

A Comparison of Five Business Philosophies

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ABSTRACT. While the media and public opinion polls suggest that the state of business ethics is declining, surveys of corporate managers on the subject are less than conclusive. This study presents results of a survey of 487 adult, MBA, and undergraduate business students on the business philosophies of Machiavellianism, Darwinism, Objectivism, Relativism, and Universalism. The findings were consistent with earlier research which showed prospective managers to be less ethical than practicing ones and that women and those reporting a strong religious conviction tend to be more ethical. Explanations and several recommendations for improving the situation are offered.

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'If you saw Atlas ... trying to hold the world aloft with the last of his strength, and the greater his effort the heavier the world bore down upon his shoulders — what would you tell him to do?'

* * *

'To shrug.'
— Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*

If one is to believe current public opinion and the media, businesspeople are shrugging off the weight of the world. Newspapers, magazines, and television newscasts are frequently reporting incidents of corporate fraud, bribery, corruption, espionage and the like, while public opinion polls indicate a decline in the level of public confidence in the ethics of business. For instance, a recent Gallup poll found that 49% of the public think business ethics has declined in the past decade while only 9% think it has increased. Not surprisingly, only 23% of business executives agree that their ethics have fallen, while 31% believe business ethics have actually risen. Furthermore, younger people and college students tend to be less ethical, whereas women and those who had reported a religious affiliation were more ethical (Ricklefs, 1983).

Business philosophies

Ethics are basically frameworks for human conduct that relate to moral principles and attempt to distinguish right from wrong. Al-

though it has been claimed that 'business ethics' is a contradiction in terms, virtually all types of decisions entail a balancing of divergent economic, technical, psychological, sociological, political, aesthetic, and theological values. While individuals may rank these values differently, everyone has a philosophy which, implicitly or explicitly, determines the overall value or worth of a particular decision. Contrary to popular belief, economic values need not always be of overriding concern in dealing with business problems.

If all corporations operated in a perfectly efficient market (which they do not) and if the market took account of all of society's interests (which it does not), then there would be no need to worry about different business philosophies. But as Gilder explains it,

The notion of perfect competition ... actually comes to mean no competition at all: an equilibrium in which all participants have perfect information and in which companies can change neither prices nor products and can essentially affect neither supply nor demand (1981, p. 31).

Generally, the attempt to achieve an ideal model through public policy has come at the expense of real-world dynamics.

On the other hand, market imperfections combined with organization slack allow professional managers a great deal of latitude in their allocation of resources. As a result, corporations are now being criticized for not responding sufficiently to society given their size and resources. At the same time, they are being

attacked for not having a moral basis that justifies their inequitable distribution of power and prosperity. Since corporations are creatures of the state and exist by the consent of society, irresponsible use of their power or lack of accountability for their actions will result in their loss of privileges.

One method of categorizing business acts is by examining the motives of the decision maker (see Table I). For instance, a consideration of the results or consequences of an act (teleological) can be based on either self-interest (egoism) or a concern for the social good (utilitarian). In contrast, an act may be viewed as inherently good or bad based on such principles as obligation or duty (deontological) and may also be seen as either selfish or altruistic. Individuals can examine their possession of these business philosophies via 'values clarification exercises.' Four of the five business philosophies examined in this paper come from Stevens (1979). Machiavellianism, Objectivism, Social Darwinism, and Ethical Relativism. In addition, Universalism will also be included (Barry, 1979).

Machiavellianism

The Machiavellian philosophy states that a business firm is a self-contained organism with its own 'natural' laws which can be bent but not broken. Hence, expediency must take precedence over virtue for one to succeed. Furthermore, since there are no categorical imperatives in business, moral actions are only those which

TABLE I

Business values based on motives

	Consequential (Ends)	Non-consequential (Means)
Self (Egoism)	Machiavellianism • Expediency • Ends justify the means	Darwinian/Objectivism • Self-interest • Survival of the fittest
Society (Utilitarian)	Universality • Categorical imperative • 'Golden Rule'	Relativism • Depends on time and place • Convention

are effective in accomplishing some purpose. Thus, Machiavellianism is amoral in the sense that the end, which is usually winning, is sufficient justification for the means.

