

# Somebody Out There Doesn't Like Us: A Study of the Position and Respect of Business Ethics at Schools of Business Administration

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**ABSTRACT.** This article is the result of a survey taken to determine the respect and position of Business Ethics as a field of study within Schools of Business Administration. 379 questionnaires were delivered to individual, not institutional, subscribers to *Business Ethics Quarterly*. 158 were filled out and returned, for a response rate of 41.6%. The general finding from an analysis of those responses is that many persons active in the teaching and research of Business Ethics at large (over 10 000 students) and very large (over 30 000 students) universities, both public and private, believe that neither their teaching nor their research "count" for merit salary increases and promotion/tenure decisions at their institutions, and that few enjoy high levels of support from deans, faculty, or students.

The university at which I teach – or more properly "taught"; I become emeritus this past June – evidences an attitude toward Business Ethics as a formal field of study that can only be described as falling somewhere on the vector between ambivalence and disdain. I was, for many years, the only person at this university teaching and writing in the area. My courses

were popular – approximately 50% of the full-time MBA students selected that elective – yet my suggestion that additional faculty be hired to expand the offering to the undergraduate BBA and part-time MBA programs were never acknowledged let alone followed. My student evaluations were good – generally in the top 10% of all faculty – yet I was told that it was easy to teach "soft" topics such as ethics. My research publications were also in my view good – over the past five years I have averaged three articles in referred journals each year, including multiple pieces published in *Strategic Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, and *Business Ethics Quarterly* which I like to think of as "A" level outlets – yet I was told that this work didn't really "count" because it was based upon ethics. Given those attitudes it is easy to understand that my salary, listed in a report that is published each year along with the salaries of all other employees of this university, was consistently at the bottom of the tenured faculty at the Business School.

In addition to those formal administrative rebukes I have been the subject of numerous informal slights and disparagements. A few years ago a group of four colleagues, recipients of a large grant for the study of corporate governance, asked me to make a presentation on the place of managerial ethics in the governance process. A time and place were set, and I was allotted one hour. No one appeared at that time and place. I went and found two of the group, who apologized and said that they had "forgotten" the meeting. When the three of us reassembled, one of them – a quite distinguished professor of finance – informed me that he had been against

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the idea of inviting me from the start because ethics were a personal matter, and had no place in managerial decisions. I could not deny, he said, that he and I had different views of what was a proper action, and I should not in any way consider my views to be superior. My response was that he and I also doubtless had differing views as to what constituted a good investment, but that there were underlying economic principles that might help us to reach a reasoned understanding of our relative positions, and that there were likewise underlying ethical principles which I was prepared to describe. About that time the leader of the group arrived, 35 minutes late for a 60 minute meeting, with no word of explanation or regret. She sat silently for the balance of the time, glancing impatiently at her watch as a clear indication of the low priority she placed upon these proceedings. The fourth member never did appear. I got no further than Hobbes and Locke in my historical sequence of the ethical principles I had been invited to discuss.

I assume that all Business Ethicists have been in ridiculous meetings of that nature, with people who don't understand our field and neither want nor intend to make the effort to understand our field. At this Business School, however, the slurs go a bit deeper and become a bit meaner. Each time there is a derogatory article relative to Business Ethics published in the *Economist*, the *Harvard Business Review* or – for that matter – in *Dilbert*, I can rest assured that I will receive two to three copies through the campus mail, sent anonymously. The record was the infamous “What's the Matter with Business Ethics” piece (Stark, 1993); I received six copies, one of which was in a reusable envelope that indicated it's last recipient had been in the Dean's Office.

The purpose of this article is not to elicit sympathy for a down trodden ethicist. I have no doubt that I am responsible for some of these adverse attitudes through my own intemperate verbal comments and – I have been told – flinty personal characteristics. Also, I fully intend to give as good as I get, and I would like to think that I have been reasonably successful in that meritorious endeavor over the past few years. Indeed, many of the more traditional faculty do

seem to enjoy bantering with me on current ethical matters over an occasional cup of coffee in the faculty lounge, and a member of the Business Economics and Public Policy group even went so far as to extend that bantering into a joint article (Hosmer and Masten, 1995) in which we contrasted our analytical approaches to – and our policy recommendations for – the then current Free Trade with Mexico debate.

In short, for a number of years I thought that this Business School was doubtless far more inhospitable towards Business Ethics than the Business Schools at other universities, but I also felt that the situation was not so unpleasant as to warrant leaving unless a much better offer was forthcoming. At my age the probabilities of that much better offer being made were not high, and so I stayed and rather enjoyed refuting the generally amiable but certainly constant deprecatory arguments. Just recently, however, I have visited a number of ethicists at other universities, and have found that they are also experiencing but not finding quite so tolerable similar on-going conflicts that are matched with an equivalent lack of involvement in major programs and an equal absence of respect from peer colleagues. I wondered just how widespread this situation was. The result was a survey sent to individual, not institutional, subscribers to *Business Ethics Quarterly*.

