas becomes more

expensive online students can save money by staying at home to complete their coursework.

Another advantage of online learning is flexibility. Online learning offers students and faculty flexibility in terms of when coursework is completed. In addition, faculty members and chief academic officers noted the most important motivation for teaching online is flexibility in meeting the needs of students (Allen & Seaman, 2008). In 2009 the world experienced an outbreak of the H1N1 flu virus. According to Allen and Seaman (2010), online learning could become an important part of academic continuity planning in the event of a global pandemic such as H1N1. Colleges could substitute online courses for face-to-face courses in the event of a global pandemic.

**Millennial Students**

Many students currently enrolled in college are part of the Millennial Generation. Howe and Nadler (2009) defined Millennials as people born between 1982 and 2004, making them the first generation to come of age during the new millennium. Howe and Strauss (2003) estimated the size of the millennial generation to be 100 million people. Millennials have been immersed in technology throughout their lives. Keeter and Taylor (2009) observed Millennials:

> are the first generation in human history who regard behaviors like Tweeting and texting, along with websites like Facebook, YouTube, Google and Wikipedia, not as astonishing innovations of the digital era, but as everyday parts of their social lives and their search for understanding. (p. 1)

Prensky (2001) designated Millennial Generation students as “Digital Natives” because they are “native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the internet” (p. 1). Prensky (2001) noted “Digital Natives” have spent their lives surrounded by cell phones, video games, and computers, and he asserted because of their immersion in technology, students now think differently than their predecessors. According to a survey of 7,705 U.S. college students by Junco and Mastrodicasa (2007), 97% of students own a computer, 94% own a cell phone, and 75% have a Facebook account. A Nielson Company (2009) survey reported adults ages 18-24 spent an average of 14 hours and 19 minutes per month using the Internet and an average of 5 hours and 35 minutes per month watching online videos.

Millennials seem to prefer to communicate visually through photos and videos (Berk 2009; Oblinger, 2008). They tend to be avid users of online collaborative technologies including blogs, wikis, texting, online video games, video sharing sites, virtual worlds, and social networking sites. Millennials are both users and creators of web content. Students are creating web content including video, audio, and text and uploading their content to social networking sites. Students are using online collaborative technologies to communicate and express themselves.

Online collaborative technologies may provide an authentic learning experience for students in a business ethics course. Online collaborative technologies allow users to interact with others on the Internet to create, share, and change web content. Online collaborative technologies are integrated into online course management systems including Blackboard, Desire2Learn, and Moodle.

YouTube.com is an online collaborative technology that allows users to upload video content and allows other users to comment on that content. YouTube enables users to share video and audio files which results in new user generated web content. In order to promote sharing of videos, YouTube provides specific codes to users that can be embedded in third party websites such as online course webpages, blogs, and social networking sites. The popularity of YouTube cannot be overstated. Although YouTube is barely six years old in February 2011, YouTube.com was the fourth most visited website in the U.S. as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Top Websites in the United States (February, 2011)*

| Name | Year Established |
|---|---|
| Google.com | 1997 |
| Facebook.com | 1997 |
| Yahoo.com | 1995 |
| YouTube.com | 2005 |
| Amazon.com | 1994 |

*Note*. Adapted from "Top Websites Accessed in the United States," by Alexa, 2011. Retrieved from http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/USA

**Summary**

A great deal is known about learning in face-to-face business ethics courses while comparatively little is known about learning in business ethics courses that incorporate

online technologies. A few authors have written about online learning and business ethics (Ottewill & Wall, 2002; Painter-Morland et al., 2003; Walker & Jeurissen, 2003), but little is written about using advanced methods such as online collaborative technologies.

Millennial students are immersed in technology, and enrollment in online forms of higher education continues to experience significant growth. Online collaborative technologies offer a means of helping students to learn in a modality students seem to prefer. There is an opportunity and need to research how online collaborative technologies can help college students learn about business ethics.

The design of the simulation in this study was guided by ELT and interview questions in the data collection phase were guided by the FCM. The purpose of this study was to explore to what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies affect student learning in a business ethics course.

# Chapter 3. Methodology

## Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology for the study. A qualitative case study method of inquiry was used to develop an in-depth description and analysis of student learning during a business ethics simulation that incorporated online collaborative technologies.

## Research Questions

1. What do students identify as significant experiences in a business ethics simulation?
2. To what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies promote ethical thinking among college students?

The case study method was appropriate for this study because it enabled in-depth description and analysis of a bounded case: student learning in a single business ethics class at a private liberal arts college during fall semester 2010. Gall et al. (2007) stated the purpose of selecting a case "is to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied" (p. 178). Additionally, Merriam (1988) asserted case studies are an appealing method of inquiry in applied fields like education because "educational processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice" (p. 32). The case study method helped develop a deeper understanding of the research questions in the study. A case study is bounded by time, place, and context is essential.

**Case Context**

The context for the case study consisted of a single section of a business ethics course at a private liberal arts college during fall semester 2010. This bounded system, a single business ethics class, was purposefully selected for in-depth study. The study explored student learning during a two-week business ethics simulation that incorporated YouTube, an online collaborative technology. Stake (2005) asserted researchers should lean towards selecting "those cases that seem to offer the opportunity to learn" (p. 451). This case offered the researcher an opportunity to learn. While the researcher has access to the institution because he teaches at the institution, he did not teach the course in this study. As student perceptions of the researcher could affect their willingness to participate in interviews, participation was voluntary. A total of 23 participants provided their informed consent to voluntarily participate in the study. Junior and senior business majors comprised 19 of the participants and four participants were health sciences majors. Thirteen women and 10 men participated in the study. The course used a hybrid model of instruction incorporating both face-to-face and online instructional methods.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Minnesota and the College of St. Scholastica (see Appendix A). The IRB's oversight is to help ensure protection of human subjects (Creswell, 2009). The researcher obtained informed consent from all participants before research was conducted (see Appendix B).

**Experiential Learning**

ELT informs the design of this study (Kolb, 1984). Kolb (1984) explained ELT defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (p. 41).

As part of a normal business ethics assignment, students working in small groups completed a simulation involving students role-playing characters in an ethics case study. Students created a video clip of their group role-playing the characters in the case study as they analyzed the ethical dilemma using multiple ethical theories. Students used an ethical decision-making model by Goodpaster et al. (2006) to analyze the ethical dilemma, and students suggested a course of action to address the dilemma. Videos were uploaded to YouTube and students posted feedback on each other's work online.

Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning proposed learning proceeds as a cycle and results from the integration of the following four learning modes: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation. Concrete experience was operationalized in this study by having students video record and role-play an ethical dilemma. Students created a story board that included an outline and dialogue for each scene. Students rehearsed before video recording their ethical dilemma. Students' experience of video recording the ethical dilemma became the basis for reflections and observations. While students reflected upon the simulation they were assimilating concepts that informed their recommended course of action to resolve the ethical dilemma.

**Data Collection**

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand to what extent, if any, a simulation that incorporated online collaborative technologies affected student learning in a business ethics course. This study used the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ), student ratings of the simulation, focus group interviews, and a review of videos by the researcher as sources of data to be analyzed. The researcher was a key instrument throughout the study. The researcher collected these data which were used to perform in-depth, triangulated analysis of the students' learning experiences.

At the end of the two-week simulation, students anonymously completed the CIQ developed by Brookfield (1995) which helps identify significant events that occurred during class (see Appendix C). The CIQ consisted of five questions that helped the researcher understand significant events from the simulation. The significant events identified on the CIQ helped the researcher determine which aspects helped promote or inhibit learning. In addition, the CIQ encouraged students to reflect on their learning.

After students completed the CIQ, they were invited to participate in a focus group interview. According to Patton (1990), a focus group interview is an interview with a small group of participants on a selected topic. One strength of focus groups, explained Morgan (1997), is that interaction among the group produces data. For example, a response by one group member can stimulate conversation among other group members. Focus groups are highly efficient because in one hour the interviewer can gather information from six people instead of only one person (Patton, 1990). Students were invited to join their simulation group mates, and the focus group audio was digitally

recorded for record keeping. Audio recording began only after students consented to being anonymously recorded. There were four focus groups numbering four to six students and the interviews lasted 40 to 60 minutes. The researcher developed the focus group interview questions in consultation with educators and researchers. The literature also informed the focus group questions. Before meeting with students the focus group questions were piloted with third year business majors who had completed coursework in business ethics.

The focus groups explored the research question: to what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies promote ethical thinking among college students? Open-ended interview questions were used in order to develop an in-depth understanding of students' learning experience during the business ethics simulation (see Appendix D).

Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of participants was a key priority throughout the study. Participants signed a consent form before research was conducted. The CIQ was completed anonymously and the focus group responses were audio recorded and transcribed using pseudonyms. The 21 students in the focus groups are not cited in the findings in order to ensure confidentiality. The YouTube videos were uploaded as private videos, which restricted access to include only the instructor, students, and researcher.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis included the researcher reviewing the multiple forms of data collected including the CIQ, student ratings of the simulation, focus group interviews,

and videos. The data analysis and interpretation used recommendations from Creswell (2009) consisting of (a) organizing and preparing the data for analysis, (b) reading through all the data and making sense of it, (c) coding the data, (d) using codes to generate description of categories and themes, (e) describing the findings of the analysis including interrelated themes, and (f) interpreting the meaning of the data.

Qualitative research focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem, and researchers seek to identify themes in the data and make interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). The researcher read through each CIQ questionnaire and summarized the themes that emerged from the students' responses. The transcribed focus group interviews were coded to organize the students' responses. The coded statements were used to identify themes that emerged in the students' responses.

As part of the focus group interviews students rated each part of the simulation (see Appendix D) and identified whether a specific part affected their sensitivity and judgment. These ratings were organized and presented in a table format to help the researcher review the data.

The researcher developed a checklist (see Appendix E) to review the videos to assess the extent to which students demonstrated moral sensitivity and moral judgment. The checklist was based on the FCM by Rest et al. (1999) and the CAT Scan ethical decision making model by Goodpaster et al. (2006).

## Validity and Reliability

Throughout the research process validity procedures were used to help ensure accuracy including triangulation of data and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2009). To help ensure external validity, rich, thick detailed descriptions were prepared to help readers better understand the setting and findings from the study. To help ensure reliability, two professionals reviewed the data for each theme. In addition, coding of data was checked and rechecked to help ensure reliability.

## Summary

This qualitative case study was designed to gather multiple sources of data in order to develop an in-depth description and analysis of a single case. ELT (Kolb, 1984) informed the design of the two-week business ethics simulation. The focus group questions were aligned with research questions in the study in order to better understand whether a simulation can help promote ethical thinking in college students. The FCM of morality (Rest et al., 1999) informed the focus group questions. The CIQ (Brookfield, 1995) addressed the research question that seeks to identify significant learning events.

# Chapter 4. Findings

## Introduction

This study explored how online collaborative technologies affect student learning in a business ethics course. Research questions were:

1. What do students identify as significant experiences in a business ethics simulation?
2. To what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies promote ethical thinking among college students?

This chapter presents the results of the study based on data gathered through the CIQ, student ratings of the simulation, focus groups, and a review of YouTube videos by the researcher. The chapter describes the data analysis, and results.

## Data Analysis

The data analysis and interpretation used recommendations from Creswell (2009) to analyze the questionnaire responses and focus group data consisting of (a) organizing and preparing the data for analysis, (b) reading through all the data and making sense of it, (c) coding the data, (d) using codes to generate description of categories and themes, (e) describing the findings of the analysis including interrelated themes, and (f) interpreting the meaning of the data.

## Results: Significant Experiences

The CIQ (see Appendix C) addressed research question 1: What do students identify as significant experiences in a business ethics simulation? The CIQ was

administered in class and 100% of the students completed the questionnaire. The CIQ contained five constructed response questions. The results were transcribed and coded to identify patterns and emergent themes. Pattern analysis of the responses to each question indicate the emergent themes (see Appendices F, G, H, I and J).

Students reported feeling engaged when (a) acting out and recording the video, (b) working in groups, and (c) watching the YouTube videos. No clear pattern emerged for the question which asked about instances where students felt distanced.

Students reported the most affirming or helpful action was watching YouTube videos and working in groups. These two themes also emerged in question 1 that addressed experiences where students felt engaged. Watching the videos enabled students to see how their classmates demonstrated moral sensitivity and moral judgment. The videos gave students multiple perspectives on identifying alternatives for action and processes for reasoning through alternatives. Moral sensitivity was demonstrated in the YouTube videos through the identification of ethical issues, stakeholders, and alternatives for action. Moral judgment was demonstrated in the videos when the groups discussed their reasoning to address the ethical dilemma in the case.