Machiavellianism has attained a pejorative connotation by describing someone who is cold-blooded and conniving in using others with total disregard for human dignity. Considered 'opportunistic' by their detractors and 'realistic' by their admirers, Machiavellians view others as naive about the real world and reject conventional moral standards in their emotionally detached pursuit of selfish ends. According to Christie and Geis (1970), they do not accept the premise that people should do what they believe in but should instead believe in what they do.

The purpose of political science, with its Machiavellian foundations, is to describe observed behavior and not to provide moral prescriptions. Indeed, the fate of nation-states depends on pragmatic politics rather than on unrealistic philosophies. Calhoon applied this view to today's manager as:

...one who employs aggressive, manipulative, exploiting, and devious moves in order to achieve personal and organizational objectives. These moves are undertaken according to perceived feasibility with secondary consideration (what is necessary under the circumstances) to the feelings, needs, and/or 'rights' of others (1969, p. 211).

Objectivism

To many, the only end of business is to provide goods and services at a reasonable price. Similar to Machiavellianism, the moral guide for Ayn Rand's Objectivism is rational self-interest. Although both Rand and Machiavelli agree that business must deal with reality and not philosophy, Rand does not consider the real world to be at odds with ethics. Indeed, morality is the ability to be faithful to the real world by avoiding ethical judgements based on feelings. And since Rand's government exists to protect the natural rights of individuals, freedom becomes the right to defy fate by making rational decisions which lead to productivity and happiness. Therefore, profit

is the result of reason and an ethical life comes from productive reasoning. In this view, then, evil individuals are those who survive as parasites living off of others, as in a government welfare state.

According to the libertarian faith in the market system, corporations have no ideology or set of values other than economic growth, profit, and efficiency. Business in this view is the only moral system precisely because it is pragmatic and based on an objective theory of values that rewards dispassionate rationality and economic individualism. Although profit is the primary motivator of economic activity, the coincidence of self-interest and public good also occurs to the extent that free market assumptions are met. But Weber refers to the widely-held perception that capitalism is exclusively profit-maximizing behavior as a naive 'kindergarten' understanding which inevitably leads to an anticorporate bias (1958, p. 17). In fact, such behavior is not exclusively capitalistic at all but exists in most cultures regardless of economic ideology. Besides, rewards can also be derived from non-monetary satisfaction (Novak, 1981).

The best known economic justification of the virtue of free competition is made by Friedman (1970) when he argues that it is fundamentally subversive for a business to do anything other than maximize its profits. Acts of individuals as citizens must be separate from their role as corporate agents in order to ensure basic political rights and individual freedoms. However, Sturdivant and Ginter (1977) did not find a contradiction between social performance and corporate profits. At the individual level, Baumhart (1961) found that many business executives regarded untempered profit maximization as immoral. Similarly, Purcell (1977) reported that 78% of his former students were opposed to Friedman's philosophy.

In an update to Baumhart's (1961) study, Brenner and Molander (1977) found economic values to be more important to business executives than ethical concerns although the traditional profit-maximizing ideology was rejected in favor of a new management role. More disturbing, they report that nearly half of their

respondents believed business executives do not apply ethical rules even though only 7% thought profit pressures contributed to lower ethical standards. On the other hand, there was a 19% decrease in the proportion of respondents experiencing a conflict between ethics and efficiency. They attribute this result to either lower ethical standards or a greater acceptance of once-unethical practices.

Social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer developed the philosophy of Social Darwinism by synthesizing Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection with Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'. Smith, primarily a moral philosopher during the pre-industrial era of state-controlled mercantalism, is today's business hero. According to his theory of competition, individuals, by pursuing their own selfish interests, unwittingly and effectively promote the social welfare. In this way, Social Darwinism may also be viewed as Utilitarian. But stressing the rugged individual characterized by the Protestant ethic ignores the role of private corporations as social organizations:

Neither the ideology of laissez-faire nor the ideology of rugged individualism suits their actual practice or their inherent ideals. ... The ideals of democratic capitalism are not those of laissez-faire (Novak, 1981, p. 52).

According to the precept 'survival of the fittest,' then, businesses survive because they obey the natural laws of competition. Hence, only the strong are good and morally superior in a laissez-faire environment. Although some suffer in the struggle, society will be improved as the inefficient are eliminated. In a sense, then, Social Darwinism is amoral since the laws of evolution and natural selection are not amendable by human intervention. The business system is thus based on survival, profit maximization, competition, self-interest, and the ability to cope with economic inevitabilities.