### Form of the survey

A copy of the survey is shown in Appendix A. Basically it asked the recipient the following series of questions. I will take this listing as an opportunity to comment on some of the unusual or – to me, at all events – unexpected responses that would otherwise be lost in the statistical analysis that follows this section. I will also note some of the changes in the wording and format of the survey that I would make if I had that opportunity in order to expand or improve the conclusions of that analysis:

1. Do you teach courses in Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility, and what is the nature (elective or required) and level

(undergraduate or graduate) of those courses?

Fifteen of the respondents did not teach in either area. If these people did not indicate why their experiences should still be considered to be valid, as in a handwritten note in the margins that they had taught in those courses or were chair of the department that offered those courses, or as in an answer to a subsequent question that they had published in either area, I omitted their responses from the full data base. There were twelve such omissions. Surprisingly, all twelve were certain that teaching excellence and research productivity “counted” fully as much for faculty in Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as for faculty in the more traditional disciplines, despite their lack of personal experience with those evaluation processes, and that the field or fields were fully supported by their respective deans. All of the twelve were from small to medium-size institutions, so that these omissions did not affect the more basic findings of the analysis which focused on large to very large universities. One of the twelve chided me for an “unprofessional approach to research”, but did not elaborate as to why he or she considered the survey to be unprofessional. I remain puzzled, however, as to why people who do not either teach or write on Business Ethics have individual subscriptions to *Business Ethics Quarterly*; if someone can inform me I would appreciate it.

2. What is the type (community or liberal arts college, or public, private non-sectarian or private religious university), size (small, medium, large or very large) and orientation (primarily teaching, mixed teaching & research, or primarily research) of your institution?

Very few people answered the “orientation” question; I think that this was due to the fact that it was a continuation of the “size” question, not separated on a line by itself, and thus somewhat hidden in the questionnaire format. Of course, another explanation would be that the respondents had a natural hesitancy to classify their institutions

along those admittedly rough dimensions. Whatever the cause, the final result was that it was impossible to sort the positive versus negative responses to later questions by the perceived orientation of the institution, which – it turned out – might have provided some interesting insights. It is now clear that I should have set off the orientation question by itself, and permitted a wider spread of possible responses.

3. What is the basis of your academic training (philosophy and the humanities, the social and political sciences, economics and “hard” business, law and the legal system, or organizational behavior and “soft” business)?

Approximately half the respondents claimed academic training in multiple areas. That is understandable, for it has been frequently demonstrated that many Business Ethicists have been active in other disciplines before switching to ethics (see, for example, Hosmer, 1996, p. 330). The multiple claims, however, once again destroyed any possibility of sorting the positive versus negative responses to later questions by the discipline of the respondent. That is, it was not possible to determine if people whose basic training was in Philosophy and/or the Humanities felt differently about the attitudes of deans, faculty, and students than did people whose basic training was in Economics or the Behavioral Sciences. To avoid this problem I probably should have asked for the discipline of the Ph.D.; very few people have multiple doctorates.

4. Do you believe that good student evaluations and effective course designs in Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility “count” as much for annual salary increases and promotion/tenure decisions as do the evaluations and designs in the more traditional disciplines of business administration (yes or no)?

This, of course, is one of the major questions of the survey; I do not wish to frustrate your natural curiosity, but the responses do require more elaborate treatment than

can be provided here. Please see the next section of this paper for the statistical analysis of the answers to this and other questions.

5. Do you publish in academic journals that focus on any of the following areas (Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility, Economic-based disciplines, Behavior-based disciplines, or General Management issues)?

Multiple responses were very common here also. I think that the fact that the mailing list was composed of individual subscribers to *Business Ethics Quarterly*, whom I assume tend to be more current in the ethics literature and thus also tend to be more active in ethics research than non-subscribers, and the finding that many of these persons had training in other disciplines, accounted for the multiplicity. Again, however, it was not possible to use the focus of research to sort the positive versus negative responses to later questions by area of interest; that is, it was not possible to determine if people who have published in one of the three Business Ethics journals feel differently about whether or not such publications “count” than do people who have not published in those journals. Again, I probably should have listed those journals by name – *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, and *Business and Society* – together with respected journals in other disciplines to get more exact data.

6. What is the attitude of the dean and/or other administrators at your college or university relative to Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as a field of study (critically important, marginally important, or generally unimportant)?

I truly wish that I had expanded the possible answers from three to five, to provide for attitudes halfway between these three rough measures. Dean Ludwig at the University of Toledo, one of the persons to whom I sent an early version of the questionnaire for comment and correction, suggested that improvement, but I was intent on keeping the length of the questionnaire within two

pages – I had been told that the two page limit was a critical factor in getting a high response rate – and so I rejected his very sensible advice. I did not at the time recognize that it would have been easily possible to arrange the response categories horizontally rather than vertically, and thus achieve both objectives.

7. What is the attitude of the more traditional faculty at your college or university relative to Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as a field of study (critically important, marginally important, or generally unimportant)?