The emergent theme for the question that addressed the most puzzling or confusing actions was “nothing.” Students had a variety of responses for what puzzled them but there was no dominant theme. Students noted the most surprising aspect of class were the differences in how each student group reasoned through the ethical dilemma in the YouTube videos.

In summary, the CIQ addressed research question 1: What do students identify as significant experiences in a business ethics simulation? Synthesis of the CIQ data reveals working in groups and watching YouTube videos were meaningful experiences for students.

**Results: Student Ratings of the Simulation**

Before the focus group, students were given a copy of the interview questions to review. Students were asked to rate each part of the simulation in terms of whether each part affected their sensitivity to moral issues and their moral judgment. Table 2 illustrates how students rated each part of the simulation.

Table 2

*Rating Each Part of the Simulation for the Perceived Affect on Moral Sensitivity and Moral Judgment. (21 students)*

Scale: 1 = *not very important* to 5 = *very important*

| Part of Simulation | Sensitivity Mean | Judgment Mean |
|---|---|---|
| Individually reading through the case | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| Using the CAT scan decision making model | 3.8 | 4.1 |
| Working with group members | 4.0 | 4.1 |
| Creating dialogue and storyboards | 3.0 | 2.9 |
| Role-playing and video recording | 3.4 | 3.4 |
| Watching your video online | 2.7 | 2.6 |
| Watching other group's videos online | 3.6 | 4.0 |
| Online questions and discussion | 2.8 | 2.8 |

As identified in Table 2, “individually reading through the case” and “working with group members” received the highest ratings for the perceived affect on students’ moral sensitivity while “watching your own video online” received the lowest rating. “Using the CAT Scan decision making model” and “working with group members” were the highest rated parts of the simulation for the perceived affect on moral judgment while watching your video online received the lowest rating. Overall, “working with group members” in the simulation received the highest ratings for the perceived affect on moral sensitivity and moral judgment while “watching your video online” received the lowest ratings for both moral sensitivity and moral judgment. The results of the student ratings helped guide the focus group interviews.

**Data Analysis: Focus Groups**

For the focus groups, two students were absent. Therefore, 21 out of the 23 students participated in the focus groups. The responses were transcribed by the researcher and downloaded into NVIVO software which was used to analyze the data. The NVIVO software assisted in organizing and coding the data. Nodes were used in NVIVO to develop codes and themes (see Appendix K). The NVIVO software was flexible and allowed nodes to be reorganized to indentify themes as they emerged. The focus group questions (see Appendix D) addressed research question 2: To what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies promote ethical thinking among college students?

In synthesizing data from the focus groups the following six themes emerged: (a) new option for learning, (b) more engaging, (c) more voice, (d) experiencing less nervousness, (e) working in groups, and (f) watching YouTube videos.

**New option for learning.** Students identified the simulation provided a new option for learning because it was different from other assignments that students encounter in class. One student noted:

> I think it [technology] did help learning just because it was a different option something new instead of just sitting in class staring at a PowerPoint or whatever. We actually went out and role-played it and obviously we understand it better because we acted it out and we are all discussing it and remembering it and if we just did a PowerPoint I wouldn't even remember it right now.

Students stated the simulation appealed to multiple learning styles. One student observed, "I think it was an all encompassing way of learning because it wasn't just writing and learning and reading it was more you had tactile you had visual you had audio you had every form of learning." Several students reported the visual nature of YouTube was helpful to learning and one student observed that role playing and video recording "put a picture in your mind" and this was helpful for visual learners. Students commented the 'hands on' nature of the simulation was helpful to learning as one student said, "I liked how the simulation was hands on …. it was good to actually get involved in something and get other people's perspectives."

**More engaging.** Students noted the simulation was engaging which resulted in students retaining the information longer. One student stated, "We actually retained a lot

more of the information…. I think in general technology made it more fun." Another student observed:

> I will remember this kind of long-term…than like PowerPoint or it's just like writing a paper; we write papers, and I will spend hour, hour and a half writing this, but it is not as helpful as actually doing the video and then analyzing it.

**More voice.** Students observed the simulation brought out more "voice" in students through role-playing in the video and through the online YouTube questions. One student commented, "Some of the people I've never heard them talk in class before so it was nice to see them on a video and just see…they do have a different side to them." The online YouTube questions allowed students to express their voice online as one student noted:

> I think the end discussion on the YouTube channel probably stood out the most for me just seeing how comfortable people were to pretty much write what they wanted to write…in class where nobody really wants to say things or half the class won't say things but you get on YouTube and I think a lot more people do say what they intend to say.

The simulation brought out more "voice" in students through the role play, videos, and online YouTube questions.

**Experiencing less nervousness.** Students noted being less nervous while recording their YouTube video than they would be if they had to complete an in-class role-play. One student explained:

> I think people get a lot more nervous in front of the class so you don't do things to your fullest...when you are just with your group it is not as nerve wracking for some people and if you mess up you can just take it out.

Students observed that during in-class role-plays students focus on their own presentation and not on other groups' presentations as one student noted:

> I liked how we videotaped it instead of acting in front of class…because whenever you do that it gets kind of awkward or you don't get the message across and when the other groups are going you are just sitting there thinking about what you are going to say for yours so none of it is even soaking in so I liked that we videotaped it and showed it.

Because students had already completed their own video they were able to focus their attention and learning on other groups' YouTube videos.

**Results: Ethical Thinking**

Student feedback through focus groups addressed research question 2: To what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies promote ethical thinking among college students? Ethical thinking incorporates moral sensitivity and moral judgment. Most theorists include moral sensitivity and moral judgment as the necessary first steps in ethical decision-making (Ritter, 2006). This case study used Rest et al.'s (1999) definition of moral sensitivity, and moral judgment to analyze student learning experiences. Moral sensitivity includes interpreting the situation, role taking how possible courses of actions would affect stakeholders involved,

and being aware an ethical issue exists. Moral judgment involves reasoning through possible courses of action and judging which action is most justified (Rest et al., 1999).