Social Darwinism assumes that laws of bio-

logical systems can be applied to organizations. But a 'jungle philosophy' may be at odds with civilization's willingness to help the helpless. Besides, there are no assurances that the survivors will be the most efficient, competitive, or innovative rather than the most ruthless or unethical. Furthermore, selecting the fittest requires a large number to pick from, with constant entry and turnover as survivors not only replace the extinct but must deal with the newcomers as well. Besides, applying environmental adaptation to social organizations means that all elements, not merely the market, must be reckoned with. An ecological perspective requires coping with socio-political pressures and responding to all claimants in order to survive in the long run.

Ethical relativism

Ethical Relativism departs from business philosophies centered around the individual to one intended to serve the group or society. Here, ethics does deal with feelings and attitudes and is based on social convention which accepts behavior sanctioned by established group norms. Hence, moral good means conforming to the way things are in a given time and place and Rand's selfishness becomes the root of all evil. Thus, conventional morality justifies the 'commonly accepted practice' argument in business. Those unable to adapt to the particular culture will suffer and questionable practices may eventually be seen as ethical under different circumstances.

Ethical Relativism is often confused with situational ethics. In Ethical Relativism, society sets the rules so that the cultural context can alter the decision. In situational ethics, the end justifies the means as long as the situation is evaluated by the amount of love achieved which, being the ultimate norm of Christian decisions, is intrinsically good. Although circumstances also alter the way a case is evaluated, there are no rules or social sanctions imposed. Instead, individuals have the freedom to be personally responsible for their actions and consequences (Fletcher, 1967).

Universalism

The opposite of Ethical Relativism is a belief that there are absolutes and all behavior should be evaluated by the same rules regardless of consequences. That is, moral values and principles are eternal and should apply Universally, being equally valid in all places and times. Universalism is described by Pichler and De-George as requiring "all others to act as we do only if we are also prepared to be *treated* in the same way under like circumstances" (1979, p. 29). This is similar to Confucian ethics which holds that all interdependent parties must follow predetermined rules of obedience, loyalty, respect, and hard work so as to optimize their mutual benefits. In fact, 80% responded in the Brenner and Molander (1977) survey that an absolute moral standard should exist.

Method

Previous research results do not tell us conclusively whether business ethics are about the same, improving, or declining. Further, we do not know much about the actual ethical value systems of the subjects studied. In an effort to find out more about the current and future state of business ethics, a large sample of practicing and prospective managers were measured on five different business philosophies and their results compared.

The sample in this study was comprised of 487 students enrolled at a business school at either one of two major mid-Atlantic state universities; registered in an extension course of either a Midwestern or Northeastern state university; or were practicing managers in an executive development program. As previously indicated, the Stevens (1979) 'values clarification exercises' relating to business philosophies were adapted as the measuring instrument. Typical of the ten Machiavellian items is, 'A business person can't afford to get hung up on ideals; it's a real world out there, and reality is all that counts.' Objectivism also included ten statements, such as 'True morality is first and fore-

most *self*-interested.' Social Darwinism had ten items, including 'Competition and profits are ideals in their own right; it is empty idealism to speak of higher purposes for business.' One of Ethical Relativism's five items was, 'A corporation planning manager from Maryland acquires an Ecuadorian company which has two sets of books to evade income taxes. He plans to continue the tax evasion on the grounds that this is a local standard practice.' One of Universalism's three items was, 'Even at the risk of losing a one-shot sale, I would not lead an unsuspecting customer to believe the truth of the exaggerated marketing claims of the computer software he is intending to buy from me.'

The survey instrument was administered to the students in class about midway through the semester, and at the end of the extension course and executive development program. Respondents were asked to reflect on the 38 statements and indicate their extent of agreement or disagreement with each on a five-point Likert scale. As a partial inducement, they were told that they would receive an interpretation of what they had done to see how they scored on the exercise. This would allow them to assess and reflect on their own business philosophies. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to convert the raw data by estimating weights for each question in order to *maximize their fit to the value construct they comprised* (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1984). Averaging the product of these weights and raw scores yielded an overall mean for each value construct which can be compared between groups of respondents. The final weights used fit the model quite well, explaining 86% of the observations with less than a 0.001 chance of error.