There I wish that I had changed the form of the question to ask what percentage of the faculty in the more traditional disciplines appeared to believe that Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility were critically important, what percentage appeared to believe that Business Ethics and Social Responsibility were marginally important, and so on. Numerous respondents penciled in a comment that the attitudes varied, often saying that 20% of the faculty apparently believed those disciplines to be important, and 80% unimportant, but then they checked “marginally important” as an approximation of the perceived mean at their institution. I recorded these exactly as checked for there was no way to adjust the scoring system for these insightful and – I assume – accurate observations.

8. What is the attitude of the students at your college or university relative to Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as a field of study (critically important, marginally important, or generally unimportant)?

Again I wish that I had changed the form of the question to ask what percentage of the students appeared to believe that Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility were critically important, marginally important, or generally unimportant. There were again many penciled comments here suggesting a wide variation around the mean, which was usually checked as “marginally

important". I also wish that I had included a subsequent question asking for perceived student attitudes by area of concentration; a number of respondents specifically identified Accounting and Finance students as being the primary advocates of the "generally unimportant" view.

9. What is your impression of the salary level of faculty teaching and writing in Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility in comparison to faculty teaching and writing in the other, more traditional fields of study within business administration (higher than traditional faculty, equal to traditional faculty, or lower than traditional faculty)?

Here I should have asked whether salary levels at their institutions were published, and consequently whether the differences were commonly known rather than individually suspected; many respondents left their answers blank, or penciled in "don't know".

10. Has the position of Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as evidenced by the respect for course evaluations and research publications in those fields of study, or as evidenced by the attitudes of administrators, faculty, and students, changed over the past five years (respect and attitudes better, the same, or worse)?

Here I should have asked for the length of experience by the respondent within the field; again many respondents left the answer blank, or penciled in "don't know". Some added that this was their first year or two of teaching and research.

I have explained in some detail changes that I would have made in the survey instrument had I had the obvious advantages of hindsight at the time of its design, and had I not felt the length to be a constraining factor. The changes are so voluminous that the design may appear to have been an amateur effort. But, I did consult texts on survey design, did ask for comments and corrections from Marketing faculty, and did conduct a pre-survey trial, all to no avail (except for the

excellent advice from Prof. Ludwig, which I unfortunately ignored). I have explained these changes because one of the conclusions of this paper is that persons active in Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility are going to be forced to engage more in empirical rather than conceptual research, and we probably should begin educating each other about some of the pragmatic aspects of that research that are not easily found in texts nor readily shared by peers.

### Results of the survey

I sent out 395 surveys, together with an accompanying letter (shown in Appendix B). The accompanying letter was added as a result of comments from the pre-survey trial; numerous respondents at that time said that the purpose of the questionnaire was not clear and that given the lack of clarity they would probably would not bother to fill out the questionnaire and return it. I thus prepared a letter to explain the purpose as a personal desire to examine how widespread were the negative attitudes towards Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility that I had experienced at this university. The problem, of course, was that such an explanation had a definite potential to bias the responses. I hope that this bias – if it resulted – had equal "Yes, you're absolutely right" and "No, I don't agree with you at all" components. A copy of the letter is included so that each reader may judge on his or her own.

I used, as explained earlier, the subscription list of *Business Ethics Quarterly*. This was edited to remove the institutional subscribers (primarily academic libraries together with an occasional consulting or legal firm) and individual subscribers who did not list a university affiliation (that is, they gave a home address). The latter policy probably eliminated some valid respondents, but I had run a test in Michigan and Ohio, and found that the home addresses predominately represented doctoral students and/or individuals who were interested but not active in the field. 19 of the 395 mailed surveys were returned unopened, with a note from the mail room at the college or university saying the recipient was no

longer there. I also received three requests from persons active in the field who had heard of the survey but not received a copy; I sent each a questionnaire. A total of 379 surveys were then delivered to recipients.

158 of the questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 41.6%, considered to be exceptionally high – if not incredibly high – in consumer survey or market research investigations. Twelve of the respondents did not either teach or publish in the two areas, and – as discussed earlier – did not explain why their experiences should still be considered to be relevant, and consequently their responses were not recorded in the data base. The final data base, then consists of 146 respondents.

The high response rate really constitutes the first finding of the survey: there is evidently real interest in the position and respect of Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as formal fields – or as a single field – of study among active participants in those fields or that field. My impression of the “fields” vs. “field” question is that the two address roughly similar topical areas through generally different analytical procedures, but I am not aware of any definitive distinction that has been published, and I am not certain that any definitive distinction is needed for this report. I shall continue to refer to the two disciplines as separate but harmonious.

The second, somewhat informal, finding of the survey was that the early responses were extremely prompt and extremely negative. That is, the first 15 responses arrived on the same day and almost universally reported that neither good course evaluations nor recent research publications “counted” for annual salary increases or promotion/tenure decisions at their universities. The written comments vigorously amplified those views. It was obvious that the survey had “struck a nerve” among these individuals. The latter responses became much more balanced, and considerably more temperate.