The value of working in groups, and watching YouTube videos were two themes that emerged from the focus group data. Student feedback suggested both of these themes were factors that affected moral sensitivity and moral judgment. Working in groups provided students with more perspectives which appeared to affect their moral sensitivity. Students explained that working in groups enabled them to understand how other group members interpreted the situation. One student noted, "It was nice talking it through with your other group members and seeing what their perspective on the case was and interpreting the situation... I thought then you can hear more people's voices and what they actually thought." Working in groups helped students identify ethical issues as reflected by this student's comment:

> I know when reading the case there were things that went over my head but when we were in the group it was like someone else said it and then I was like 'I remember reading that' but didn't think it was a key point.

Working in groups appeared to affect moral sensitivity because students were exposed to more perspectives from classmates who helped them interpret the case, and identify ethical issues.

Students observed that working in groups provided them with more perspectives as they reasoned through the case. One student noted:

> When I was reading through the case I didn't really need group members to explain it, to help me interpret it but then for the judgment it was interesting to see what other people thought about it and what we should do to fix it.

Working in groups helped students understand how their classmates made a final judgment and one student commented, "It is really nice when you see different people judge the same problem." Working in groups appeared to affect moral judgment because students were exposed to more perspectives from classmates as they reasoned through the case.

Watching YouTube videos was a theme that emerged from the focus groups that appeared to affect students' moral sensitivity and moral judgment. Hearing other peoples' perspectives and how they identified ethical issues appeared to affect moral sensitivity. Watching YouTube videos exposed students to more perspectives as they interpreted the case as one student commented, "I really liked seeing other groups' perspectives on the same thing." Watching YouTube videos helped students identify ethical issues in the case as this student noted, "One of the groups' videos that really opened up my eyes is if [the central character] decided to give the discount that it would fall solidly on him as being responsible and I had not thought about that at all." Watching YouTube videos provided students with more perspectives from other groups which appeared to affect moral sensitivity because the videos helped students interpret the case, and identify ethical issues.

Student responses in the watching YouTube videos theme noted watching other group's videos provided students with more approaches to reasoning through the case

which appeared to affect moral judgment. One student noted, "It was certainly nice because when you are doing your video you think this is the only solution but when you watch other people's video then you have bigger choices of solutions." The YouTube videos allowed students to watch their classmates reason through the case, and one student explained, "I think for me what worked best….was actually having people act out or discuss in the videos how they reasoned through it….and being able to understand why they made the decision they did." Watching videos appeared to affect moral judgment because the videos provided students with multiple approaches for reasoning through the case.

In the theme watching YouTube videos, students noted that being able to go back and review video clips was helpful to learning. A student explained:

> I think [the technology did help] because you can instead of just learning it you can look back and keep repeating what people's decisions were so I think that is how technology can go back and see it again. I think that helped a lot.

Watching YouTube videos enabled students to rewind and review how groups identified ethical issues, alternatives for action and different approaches to reason through the case. In this study the ability to rewind and review videos was helpful to student learning.

**Results: Review of Videos by Researcher**

The researcher developed a checklist (see Appendix E) to review the videos to assess the extent to which students demonstrated moral sensitivity and moral judgment. The checklist was based on the FCM by Rest et al. (1999) and the CAT Scan ethical

decision making model by Goodpaster et al. (2006). Table 3 summarizes the review of videos.

As noted in Table 3, all four groups demonstrated moral sensitivity by identifying ethical issues, stakeholders, alternatives for actions, and discussion of implications for stakeholders. For the review of moral judgment, Table 3 shows that the process of reasoning varied across all four groups. Table 3 notes Group 1's recommended course of action was to deny the sales discount but they did not justify their decision based on a moral theory as the assignment required. Group 2 referenced all four moral theories in the CAT Scan model and justified their recommended course of action through the interest and duty based theory. Group 2's recommended course of action was to deny the sales discount. Group 3 referenced one moral theory (interest based theory), and this was the only group whose recommended course of action was to give the sales discount. Group 4 referenced three moral theories and used the virtue-based theory to justify their course of action which was to deny the discount. Finally, based on the review of videos the process of reasoning varied for each of the four groups. These findings are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

*Review of Videos*

| Group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sensitivity | | | | |
| Identified ethical issues | X | X | X | X |
| Identified stakeholders | X | X | X | X |
| Identified alternatives for actions | X | X | X | X |
| Explained implications to stakeholders | X | X | X | X |
| Judgment Referenced: | | | | |
| Interest based (consequences) moral theory as part of reasoning | | X | X | X |
| Rights based moral theory as part of reasoning | | X | | X |
| Duty based moral theory as part of reasoning | | X | | |
| Virtue based moral theory as part of reasoning | | X | | X |
| Recommended course of action is justified based on one or more moral theories? | No | Yes interest & duty | Yes interest | Yes virtue |
| List the course of action | Deny the discount | Deny the discount | Give the discount | Deny the discount |

**Triangulating Data**

Data in the study included the CIQ responses, student ratings of the simulation, focus group responses, and a review of videos by the researcher. The following themes emerged through triangulation of data:

- Working in groups
- Watching YouTube videos

The theme working in groups emerged in the CIQ responses, student ratings of the simulation, and focus group responses. For the CIQ questions that addressed engaging and most helpful experiences, working in a group emerged as a theme (see Appendix F and H). In the focus groups, students noted working in groups provided them with more perspectives when they were interpreting the case and indentifying ethical issues. Students explained that working in groups also provided students with more perspectives as they reasoned through the case. Finally, when rating each part of the simulation, students gave their highest ratings on perceived affect on moral sensitivity and judgment to the aspect of working with group members.

The theme watching YouTube videos was triangulated through the results from the CIQ, student ratings of the simulation, focus group responses, and the review of videos by the researcher. The CIQ results in Appendix F and Appendix H identified watching YouTube videos as an emergent theme in the questions that addressed engaging and most helpful experiences. In the focus groups, watching YouTube videos also emerged as a theme. Watching YouTube videos provided students with more perspectives because the videos helped students interpret the case and identify ethical

issues. Watching videos provided students with multiple approaches for reasoning through the case. YouTube enabled students to rewind and review how groups identified ethical issues, alternatives for action, and different approaches to reason through the case. YouTube provided students with more perspectives through a technology that students are accustomed to using. Figure 1 presents the results from the triangulation of data.