Results and discussion

As show in Table II, the mean scores for the overall group consisting of 487 individuals were 2.28 on Machiavellianism, 2.60 on Objectivism, 2.37 on Darwinism, 2.32 on Ethical Relativism, and 3.61 on Universalism. The higher the scores, the more in agreement the group was with that

TABLE II
Means, differences, and correlations

	Machiavellian	Objectivism	Darwinism	Relativism	Universalism
Machiavellian	$\bar{x} = 2.28$ (S.D. = 0.56)	$r = 0.44$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$r = 0.66$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$r = 0.45$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$r = -0.33$ ($p \leq 0.001$)
Objectivism	$t = 12.40$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$\bar{x} = 2.60$ (S.D. = 0.52)	$r = 0.38$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$r = 0.19$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$r = -0.09$ (n.s.)
Darwinism	$t = 4.59$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$t = 8.45$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$\bar{x} = 2.37$ (S.D. = 0.54)	$r = 0.47$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$r = -0.31$ ($p \leq 0.001$)
Relativism	$t = 1.37$ (n.s.)	$t = 7.77$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$t = 1.78$ (n.s.)	$\bar{x} = 2.32$ (S.D. = 0.71)	$r = -0.29$ ($p \leq 0.001$)
Universalism	$t = 29.82$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$t = 25.80$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$t = 28.31$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$t = 26.25$ ($p \leq 0.001$)	$\bar{x} = 3.61$ (S.D. = 0.65)

cluster of items making up a particular business philosophy. All philosophies except Universalism were positively correlated.

T-tests on these scores indicated that most of them were significantly different from one another at the 0.001 level. The exceptions were that significant differences between Relativism and Darwinism or Machiavellianism did not occur. With 3.00 representing a neutral or unsure position, it appears that the first four philosophies were not unanimously subscribed to. The exception was the fifth philosophy, *Universalism*, which also had the highest 't' values. In addition to these overall tendencies, comparisons made on these business philosophies by class type, sex, work experience, age, and religious conviction revealed a number of interesting differences.

Maturity

A generation gap might exist between students and managers. Some believe that morals are formed by the time people reach college age or complete their formal education. Alternatively, people might change their values over time. One might then expect a development of enlightened attitudes as a result of new and dif-

ferent situations. Conversely, people may become jaded and cynical. If society's values have changed, than the new values might be reflected by the younger respondents.

Baumhart (1961) found students to have a lower opinion of the ethics of the business person than business people have of themselves. On the other hand, Arlow and Ulrich (1980) and Hollon and Ulrich (1979) found students to have lower personal ethics than business executives do. These are explained in part by the business students' Machiavellian orientation (Christie and Geis, 1970, p. 354; Hollon and Ulrich, 1979, p. 21; Siegel, 1973) that can emerge from the socialization processes of business schools or stereotypical image students possess rather than reflecting overall changes in social values. Purcell (1977) compared changes over time for one group and concluded "that these young businessmen seem to have developed a greater ethical consciousness and sophistication after their decade of business experience" (p. 51). It is unclear if such differences are attributable to socialization or are responses to popular perceptions.

To assess these possibilities, respondents were classified by whether they were undergraduates, MBAs, or adults; their age; and the number of years they worked full-time in a profit-making organization. The results are as follows:

	Machiavellian	Objectivism	Darwinism	Relativism	Universalism
<i>Class:</i>					
Undergrad Policy (<i>n</i> = 136)	2.41 ^a	2.56	2.53 ^{a, c}	2.32	3.47 ^b
Undergrad Bus Env (<i>n</i> = 68)	2.38	2.50	2.38	2.39	3.65
Day MBAs (<i>n</i> = 109)	2.17 ^a	2.62	2.31 ^a	2.30	3.69
Night MBAs (<i>n</i> = 92)	2.14 ^a	2.63	2.22 ^c	2.28	3.51 ^a
Adults (<i>n</i> = 82)	2.26	2.67	2.34	2.34	2.84 ^{a, b}
<i>Birth Year:</i>					
1960s (<i>n</i> = 180)	2.38 ^a	2.54	2.48 ^a	2.35	3.55
1950s (<i>n</i> = 203)	2.21 ^a	2.62	2.32 ^a	2.26	3.63
1940s (<i>n</i> = 81)	2.20	2.66	2.28	2.35	3.79
<i>Number of Years Worked:</i>					
none (<i>n</i> = 233)	2.33 ^a	2.61	2.40 ^a	2.37	3.59
1-5 yrs. (<i>n</i> = 178)	2.27	2.58	2.40	2.32	3.62
≥ 6 yrs. (<i>n</i> = 72)	2.13 ^a	2.58	2.22 ^a	2.18	3.65