I was pleased with the high rate of replies. I was surprised by the vehemence of the early responses. And, I was proud of the tendency of many persons active in our fields to clearly identify themselves. 47 either signed their names or attached their cards. Evidently the Aristotelian

dictum that virtuous citizens should be open, honest, and proud of their actions has permeated our ranks.

The totals of all responses to all questions are given in Table I. I’m not certain that they tell us very much. I personally am disappointed at the reported low levels of enthusiasm for our field or fields among administrators, peers, and students, but I assume that most of us are accustomed to living with that fact. I personally am discouraged by the finding that only 72 out of 146 respondents felt that research publications in Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility “counted” at their institutions; but I must admit that the 49.3% affirmative response to this research question is far better than I expected, based upon my own experiences here and visits to other institutions.

Some of the written comments provide additional insight. The overall approval rating of deans and other administrators was much higher – 54 of these groups were viewed as thinking our areas of study are “critically important” – than the approval ratings of faculty or students. Numerous respondents explained this difference by adding penciled notations that the AACSB regulations required the vocal, though perhaps not the financial, support of the administrators.

Far more interesting results come when the responses are divided firstly by type, and then by size, of institution. For easier comparisons across different classification sets I converted the “yes” and “no” votes on whether course evaluations and research publications in our fields “count” as much as those in the more traditional disciplines into the overall percentage of persons voting “yes”. For easier comparisons across the “attitude” questions, I constructed a weighted average for each, with “critically important” given a weight of 10, “marginally important” a weight of 5, and “generally unimportant” a weight of 0, and then divided the total weight by the number of observations.

The astonishing element to me here is the very obvious differentiation along all of these dimensions between the various types of institutions. Perhaps I should have anticipated that liberal arts colleges and private religious universities would report consistently higher position and respect measures for Business Ethics and/or Social

TABLE I  
Overall Result of the of the survey on the position and respect of business ethics and/or social responsibility as formal fields of study

Type of college or university	Liberal arts	20		
	Private religious	33		
	Private non-sectarian	33		
	Public	60		
	Total	146		
Size of college or university	Small (under 2 000)	14		
	Medium (2 000 to 9 900)	45		
	Large (10 000 to 29 900)	53		
	Very large (over 30 000)	29		
	Total	146		
		Yes	No	No responses
Do good student evaluations and effective course designs in Business Ethics “count” as much as those in more traditional business disciplines		94	36	16
Do research articles published in Business Ethics and Social Responsibility journals “count” as much as those in more traditional business disciplines		72	56	18
		Important	Marginal	Unimportant
Attitude of dean and other administrators towards topic of Business Ethics and Social Responsibility		54	79	10
Attitude of faculty in more traditional disciplines towards topic of Business Ethics and Social Responsibility		24	80	51
Attitude of students in degree programs towards topic of Business Ethics and Social Responsibility		19	94	30
		Higher	Similar	Lower
Is the salary of Business Ethicists as compared to salaries of faculty in the more traditional disciplines		2	83	49
		Better	Same	Worse
Has the attitude towards Business Ethics on the part of deans and traditional faculty changed over time		45	71	14

Responsibility as fields of study than would the public and private non-sectarian universities, but I did not. In retrospect, my explanation is that liberal arts colleges are by definition more oriented towards philosophy and the humanities, and that private religious universities are by design more focused towards personal responsibilities and human rights. These differences were

emphasized by the written comments in the margins; many people acknowledged that they felt fortunate to be at these types of institutions that appeared to value their work. I hope that this will not be seen as an abridgment of my implied promise of confidentiality, but I think that it speaks very well of the religious university which shall be named: three people reported

TABLE II

Comparative results of the of survey on the position and respect of business ethics and/or social responsibility as formal fields of study, by type of institution

	Liberal arts colleges	Religious universities	Private universities	Public universities
Number of respondents within the sample	20	33	33	60
Do course evaluations count? – percentage responding “yes”	75.0%	75.7%	51.6%	61.6%
Do research publications count? – percentage responding “yes”	65.0%	54.5%	48.4%	41.6%
Attitudes of administrations – weighted averages	9.47	7.12	5.90	5.93
Attitudes of faculty – weighted averages	6.05	5.15	3.48	4.00
Attitudes of students – weighted averages	6.00	5.00	4.53	3.96
Salaries of ethicists – weighted averages	4.54	3.62	2.72	3.21
Improvements over time – weighted averages	7.31	6.16	6.25	5.90

TABLE III

Comparative results of the survey on the position and respect of business ethics and/or social responsibility as formal fields of study, by size or institution

	Small Under 2 000	Medium 2 000–9 999	Large 10 000–29 999	Very large Over 30 000
Number of respondents within the sample	19	45	53	29
Do course evaluations count? – percentage responding “yes”	73.6%	75.5%	69.8%	31.0%
Do research publications count? – percentage responding “yes”	52.6%	66.6%	49.0%	20.6%
Attitudes of administrations – weighted averages	6.94	7.38	6.22	5.53
Attitudes of faculty – weighted averages	6.57	4.88	4.33	2.41
Attitudes of students – weighted averages	5.26	4.88	4.37	3.75
Salaries of ethicists – weighted averages	4.11	2.87	3.30	3.88
Improvements over time – weighted averages	6.92	7.19	5.58	5.40

that they were very pleased to be at Georgetown because of the acknowledged centrality of Business Ethics in the mission and curriculum at that school.