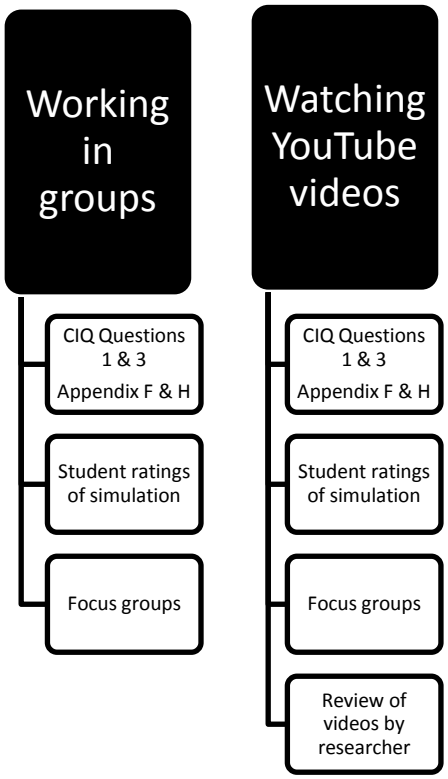


*Figure 1*. Concept map of triangulating data.

**Summary**

In summary, the CIQ addressed research question 1: What do students identify as significant experiences in a business ethics simulation? Synthesis of the CIQ data reveals working in groups and watching YouTube videos were meaningful experiences for students.

The focus group questions (see Appendix D) addressed research question 2: To what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies promote ethical thinking among college students? Ethical thinking incorporates moral sensitivity and moral judgment. Three key themes that appeared to affect ethical thinking emerged during data analysis. The three key themes include (a) working in groups, (b) watching YouTube videos, and (c) experiencing less nervousness. These findings will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

# Chapter 5. Discussion and Recommendations

## Introduction

This chapter reviews the study design, restates the research questions, discusses the results and conclusions in the context of the literature, discusses implications, and makes research recommendations.

## Review of the Study Design

A qualitative case study method of inquiry was used to develop an in-depth description and analysis of student learning during a business ethics simulation that incorporated online collaborative technologies. The study used the CIQ, student ratings of the simulation, focus groups, and a review of YouTube videos by the researcher as sources of data.

## Restatement of the Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand to what extent, if any, a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies affects student learning in a business ethics course. The research questions for this study were:

1. What do students identify as significant experiences in a business ethics simulation?
2. To what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies promote ethical thinking among college students?

**Discussion of the Results by Research Question**

1. Research Question 1: What do students identify as significant experiences in a business ethics simulation?

Based on analysis of the CIQ data students identified (a) working in groups, and (b) watching YouTube videos as meaningful experiences during the simulation. These themes are discussed in more detail in the next section.

2. Research Question 2: To what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies promote ethical thinking among college students?

Ethical thinking incorporates moral sensitivity and moral judgment. Based on student feedback the following three key themes appeared to affect ethical thinking: (a) working in groups, (b) watching YouTube videos, and (c) experiencing less nervousness.

Working in groups emerged as a theme based on triangulating data from the CIQ, student ratings of the simulation, and focus groups. Working in groups provided students with more perspectives to consider. Working in groups appeared to affect moral sensitivity because students were exposed to more perspectives from classmates who helped them interpret the case, and identify ethical issues. Working in groups appeared to affect moral judgment because students were exposed to more perspectives from classmates as they reasoned through the case.

Working in groups was a key theme in this study. Individuals frequently make ethical decisions in group meetings and through discussions with co-workers. Workplace

ethical decisions are influenced by other people including co-workers and supervisors (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008; Loe, Ferrell, & Mansfield, 2000). Students should be exposed to learning experiences that reflect real life ethical issues in the workplace (AACSB, 2004) and this group simulation did just that.

In this study, based on student feedback, working in groups appeared to affect both students' moral sensitivity and moral judgment. There are likely additional factors, which were beyond the scope of this study that affected students' moral sensitivity and judgment. Some element of working in groups, which was beyond the scope of this study, appeared to affect students' moral sensitivity and moral judgment as well.

**Watching YouTube videos.** This theme emerged based on triangulating data from the CIQ, student ratings of the simulation, focus groups, and the review of videos by the researcher. Watching YouTube videos allowed students to rewind and review videos which was helpful to learning. Watching YouTube videos provided students with more perspectives which appeared to affect moral sensitivity because the videos helped students interpret the case, and identify ethical issues. Watching videos appeared to affect moral judgment because the videos provided students with multiple approaches for reasoning through the case. Students in this study indicated watching YouTube videos appeared to affect moral sensitivity and judgment but student comments may or may not be reflective of other factors which may have happened to students that they were not aware of. There may have been other elements in the simulation, not part of this study, that affected students' moral sensitivity and judgment.

YouTube enabled students to rewind and review how groups identified ethical issues, and different approaches to reason through the case. YouTube is an online collaborative technology that Millennial students are accustomed to using.

Millennials seem to prefer to communicate visually through photos and videos (Berk, 2009; Oblinger, 2008). They tend to be avid users of online collaborative technologies including video sharing sites, podcasts, blogs, wikis, instant messaging, online video games, virtual worlds, and social networking sites. Online collaborative technologies offer a means of helping students to learn in a modality students seem to prefer. According to Zull (2004), in order to encourage learning, students should work on activities and topics that naturally appeal to them. YouTube is an engaging technology that appeals to students and this technology can help them learn. Online video technology can "transform learning not merely by providing a new channel for educational content but by creating new opportunities for students to express themselves and to see their own learning reflected back to them in a familiar environment" (Downes, 2008, para. 13). In this study YouTube provided students with more perspectives for resolving an ethical dilemma through an engaging technology students seem to prefer.

**Experiencing less nervousness.** Students experiencing less nervousness emerged as a theme in the focus group data. Students noted being less nervous while recording their YouTube video than they would be if they had to complete an in-class role-play. Students reported that during in-class role-plays, students focus on their own presentation and not on other groups' presentations.

College students have grown up using technology in their personal lives and so they are comfortable using technology in classroom assignments. Keeter and Taylor (2009) observed:

> Millennials are the first generation in human history who regard behaviors like Tweeting and texting, along with websites like Facebook, YouTube, Google and Wikipedia, not as astonishing innovations of the digital era, but as everyday parts of their social lives and their search for understanding. (p. 1)

Prensky (2001) designated Millennial generation students as "Digital Natives" because they are "native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the internet" (p. 1). 'Digital Natives' have spent their lives surrounded by cell phones, video games, and computers, and Prensky asserted that because of their immersion in technology students now think differently than their predecessors.