Note: ^{a, b, c} denote pairs of groups significantly different at the following levels:

^a $p \leq 0.05$

^b $p \leq 0.01$

^c $p \leq 0.001$

Objectivism and Relativism were not significantly different for any of the measures of maturity. The undergraduate policy students received limited exposure to an ethical component and had significantly higher Machiavellianism and Darwinism scores than both MBA groups. The adult group had higher Universalism scores than the undergraduate policy and night MBA groups. This same pattern holds when looking at *age* and *corporate work experience*: undergraduate students and those without work experience were significantly more Machiavellian and Darwinian than graduate students or adults and those with six years or more of work experience. On the other hand, undergraduate policy students had significantly lower Universalism scores than both adult groups. Based on these results, *maturity appears*

to influence one's adherence to these business philosophies.

Undergraduate major

College experience might be expected to make a lasting impression in forming values. Business schools in particular have been criticized for fostering egocentric rather than society-centered values. This would be consistent with the "cool, cognitive, situation-specific strategy" of Machiavellians (Christie and Geis, 1970, p. 304). It is not known, however, if business schools attract individuals with certain characteristics or train them to be pragmatic and make detached analytical decisions. The evidence from this study shows *no significant differences in business philosophies by undergraduate major*:

	Machiavellian	Objectivism	Darwinism	Relativism	Universalism
<i>Undergraduate Major:</i>					
Business (<i>n</i> = 234)	2.31	2.55	2.43	2.30	3.58
Economics (<i>n</i> = 19)	2.30	2.69	2.41	2.42	3.65
Physical Sci. (<i>n</i> = 52)	2.27	2.74	2.40	2.44	3.58
Social Sci. (<i>n</i> = 46)	2.19	2.48	2.22	2.31	3.63
Liberal Arts (<i>n</i> = 50)	2.18	2.62	2.30	2.31	3.68
Health and Ed. (<i>n</i> = 17)	2.03	2.57	2.08	2.28	3.75

Sex

The stereotypical male is aggressive, dispassionate, and clear-headed. The data cannot confirm or deny this stereotype, but they do

show women agree significantly less than men with all of the business philosophies except for Universalism, where they scored somewhat higher although not significantly so:

	Machiavellian	Objectivism	Darwinism	Relativism	Universalism
Sex: Male (n = 276)	2.35 ^c	2.64 ^a	2.45 ^c	2.43 ^c	3.57
Female (n = 196)	2.18 ^c	2.53 ^a	2.26 ^c	2.16 ^c	3.68

The respondents were also asked the extent to which they believed a course dealing with business ethics should be required of all managers on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly

agree). The results are significantly different at the 0.05 level only by sex and for Machiavellian and Objectivism:

	Strongly disagree		Not sure		Strongly agree
Course should be required:	1	2	3	4	5
Sex: Male	(n = 17)	(n = 35)	(n = 34)	(n = 103)	(n = 71)
Machiavellian	2.62	2.56	2.41	2.34	2.15
Objectivism	2.76	2.61	2.61	2.65	2.63
Female	(n = 8)	(n = 18)	(n = 16)	(n = 72)	(n = 72)
Machiavellian	1.97	2.32	2.15	2.24	2.07
Objectivism	2.55	2.87	2.17	2.56	2.49

A greater proportion of women than men (85% vs. 77%) believe that a course dealing with business ethics should be required. Furthermore, women are less Machiavellian and less Objectivist than men for nearly every extent of response to this statement. A clear and consistent pattern is

that men score less on the Machiavellian scale as they show stronger belief that such a course should be required. The following are the results for this same question for each of the value constructs:

	Machiavellian	Objectivism	Darwinism	Relativism	Universalism
Should be required:					
1 strongly disagree (n = 27)	2.42	2.71	2.50	2.45	3.46
2 (n = 58)	2.50 ^c	2.71	2.55 ^b	2.57 ^b	3.27 ^c
3 not sure (n = 58)	2.33	2.52	2.48	2.36	3.55
4 (n = 190)	2.31 ^a	2.61	2.38	2.32	3.66 ^b
5 strongly agree (n = 153)	2.10 ^{a, c}	2.56	2.23 ^b	2.18 ^b	3.74 ^{b, c}

Generally, Machiavellian, Darwinism, and Relativism decrease for those who believe the course should be required, whereas Universalism increases. There are no significant differences for Objectivism.