Even more astonishing to me is the differentiation across the various sizes of institutions. There is, of course, some overlap between these two classification schemes. There were no “very large” religious universities in the response data

base, though plenty (12) of “large” ones, and only two “large” liberal arts colleges. The larger size classifications are thus made up essentially of public and private non-sectarian institutions. But the negative responses in all types of colleges and universities – public and private, religious and non-sectarian – came primarily in the larger sizes, as can be seen in the more detailed figures of Table IV:



TABLE IV

Detailed results of the of the survey on the position and respect of business ethics and/or social responsibility as formal fields of study, by size and type of institution

<i>Large Institution:</i>	Religious universities 12			Private universities 13			Public universities 26		
	Yes	No	NA	Yes	No	NA	Yes	No	NA
Does teaching count?	9	2	1	8	3	2	19	3	4
Does research count?	6	5	1	7	5	1	12	11	3
	High	Med	Low	High	Med	Low	High	Med	Low
Support from dean?	5	6	1	4	7	2	8	15	3
Support from faculty?	1	8	3	–	10	3	6	13	7
Support from students?	3	6	3	1	11	1	2	18	6
<i>Very Large Institutions:</i>	Religious Universities 0			Private universities 5			Public universities 24		
	Yes	No	NA	Yes	No	NA	Yes	No	NA
Does teaching count?	–	–	–	1	4	–	9	13	2
Does research count?	–	–	–	–	5	–	6	16	2
	High	Med	Low	High	Med	Low	High	Med	Low
Support from dean?	–	–	–	–	5	–	5	16	2
Support from faculty?	–	–	–	–	–	5	1	12	11
Support from students	–	–	–	–	4	1	2	13	8

Only one of the respondents at very large *private* universities felt that his/her teaching “counted” as much for annual salary increases and/or promotive/tenure decisions as did the teaching of his/her peers, and that person added the written qualifier “but not very much” meaning – I would assume – that good quality teaching in any field did not greatly influence promotion and salary decisions at that institution. No one at these very large *private* universities believed that his/her research “counted” at all equally in their evaluations. Only small minorities of the respondents at very large *public* universities had positive views of the evaluative processes for teaching (9 out of 24) and research (6 out of 24) within their institutions. The percentages are better at the *large* (as opposed to the very large) institutions, but here even the religious universities show evidence of negative

attitudes towards. Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as fields of study.

The negative numerical findings at the large and very large public, private and religious institutions are both supported by and amplified through the written comments that often accompanied them: It was surprising to me that there were *no* clearly positive statements or explanations from the respondents at these large and very large universities of all types. Even persons who reported that their institutions did indeed “count” student evaluations and research publications for annual salary and promotion/tenure decisions, and that they were fully supported by their deans and other administrators, often qualified those impressions with their later comments: The following is a full inventory of the written statements from respondents at large and very large institutions, there has been no effort to

select either positive or negative views. Each statement is from a different individual; they do not reflect the opinions of a small minority of respondents. Some have been edited to reduce the length or – in one of two instances – to remove extreme terms relative to the perceived attitudes of deans, faculty and students, but that editing, when it occurred, specifically attempted to maintain the original tenor of the comments. In summary, of the 46 persons quoted below, only the fourth and the last can be considered to be at best neutral:

At (name of the institution) most faculty seem baffled as to why anyone would think Ethics/SR was relevant to students studying to be managers. The students themselves seem angry at the imposition of ethical issues into their schedules filled with the tool courses they want and the faculty believes they need.

Here, any challenge to the dominant organizational management paradigm is very problematic career-wise.

I have been told that the faculty committee will consider my research when I come up for tenure, but I'm not certain that will happen.

The character of our department head, and his emphasis upon ethics, has elevated the status of ethics within our department and, to a certain extent, within our school.

Our faculty has chosen to ignore social issues, and does not respect non-quantitative research.

Many of us have experienced this generalized bias against ethics more precisely as "Meet our empirical, positivist standards on research, or forget it!"

Ethics is considered to be a service course here, window dressing for the curriculum, and not at all central to what a Business School should be about.

Business Ethics is not viewed as mainstream at (name of the institution). AACSB has helped us greatly, but if their interest ever fades my situation will worsen.

"Hard-core" researchers control all Business School decisions at (name of the institution), and ethics research is seen as "very soft".

Most of our traditional Business School faculty have had no academic training/exposure to BE/CSR. Thus, they don't see its relevance nor understand its research. Further, BE/CSR does not square with their perception of the traditional economic model of the firm. Business Ethics is seen as a popular, journalistic topic rather than a serious research domain.

My perception is that most of our faculty and students view Business Ethics/Social Responsibility from a "Friedman-like" posture.