In this study students reported being less nervous because they had already completed their own video which allowed them to focus their attention and learning on other groups' YouTube videos. The literature supports findings that integrating online strategies can increase learning. According to a recent meta-analysis of online learning by Means et al. (2009), the overall finding noted classes with online learning (whether taught completely online or blended), on average, produce stronger student learning outcomes than classes with solely face-to-face instruction. Researchers also stated when students in online courses spent more time on task than students in the face-to-face courses there was a greater benefit for online learning (Means et al., 2009). In this study

online YouTube videos allowed students to focus their attention and learning on other groups videos.

**Implications**

Findings from this study have implications for faculty in the classroom. This study adds to the body of knowledge regarding teaching business ethics and the area of integrating technology into coursework. This study informs college instructors, deans, and others interested in helping college students learn about business ethics. This study offers instructors another technique to incorporate into their courses utilizing an engaging technology which students are accustomed to using.

Colleges can hold down costs by utilizing websites like YouTube. YouTube is a free video sharing website anyone can utilize. Some college libraries loan students $100 Flip video recorders that can be used to create video clips. YouTube is easily integrated into course management systems including Moodle and Blackboard, and users do not have to pay for online storage of video files which saves colleges money.

The study may also have implications for understanding the role of using YouTube in disciplines outside of business ethics. Courses that require presentations or group work may benefit from the findings in this study. Learning about ethics and moral reasoning is complex. The simulation in this study could be a useful learning tool for other complex topics. Disciplines similar to ethics that do not have clear cut answers and rely on student perceptions may benefit from the findings in this study.

**Discussion**

This study was important because it identified three themes that appeared to affect students' moral sensitivity and judgment in a business ethics simulation that incorporated YouTube. Students reported that the simulation was engaging and it helped them learn. The simulation in this study offers educators an engaging tool which can be incorporated into courses.

Students reported being less nervous while recording their YouTube video than if they had to complete the assignment in-class in front of their peers and this is an important finding for educators. Because students had already completed their own video they were able to focus their attention and learning on other groups' YouTube videos. Utilizing video technology can enhance student learning because students are not worried about their impending presentation. By recording videos, students produced a better outcome because they were able to make mistakes in their videos and reshoot them before videos were uploaded to YouTube.

Utilizing video technology also allowed students to have their learning reflected back to them. Students could review and rewind their own group's video and other groups' videos. Students reported that being able to review and rewind videos helped them interpret the case and identify ethical issues. If students did not understand part of a video or if they missed a key detail then they could simply rewind and review the video. Students could visually review how their group reasoned through the dilemma which gave student's another means of reflecting on their learning.

Some may argue that YouTube is overused and students are getting YouTube fatigue, but in this simulation, students were the actors in the video which is an important reason why students felt engaged. There is some element about students seeing themselves as an actor in a video which enhances learning. The process of students watching themselves "do the right thing" on screen may promote ethical thinking.

Utilizing technology in courses requires training for instructors. Higher education institutions need to provide training for instructors. Online technologies are constantly changing and instructors need regular professional development opportunities that expose them to tools which can be integrated into coursework. In order to complete this simulation, an instructor needs to understand how to create a video clip and be able to upload them to YouTube. Instructors also need to learn how to embed video clips into course management systems. Instructors need training on YouTube specifications, including the requirement that video clips be less than 15 minutes long and private videos can be shared with a maximum of 50 users.

Utilizing YouTube and other online technologies can raise privacy concerns. It is critical that access to videos be restricted to include only the instructor and students. An instructor should not require students to complete an assignment that then could cause harm to the student or institution. For example, during this simulation a student could have recommended that the central character in the case study lie in order to keep his job. If this video was accessible to anyone with an internet connection, then a student could be harmed because potential employers or graduate schools could view the video and misinterpret it. In addition, the institution could be harmed because many of the students

in the videos were wearing shirts bearing the college's logo. Another reason for keeping the videos private is because the content of an ethical dilemma could present students in negative manner. For example, if students role play a dilemma that involves sexual harassment or racial discrimination, then by uploading the video for all internet users to view, students and the institution could be harmed. In order to address privacy in this study the videos were uploaded as private videos which restricted access to include only the instructor, students, and researcher.

An important question for future research is: Would the results of this study be different at a secular institution? The context for this case study was a single business ethics course at a private Catholic liberal arts college. The mission of the college is to provide intellectual and moral preparation for responsible living and meaningful work. The college was founded by Benedictine sisters, and students are immersed in five Benedictine values including community, hospitality, respect, stewardship, and love of learning. Students learn about these values throughout their college careers and students are encouraged to live these values in their daily lives. The value of community is reflected by visitors who frequently comment how friendly students are and how often people hold the door open for each other.

One way students are encouraged to live the Benedictine values is through volunteering in the community. Twice a year the college organizes a community day where students volunteer by helping children, elderly and low income people. Each spring, first year students host a community dinner that serves food to low income people and delivers meals to people who are not able to travel. Students study these values

throughout their college experience and are encouraged to live the five Benedictine values throughout their lives. Future research could explore the impact of ethics courses on student learning at religious institutions.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Findings from this study and the literature suggest the following recommendations for further research that could advance our understanding of how technology like YouTube can help students learn about business ethics. The recommendations include:

- Working in groups emerged as a theme in this study. Further research could study teaching business ethics while incorporating cooperative learning strategies.
- A small sample size was used in this study; therefore, a larger sample size would provide an opportunity for more extensive analysis.
- This study explored the first two components of the FCM (Rest et al., 1999): moral sensitivity and moral judgment. Conduct a study that explores all four components including moral motivation and character in order to better understand the four components that contribute to moral behavior.
- Students rated the online questions in YouTube very low in terms of their perceived impact on moral sensitivity and judgment. Revise online questions in a manner that engages students.
- Design a study to evaluate whether the Benedictine values have an affect on students' moral sensitivity and judgment.

- Complete a quantitative experimental design study that incorporates a pre and posttest utilizing the DIT (Rest, 1986) instrument which measures moral judgment. Students would be assigned to a treatment group and a control group. All students would complete a pretest utilizing the DIT. The treatment group would complete the YouTube simulation and the control group would complete a face-to-face simulation. At the end of the study, all students would complete a posttest utilizing the DIT. The pre and posttest DIT scores would be analyzed to evaluate whether there were changes in moral judgment.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore to what extent, if any, does a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies affect student learning in a business ethics course. A qualitative case study method of inquiry was used to develop an in-depth description and analysis of student learning during a business ethics simulation.