Authority

Business values might differ by the degree to which individuals are willing to grant power or privilege to others. This may be thought of in several ways. For instance, religious conviction can affect altruism since the Bible has historically provided rules of right or wrong conduct towards others. However, the Protestant ethic interpretation of the Bible is that it is a moral duty to increase personal wealth because material goods are a deserved reflection of God's glory and demonstrate salvation. There is then a coincidence of the spiritual with the material (Buchholz, 1983). On the other hand, Puritanism opposes accumulating earthly possessions in favor of asceticism, and Lutheranism also questions good works as a 'justification' for salvation and its implication that people could bargain with God the angry judge rather than coming to terms with God the forgiving father.

Politics can also be viewed as the extent of self-interest or altruism in the use of power. Walters (1977), however, argues that business values are not a matter of political ideology but

are based on the merits of each particular case. Traditional conservatives believe that unilateral decision-making authority requires limited government market intervention. The irony is that proactive corporate social responsibility keeps such intervention to a minimum, and business may solve social problems more efficiently than other institutions can. On the other hand, traditional liberals tend to be pluralistic and look to government command and control of the market to solve social ills. But some liberals argue that corporate social responsibility is an abuse of corporate power, whereas others do not think business corporations have sufficient ability to effectively rectify social problems. Walters (1977) concludes

that the conservative and liberal arguments for corporate social responsibility are in agreement on the fundamental concept and goals of social responsibility. Social responsibility is not a non-market goal, but it is a set of business policies to most effectively achieve profitability and to assure further profitability (p. 49).

A final comparison of authority can be made by looking at expected salaries. It can be argued that those desiring high salaries are willing to achieve status and power at all costs. On the other hand, if salary does not matter, then even high ambitions need not result in unethical conduct. The results are as follows:

	Machiavellian	Objectivism	Darwinism	Relativism	Universalism
<i>Religious conviction:</i>					
1 non-believer (n = 51)	2.29	2.71	2.43	2.49 ^b	3.58
2 (n = 74)	2.37 ^a	2.63	2.46 ^a	2.49 ^b	3.50 ^a
3 not sure (n = 128)	2.34 ^a	2.60	2.38	2.35 ^a	3.58
4 (n = 161)	2.22	2.56	2.35	2.24	3.63
5 dedicated (n = 52)	2.03 ^a	2.41	2.15 ^a	1.97 ^{a, b}	3.87 ^a
<i>Political persuasion:</i>					
1 liberal (n = 15)	2.07	2.47	2.03	2.24	3.68
2 (n = 131)	2.21	2.52	2.36	2.31	3.62
3 not sure (n = 164)	2.30	2.60	2.34	2.35	3.59
4 (n = 130)	2.29	2.62	2.42	2.33	3.61
5 conservative (n = 25)	2.25	2.70	2.38	1.94	3.78

continued on p. 474

	Machiavellian	Objectivism	Darwinism	Relativism	Universalism
<i>Expected salary:</i>					
<\$18K (n = 92)	2.38	2.56	2.44	2.36	3.60
\$18-21K (n = 115)	2.30	2.55	2.42	2.24	3.53
\$22-25K (n = 114)	2.24	2.61	2.30	2.27	3.70
\$26-29K (n = 73)	2.17	2.66	2.36	2.37	3.63
≥\$30K (n = 67)	2.24	2.62	2.30	2.39	3.64

The results based on authority are mixed. Generally, respondents who believe they have dedicated religious convictions are less Machiavellian, Darwinian, and Relative but more Universal than non-believers. This reflects a more contemporary interpretation and rejects the traditional Protestant ethic notion by those who have religious convictions. However, there are no significant differences based on either

political persuasion or expected salary. *Political ideology, then, can be used as a rationale for or against social responsibility. Finally, the degree of ambition does not influence ethical belief.*