Business is considered to be a set of "hard" technical skills. Ethics is "soft" and does not fit within that set. Business Ethics makes our corporate donors (and academic administrators) nervous.

I hold an endowed chair at (name of the institutions), but I would not wish to be a young, untenured faculty member in Business Ethics at this university.

As a senior professor with other interests I am treated well but although (name of the university) has a well respected center for ethics and our dean says that he is interested in ethics, the subject has not become well integrated in the school. Most of the faculty who teach our elective courses on ethics are not highly respected for their efforts.

There is a high premium placed on Business Ethics here, but that may be because we have been without a Business Ethics program for a long time. Perhaps we do not value it as highly as we say.

Business Ethics is more ignored than depreciated here.

There is felt to be a lack of good data to do respected empirical work in ethics, though this is changing.

I believe that our students are far more sensitive to BE/CSR issues than our faculty.

When I was denied promotion to full last year, and asked for specific feedback, one of the comments was that I should ditch the ethics research and do more "mainstream" work.

The basic assumptions of Business Economics that dominate our faculty are 180 degrees different from those of Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility.

An uncritical disciplinary bias and a narrow parochial specialization characterize much of our current faculty.

When I was a grad student I was asked to teach Business Ethics. I loved the assignment, but clearly only got the chance because none of the regular faculty wanted anything to do with it.

Hard science is much more respected than soft, and ethics is perceived here as soft.

The attitude at (name of the institution) is that you can't teach students to be ethical.

There is a presumption here that ethics is based upon clichés. The assumed lack of empirical support really hurts us.

We delude ourselves that Business Ethics can be combined with Business Law.

Business Ethics has never received strong support at (name of the institution).

Traditional B-School faculty strongly believe that profit is all important in business, and they resent the encroachment of non-economic based views. Ethical/CSR folks for some bizarre reason are seen as Marxists, social engineers who are antagonistic towards business.

Promotion/tenure and salary decisions are all right now, but they represent a continual battle with our econ/fin/acct "colleagues".

Our relatively new dean has stated publicly to the faculty, "Most business executives don't care about ethics. The law is their guide. Also, ethics cannot be taught beyond adolescence".

Our emphasis upon the global economy in the curriculum, and our functional specialization in research, have frozen out ethics.

Our dean is phasing out ethics as a required MBA course to make room for more "relevant" topics: electronic commerce, Pac-rim, and Finance.

The students here are simply impatient with the view that they should consider the impact of their decisions upon others in the decision-making process. Our Economics faculty members simply refuse to address the concept of externalities, which I thought was central to their theorem.

Assumptions of Neo-Classical Economics are the problem. Students see anything not related to salary as suspect; faculty anything not related to profit.

There is a pecking order in all schools of management, with Business Econ., Finance and Accounting at the top; Organizational Behavior, Law, and Business Ethics at the bottom. Ethics is the real bottom of the pail at (name of the institution).

Primary orientation of our faculty is to functional disciplines, reflecting PhD training and student interests. Ethics and CSR are viewed as "enrichment", nice but not necessary.

Our faculty recognizes ethics as important in principle, but in practice whenever new functional courses are proposed our ethics course is first in line to be considered for elimination.

Orthodox Chicago-school economics systematically downgrades ethics in our B-school.

Other faculty members are not aware of our field in general, or of our publications in particular.

Initial good will for Business Ethics is weakening because of a lack of leadership, and because of increasing tension between high talk and low action. We need a theoretical foundation.

We are seen as a critic of business, not as a theory of business.

Students seem to feel that they are in Business School to learn to make money, that's all.

Other faculty say we don't deal in numbers, or have testable hypotheses.

Business school deans and faculty are ignorant of the value of Business Ethics, and we don't know how, or have not tried, to educate them.

Everyone thinks what he/she is doing is critically important, and what others are doing is of marginal interest and importance. We are all equal opportunity oppressors.

**Conclusions of the paper**

What does all this mean? Obviously readers are free to draw their own conclusions, but let me clearly state mine. I believe that the combination of adverse numerical results and negative written statements at the large and very large universities of all types (religious, private, and public) is most telling. Clearly a large majority of respondents perceive an intellectual bias against our field of study at these institutions.

These large and very large religious, private, and public universities are, of course, the leaders in management education within the United States. The finding of a perceived intellectual bias against Business Ethics would not be so troubling were it confined to the small and medium-sized institutions. It is not. It is primarily located in the very institutions that should be – and doubtless are – developing advanced management theory and that theory – clearly – will continue to exclude ethics.

The perceived intellectual bias against Business Ethics within these leading institutions also extends, in the view of the respondents, to the evaluative processes for annual merit increases and to the faculty committees for promotion/tenure decisions. Only a bare majority (25 out of 49 persons) at *large* universities and a small minority (6 out of 29 persons) at *very large* universities felt that Business Ethics research would be evaluated equally with the research of faculty from the more traditional disciplines. When intellectual bias extends to salary, promo-

tion, and tenure decisions it becomes an issue of institutional justice and of academic integrity. It is not – in my view – a minor matter that can be ignored, or cured with “educating” administrators and faculty members about our view of the importance of ethics.