The study resulted in several findings specific to student learning during a business ethics simulation that incorporated YouTube. Based on student feedback three key themes that appeared to affect ethical thinking emerged during data analysis 1) working in groups, 2) watching YouTube videos, and 3) experiencing less nervousness. The results of this study provide insight into themes that may affect students' moral sensitivity and moral judgment. There are likely additional factors, which were beyond the scope of this study that affected students' moral sensitivity and judgment.

Based on student feedback in this study working in groups appeared to affect students' moral sensitivity and judgment. Working in groups appeared to affect moral

sensitivity because students were exposed to more perspectives from classmates who helped them interpret the case, and identify ethical issues. Working in groups appeared to affect moral judgment because students were exposed to more perspectives from classmates as they reasoned through the case. Some element of working in groups, that was beyond the scope of this study, appeared to affect students' moral sensitivity and moral judgment.

Watching YouTube videos allowed students to rewind and review videos which students identified as being helpful to learning. Watching YouTube videos provided students with more perspectives which appeared to affect moral sensitivity because the videos helped students interpret the case, and identify ethical issues. Watching videos appeared to affect moral judgment because the videos provided students with multiple approaches for reasoning through the case. Did watching videos promote moral sensitivity and judgment? Student feedback in this study indicated that watching YouTube videos appeared to affect moral sensitivity and judgment but student comments may or may not be reflective of other factors that may have happened to students that they were not aware of. There may have been other factors in the simulation that were not part of this study that affected students' moral sensitivity and judgment.

Students reported being less nervous while recording their YouTube video than if they had to complete the assignment in-class in front of their peers. In addition, students came to class with their YouTube video completed, they had time in class to reflect on other students' performances during class time, rather than focus on their impending performance.

The findings of this study add to the literature in the area of business ethics by describing how the integration of technology for ethical simulations may affect student learning. With the three themes identified, the results of this study have implications for college instructors who are teaching business ethics courses.

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# Appendix A

## IRB Approval Letters

**Approval Letters**

From: **Graduate Student Services and Progress** <grad-noreply@umn.edu>
Date: Wed, Sep 22, 2010 at 10:40 AM
Subject: Your Thesis/Project Proposal has been approved
To: Rick Revoir-1 <rrevoir@umn.edu>


Dear Richard,

This is to inform you that your Thesis/Project Proposal has been approved by the Graduate School. Please retain the attached PDF copy for your records.

The Graduate Student Service and Progress (GSSP) office provides detailed information regarding completion requirements online. We strongly encourage you to bookmark that website for future reference as it will provide you with timely and relevant information specific to your degree objective. **Please also remember to check with your graduate program regarding additional program-specific requirements.**

If you have any questions or concerns as you proceed with your graduate studies, please do not hesitate to contact the GSSP office at gradssp@umn.edu or by phone at 612-625-2306.

We wish you all the best in your academic endeavors.

Graduate Student Services and Progress Office
Graduate School
University of Minnesota
316 Johnston Hall

## IRB Approval from the College of St. Scholastica

"David Swenson" <dswenson@css.edu>
Date: 7/20/2010 10:05:42 AM
Subject: Re: Fwd: IRB re Revoir

Rick,

Congratulations on your research proposal. The School of Business and Technology IRB has reviewed your proposal and approved the project based on the federal criteria for research involving human participants. You may now notify your advisor and continue with your research.

Best wishes on your project!

David X. Swenson PhD LP
Chair SB&T IRB

# Appendix B

## Consent Form

## Consent Form

Exploring Learning During a Business Ethics Simulation.

You are invited to be in a research study that explores students' learning during a business ethics simulation. You were selected as a possible participant because you are enrolled in the management ethics course at St. Scholastica. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Richard Revoir a doctoral candidate from the University of Minnesota-Duluth, Department of Education.

**Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to explore to what extent if any a simulation that incorporates online collaborative technologies affects students' learning in an ethics course.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Finish the business ethics simulation which is a normal class assignment that students will complete during the fourth and fifth week of the semester. Students working in groups will complete a simulation that involves students role-playing characters in a case study. Students will create a video clip of their group role-playing the characters in the case study as they analyze the ethical dilemma using multiple ethical theories. Students will suggest a course of action to address the ethical dilemma. Video clips will be uploaded to YouTube and video clips will be password protected and can be viewed only by students in the class, the instructor and the researcher. Students will evaluate each other's work online.

Complete one anonymous written questionnaire regarding your experiences during the business ethics simulation. The questionnaire should take about 15 minutes to complete during class.

Participate in one focus group interview where the audio will be digitally recorded for record keeping. The researcher will conduct the focus groups in a manner to help ensure that your anonymity remains intact. The focus groups will last an estimated 60 minutes during class time.

Grant the researcher permission to view your video clip and online postings from the business ethics simulation.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study**

No risks have been identified with participating in this study.

**Compensation:**

You will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. The digital audio recordings of the focus groups will be accessible only to the researcher and will encrypted, securely stored with password protection, and maintained until the completion of the study. At the conclusion of the study, which may last until July 2011, all recordings will be erased by a secure, encrypted erasure of pertinent files. The video clips and online postings are a normal class assignment and will be password protected and accessible only to the class, the instructor and the researcher. At the conclusion of the study, which may last until July 2011, the video clips and online postings will be erased.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or with the College of St. Scholastica. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time with out affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is: Richard Revoir. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at the University of Minnesota Duluth, 218-723-6424, rrevoir@d.umn.edu. You may also contact Richard's adviser Dr. Frank Guldbrandsen, University of Minnesota Duluth at 218-726-8172, fguldbra@d.umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

***You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.***

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:_____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator:_____ Date: _____

# Appendix C

## The Classroom Critical Incident Questionnaire

**The Classroom Critical Incident Questionnaire** (Brookfield, 1995, p. 115)

Please take time to respond to the questions below about the business ethics simulation. Thanks for taking time to do this.

At what moment in class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?

At what moment in class this week were you most distanced from what was happening?

What action that anyone (teacher or student) took this week did you find most affirming or helpful?

What action that anyone took this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?

What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be about your own reactions to what went on, something that someone did, or anything else that occurs).

Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

# Appendix D

## Focus Group Protocol

**Focus Group Protocol**

Hello, thank you for participating in this focus group to discuss your experiences over the past two weeks in the business ethics simulation. I encourage you to respond to each other's comments during this interview. Your participation is voluntary and I am able to conduct these focus groups to ensure that your anonymity remains intact. We will be digitally audio recording this focus group. We will then transcribe these proceedings using none of your names or identifying information. Please let me know whether this recording is OK with you and whether we have permission to proceed. When each of you agrees, we will turn on the recorder (Williams, 2010).