Relativism also varied significantly (at the 0.05 level) by religious conviction and the extent to which respondents believed a course dealing with business ethics should be required of all managers:

	<i>Course should be required:</i>				
	Strongly disagree		Not sure		Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Religious conviction:</i>					
1 non believer	2.62 (n = 5)	2.15 (n = 5)	2.80 (n = 4)	2.40 (n = 10)	1.79 (n = 1)
2	2.65 (n = 9)	2.66 (n = 15)	3.25 (n = 10)	2.01 (n = 16)	2.16 (n = 3)
3 not sure	2.84 (n = 3)	2.71 (n = 7)	2.43 (n = 14)	2.11 (n = 19)	2.17 (n = 7)
4	2.50 (n = 16)	2.53 (n = 24)	2.33 (n = 50)	2.28 (n = 65)	1.83 (n = 20)
5 dedicated	2.30 (n = 17)	2.38 (n = 18)	2.11 (n = 44)	2.24 (n = 43)	2.03 (n = 21)

Relativism scores are higher for those respondents who do not believe such a course should be offered and who are indifferent as to their religious conviction.

Summary and conclusions

This study is consistent with current surveys that find younger people tend to be less ethical than older people, and that women and those

with religious conviction are more ethical. Students without corporate work experience, and especially those not being exposed to ethical ideas, may be responding to the image they have of businesspeople. But since there were no significant distinctions by undergraduate major, the alternative is that these managers-to-be may be reflecting future business philosophies. The findings can be summarized as follows:

- (1) The overall group of respondents *did not* unanimously subscribe to the jungle

philosophy of *Darwinism*, the expediency of *Machiavellianism*, nor the flexibility and satisfying of group norms associated with *Ethical Relativism*. Stronger agreement with the real-world orientation of *Objectivism* was demonstrated, but results were still below the 3.00 neutral position. The strongest agreement was with the ultimate criteria of duties that are universally valid (*Universalism*).

- (2) However, when comparisons were made by class type, the *undergraduate business policy* students had significantly higher Machiavellianism and Darwinism scores than *both MBA groups*. Similarly, *undergraduate students* and those *without work experience* were significantly more Machiavellian and Darwinian than *graduate students* or *adults* and those with six or more years of *work experience*. Clearly, *maturity* reduces strong adherence to these two business philosophies.
- (3) No significant differences were shown on the five business philosophies when students were compared by *undergraduate major*.
- (4) While *women* agreed more than *men* with *Universalism*, they agreed significantly less with the other four business philosophies than men did.
- (5) A greater proportion of *women* than *men* believed that a course dealing with business ethics *should be required*, while men who believed that such a course should be required scored less on the Machiavellian, Darwinian, and Relativism scales.

These profiles of business philosophies based on the reported patterns of differences show those agreeing with *Universalism*, or 'consequential utilitarianism,' tend to be adults with dedicated religious convictions who believe a course dealing with business ethics should be required for managers. Respondents disagreeing with this value construct were the night MBAs and undergraduate policy students, have no religious convictions, and do not feel a course

in business ethics should be required. The 'non-consequential utilitarians,' or those agreeing with *Relativism*, tended to be men without strong religious convictions and do not think a business ethics course should be required of managers. The low scorers are women, have dedicated religious convictions, and believe a business ethics course should be required. The patterns for *Machiavellianism* and *Darwinism* are virtually identical, indicating egoists do not differentiate ends from means. In addition to possessing the same attributes as for *Relativism*, high scorers were undergraduates without either exposure to the ethical issues or any experience working for a profit-making organization. Low scorers tended to be MBAs, were born in the sixties, and have more than six years of work experience in a profit-making organization.

Today's business philosophies are derived from anthropology, economics, sociology, psychology, political science, theology, and even law. But there currently does not exist a unique business philosophy relevant for economic organizations in today's socio-political world which corporate decision makers can relate to. In attempting to define business' 'complex network of moral relationships,' Hoffman and Moore posit the following:

Business ethics ... deals with comprehensive questions about the justice of the economic context in which business operates and about the nature, function, structure and scope ... as well as ... the relationship of business to government, the consumer, its employees, and society at large (1982, p. 299).

Clearly, much work remains in developing a coherent and comprehensive business philosophy suitable for business situations.

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