What are the causes of this intellectual bias, assuming for now that the perceptions of the respondents are correct? Once again, readers are as fully qualified as I to speculate upon the causes, but I feel that they are partially to be found in the position of Business Ethics faculty as a small minority within most large and very large Business Schools; we don’t have the numerical mass and/or political power to compel attention. They are also partially to be found in the position of Business Ethics theory as a neglected appendage or – even worse – an ignored contrast to the dominant economic paradigm within most large and very large Business Schools; we don’t have the underlying base and/or sympathetic understanding to build attention. But, in my view, the principal causes of the intellectual bias are primarily to be found in the position of Business Ethics as a normative approach to human learning in a descriptive academic world. These very basic differences were well explored in an excellent article by Trevino and Weaver (1994); their primary interests were in the contrasts between normative and descriptive approaches to ethics, but the same dimensions can easily be expanded (see Table V) to accommodate the larger or deeper topic of learning:

TABLE V  
Normative and descriptive approaches to learning (derived from Trevino and Weaver 1994, p. 115)

	Normative approach	Descriptive approach
Academic home	Philosophy, theology, and liberal arts	Economics, social and political science, and mathematics
Academic language	Evaluative, an action that is “right”, “just”, and “fair”	Quantitative, an action that is maximal, minimal, or profitable
Underlying assumption	Human beings are motivated by self interest and other interest	Human beings are motivated by self-interest alone
Theory purpose	Prescription and proscription	Explanation and prediction
Theory basis	Reflective study of business practice	Empirical study of business practice

What should we do? I would hope that this article might generate a number of responses, particularly from persons at the large and very large institutions that have successfully integrated Business Ethics into the curriculum and into the structure. I have focused on the failures: one the 23 out of 29 very large institutions where the respondent either was not confident enough to express an opinion or felt strongly that Business Ethics would not be evaluated fairly in promotion/tenure decisions and merit salary increases, and on the 46 out of 82 at large and very large universities who expressed various written forms of discouragement and – in one or two instances – despair. It is necessary not to forget that there are also 6 very large institutions and 12 large ones where the respondents stated that their research would be evaluated fairly, even though some added amplifying statements that were not quite so sanguine. What has occurred at those 18 insti-

tutions that the rest of us might attempt to emulate. Why is the situation apparently so much better at the small and medium-sized colleges and universities? I certainly don't know, but would be delighted to learn in both instances.

My view, given that we lack the political power and widespread comprehension necessary to change adverse attitudes directly, is that we continue to attempt to tie Business Ethics into Behavioral Science and Economic Theory through such intermediate variables as loyalty (Haughey, 1993), trust (Hosmer, 1995), community (Solomon, 1994) and the stakeholder basis for all this (Freeman, 1984) to create an overall philosophy, rather than a limited theory, of management. This, of course, represents a major undertaking. Let me express, without further elaboration, one possible approach (see Table VI) to that undertaking:

TABLE VI  
Integrative philosophy of management (derived from Hosmer, 1994, p. 198) firm

Moral level	Recognizing duties Considering benefits/harms Stating objectives	} Loyalty Trust Community	} Economic efficiency Competitive effectiveness Social beneficency
Conceptual level	Forecasting conditions Evaluating resources Examining alternatives		
Organizational level	Assigning tasks Developing structures Designing systems		
Technical level	Developing people Utilizing information Applying technology		
Positional level	Designing products Defining markets Choosing processes		
Functional level	Maximizing revenues Minimizing costs Optimizing returns		
Operational level	Satisfying customers Improving methods Conserving assets		

Obviously the argument can be made that the business firms that make an effort to understand their duties/obligations towards others and the benefit/harm consequences of their actions upon others before setting objectives for themselves will develop greater levels of loyalty, trust, and community among all associated with that firm. The further argument can then be made that a sense of loyalty, trust, and community among all associated with the firm will, over time, lead to a definite improvement in performance on the

three different levels or measures of that performance: economic efficiency, competitive effectiveness, and social beneficency. Given those sequential arguments, Business Ethics is not peripheral to management and management education; it is central to management and management education. Empirical evidence supporting those arguments should, also over time, change the position and respect of Business Ethics within the Business Schools at all of our colleges and universities, large and small.

**Appendix A. Survey sent to individual subscribers of *Business Ethics Quarterly***

Comparative position of Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility at your college or university

We are interested in determining the comparative position of Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility relative to the other, more traditional disciplines of business administration (such as Accounting, Finance, Marketing, Economics, Organizational Behavior, Business Law, Information Systems or Corporate Strategy) at your college or university. You can help us by answering the following 15 questions:

1. Do you teach courses in Business Ethics \_\_\_\_\_ and/or Social Responsibility \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
(yes/no) (yes/no)
2. Are those courses required \_\_\_\_\_ or elective \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
(yes/no) (yes/no)
3. Are those courses at the undergraduate \_\_\_\_\_ or graduate \_\_\_\_\_ levels?  
(yes/no) (yes/no)
4. Do you teach at a: 2-year community college \_\_\_\_\_ (check whichever one applies)  
4-year liberal arts college \_\_\_\_\_  
public university \_\_\_\_\_  
private non-sectarian university \_\_\_\_\_  
private religious university \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is your institution: very large (over 30,000 students) \_\_\_\_\_ (check all those that apply)  
large (over 10,000 students) \_\_\_\_\_  
medium (2,000 to 9,900) \_\_\_\_\_  
small (under 2,000 students) \_\_\_\_\_  
primarily teaching oriented \_\_\_\_\_  
teaching and research oriented \_\_\_\_\_  
primarily research oriented \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is your training in: philosophy and humanities \_\_\_\_\_ (check whichever one applies)  
social and political sciences \_\_\_\_\_  
economics and “hard” business \_\_\_\_\_  
law and the legal system \_\_\_\_\_  
org. behavior and “soft” business \_\_\_\_\_
7. In your opinion, do good student evaluations and effective course designs in Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility “count” as much at your college or university as the evaluations and designs in the other, more traditional disciplines of business administration?  
for annual salary increases \_\_\_\_\_ (yes/no)  
for promotion/tenure decisions \_\_\_\_\_ (yes/no)

8. Do you publish in academic journals that focus on any of the following topics:
  - Business ethics and/or social res. \_\_\_\_\_ (yes/no)
  - Economic based disciplines \_\_\_\_\_ (yes/no)
  - Behavior based disciplines \_\_\_\_\_ (yes/no)
  - General management issues \_\_\_\_\_ (yes/no)
  
9. In your opinion, do articles published in journals that focus on Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility “count” as much at your college or university as those published in journals oriented towards the other, more traditional disciplines of business administration
  - for annual salary increases \_\_\_\_\_ (yes/no)
  - for promotion/tenure decisions \_\_\_\_\_ (yes/no)
  
10. What is the attitude of the dean and/or other administrators at your college or university relative to Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as a field of study?
  - critical important topic \_\_\_\_\_ (check whichever one applies)
  - marginally important topic \_\_\_\_\_
  - generally unimportant topic \_\_\_\_\_
  
11. What is the attitude of the more traditional faculty at your college or university relative to Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as a field of study?
  - critically important topic \_\_\_\_\_ (check whichever one applies)
  - marginally important topic \_\_\_\_\_
  - generally unimportant topic \_\_\_\_\_
  
12. What is the attitude of the students at your college or university relative to Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as a field of study?
  - critically important topic \_\_\_\_\_ (check whichever one applies)
  - marginally important topic \_\_\_\_\_
  - generally unimportant topic \_\_\_\_\_
  
13. What is your impression of the salary level of faculty teaching and writing in Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility in comparison to faculty teaching and writing in the other, more traditional fields of study within business administration:
  - higher than traditional faculty \_\_\_\_\_ (check which ever one applies)
  - equal to the traditional faculty \_\_\_\_\_
  - lower than traditional faculty \_\_\_\_\_
  
14. Has the position of Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as evidenced by the respect for course evaluations and research publications in those fields of study, or as evidenced by the attitudes of administrators, faculty, and students, changed over the past 5 years?
  - respect and attitudes better \_\_\_\_\_ (check whichever one applies)
  - respect and attitudes the same \_\_\_\_\_
  - respect and attitudes worse \_\_\_\_\_

If you believe that teaching and research in Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility count for less than teaching and research in the more traditional disciplines of management, or if you believe that administrators, faculty, and students at your college or university view Business Ethics and/or Social Responsibility as only marginally important or generally unimportant at your college or university, we would be interested in your explanation. Why does this happen? Your comments, handwritten in the limited space below or typed on a separate page, will be read by the principle investigators and summarized in the final article:

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## Appendix B. Accompanying Letter sent with the Survey to Individual Subscribers of Business Ethics Quarterly

October 28th, 1996

Dear Colleague in Business Ethics:

I have been greatly discouraged just recently by the number of faulty members teaching business ethics at other colleges and universities who tell me that they are now viewed as “second class citizens” within their own institutions. They explain that the study of applied ethics has been “marginalized” by the academic administrators and peer faculty at the business schools at which they teach and do research.

That attitude of disregard has always been common at the University of Michigan, but I had hoped that it might be different elsewhere. Consequently, I have prepared a survey to determine the comparative position of business ethics and/or social responsibility at colleges or universities nationally. I look upon the two fields as essentially similar; perhaps there are some differences in our analytical frameworks but the topic remains the same: the consequences of managerial actions upon the personal, social and physical environment of which we are all a part.

There are only 15 items on this 2-page questionnaire. I hope that you will take the time to fill it out, and send it back in the enclosed, self-addressed and postage paid envelope. Sign your name and give your address if you want a preliminary report on the findings.

If you have questions or comments, my telephone number is (313) 764-2341 and my e-mail address is LTHosmer@umich.edu.

Very truly yours,

LaRue Tone Hosmer  
Professor Emeritus of Corporate  
Strategy and Managerial Ethics

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