You received a copy last week of the focus group questions that we will discuss today. Let's take a minute to review the Four Component Model (FCM) of Morality by Rest that the class has been discussing this semester. The FCM identifies the inner psychological processes that lead to moral behavior including (a) moral sensitivity, (b) judgment, (c) motivation, and (d) character (Rest et al., 1999).

Please take a few minutes to discuss in small groups the simulation that you completed over the past two weeks. Please think about and discuss how the simulation may have affected your sensitivity to ethical issues and your process of reasoning through the ethical dilemma.

1. Please review each part of the simulation listed in the table below and rate each item from 1-5 in terms whether each item affected your sensitivity to moral issues and your moral judgment.

   Not very important 1 2 3 4 5 very important

| **Parts of Simulation** | | **Sensitivity** | **Judgment** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Enter 1-5 | Enter 1-5 |
| Individually reading through the case | | | |
| Using the decision making model | | | |
| Working with group members | | | |
| Creating dialogue and storyboards | | | |
| Role-playing and video recording | | | |
| Watching your video online | | | |
| Watching other group's videos online | | | |
| Online questions and discussion | | | |

2. Thanks for rating the different parts of the simulation. Let's take some time to discuss each part of the simulation.

3. As you see it did the technology help your learning? If so how did the technology help your learning?

4. As you see it did the technology hinder your learning? If so how did the technology hinder your learning?

5. During the simulation what stood out for you and why?

6. Please describe what helped you recognize the ethical issues in the simulation.

7. Tell me about how you reasoned through the possible courses of action?

8. You came to a conclusion (a course of action) would you have come to the same conclusion two weeks ago? What would be different and what made that difference?

9. If the class was going to complete this simulation again would you keep it the same or would you change the simulation? If you would change the simulation please explain what you would change.

## References

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Williams, J. Personal communication, June 16, 2010.

# Appendix E

## Checklist for Evaluating Videoclips

**Checklist for Evaluating Videoclips**

| | | Group # _____ |
|---|---|---|
| **Sensitivity** | | |
| Identified ethical issues | | |
| Identified stakeholders | | |
| Identified alternatives for actions | | |
| Explained implications to stakeholders | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| **Judgment** | | |
| Referenced interest based (consequences) moral theory as part of reasoning | | |
| Referenced rights based moral theory as part of reasoning | | |
| Referenced duty based moral theory as part of reasoning | | |
| Referenced virtue based moral theory as part of reasoning | | |
| Referenced other framework _____ | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Recommended course of action is justified based on one or more moral theories? | | |
| | | |
| List the course of action | | |
| | | |
| | | |

# Appendix F

## Results from CIQ Question 1

**Results from CIQ Question 1**

*Question 1: At what moment this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening? (23 students with 34 responses)*

| Pattern | Frequency | Percentage | Emergent Theme |
|---|---|---|---|
| Major Pattern | 8 | 24% | Students reported feeling engaged when their group acted out and recorded the video clip. |
| Secondary Pattern | 7 | 21% | Students reported feeling engaged when they worked in a group during the simulation. |
| Secondary Pattern | 6 | 18% | Students reported feeling engaged during the experience of watching YouTube video clips online. |
| Other Responses | 13 | 37% | A variety of responses. |

# Appendix G

## Results from CIQ Question 2

**Results from CIQ Question 2**

*Question 2: At what moment in class this week were you most distanced from what was happening? (23 students with 25 responses)*

| Pattern | Frequency | Percentage | Emergent Theme |
|---|---|---|---|
| Major Pattern | 4 | 16% | Students reported feeling most distanced during the process of creating the storyboard. |
| Secondary Pattern | 3 | 12% | Students reported feeling distanced while responding to online questions on YouTube. |
| Secondary Pattern | 3 | 12% | Students reported feeling distanced when they individually reasoned through the case. |
| Secondary Pattern | 3 | 12% | Students reported never feeling distanced during the simulation. |
| Other Responses | 12 | 48% | A variety of responses. |

# Appendix H

## Results from CIQ Question 3

**Results from CIQ Question 3**

*Question 3: What action that anyone (teacher or student) took this week did you find most affirming or helpful? (23 students with 30 responses)*

| Pattern | Frequency | Percentage | Emergent Theme |
|---|---|---|---|
| Major Pattern | 9 | 30% | Students reported that watching the YouTube videos online was affirming or helpful. |
| Secondary Pattern | 8 | 27% | Students identified that working in groups was affirming or helpful. |
| Other Responses | 13 | 43% | A variety of responses. |

# Appendix I

## Results from CIQ Question 4

**Results from CIQ Question 4**

Table 5

*Question 4: What action that anyone (teacher or student) took this week did you find most puzzling or confusing? (23 students)*

| Pattern | Frequency | Percentage | Emergent Theme |
|---|---|---|---|
| Major Pattern | 7 | 30% | Students responded "nothing" or left the question blank when asked if any actions were puzzling or confusing. |
| Secondary Pattern | 4 | 17% | Students reported that applying the CAT scan decision making model was confusing. |
| Other Responses | 12 | 53% | A variety of responses. |

# Appendix J

## Results from CIQ Question 5

**Results from CIQ Question 5**

*Question 5: What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be about your own reactions to what went on, something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you). (23 students with 25 responses)*

| Pattern | Frequency | Percentage | Emergent Theme |
|---|---|---|---|
| Major Pattern | 8 | 32% | Students reported feeling surprised by the differences among students in the process of reasoning across each of the YouTube videos. |
| Other Responses | 17 | 68% | A variety of responses. |

# Appendix K

## Codes and Themes from Qualitative Analysis of Focus Groups

**Codes and Themes from Qualitative Analysis of Focus Groups**

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Codes: New type of assignment, Learning styles, Remember longer
Theme: New option for learning

Codes: Pay more attention, More engaging
Theme: More engaging

Code & Theme: More voice

Code & Theme: Experiencing less nervousness

Codes: Group work, Group offers different perspectives
Theme: Working in groups

Codes: different or more perspectives, differences in reasoning, Rewind refresh
Theme: Watching YouTube Videos

Codes not categorized into themes: Acting out, Future changes, Questions in YouTube

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