

Review of “The Principles of Ethical Reasoning” by Bruce Bjorkquist

This ethics book is for police officers. It’s useful for the background of ethics, as it articulates and defines ethical principles and perspectives. All the chapters contain definitions for the specific areas of ethics and include case studies.

This textbook did not cover the levels of moral reasoning similar to the *Sinclair/ Kohlberg* paradigm. The text continuously returns to the policing perspectives. It covers a DECIDE process as a set of rules, and a PRINCIPLES Model, both incorporating the same values of goodness, freedom, truth, justice and equality. “Cowboy Values” lists values to live by of various character strengths to enhance integrity, similar to a few of this text’s values. This text is like a dictionary of ethics terms with examples and although easy to read and understand, is specific for police. The case studies are court related and policing issues, and not necessarily normal public issues. The article, “The Philosophical Importance of Moral Reasoning,” by The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/reasoning-moral/>) posited two levels of moral reasoning, but this text does not pose the same levels of moral and ethical reasoning.

One chapter defines good and bad lies, which explains the “black and white,” but not the grey area. It doesn’t define what a “white lie” is and how it is used. Dictionaries define a “white lie,” and this should be included as a grey area. The book did not define “half- truth”, as these terms both could have been included.

The book had great definitions for the various prejudices such as sexism, racism etc., but it missed one – Ageism! The book missed this subject, which is a discrimination that is becoming more prevalent. I experienced this as a student trainee, and I wasn’t aware it existed until it happened to me. A supervisor commented what he thought was my lack of driving experience, even though I had 10 years of driving experience. The comment wasn’t based on my race or sex, but I could feel discrimination directed at my (then) youthful age.

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There was a section on adultery, but only the western religious perspective was discussed. Although this book covers various religious perspectives it has narrowed it to Christianity, Catholic and Jewish perspectives. The Muslim religion was mentioned briefly but without detail.

This book failed to take into account other religions and their perspectives, which narrow the view. The book could have touched upon other religious perspectives, such as paganism, Islamic / Muslim, new age-ism, native spirituality, etc. This book claims to be for ethics and policing in a civil society. An “uncivil society” such as the Middle East uses the Quran as its bible and may not consider themselves to be “uncivil.” Mercy killings, stoning and polygamy are practices common in the Middle East. It would be interesting to see how the Quran explains these actions that are seen as unethical in the western civil society. It could be beneficial to see the background of these “uncivil,” non-western religions to attempt to understand the reasoning behind some of the actions as some of these are practiced today here in Canada. Some of these religious practices end up in the news and in the courtrooms here in Canada, so background to understanding their practices may increase awareness/understanding, as we are considered a multi-cultural country.

The book have useful information on ethics, but as PHI’s, there are certain policing ethics we do not need to know. PHI’s that work with police may benefit from this information, if the interest is there. Not a lot of PHI’s work with the police, so this text may not be useful for the broad lot.

Health inspectors require ethics courses as part of the curriculum. Every year, as a PHI / EHO, we sign an ethics agreement for our membership with the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors. Not all PHI’s sign this agreement, as not all jurisdictions require a current standing with CIPHI. The majority of PHI’s are required to keep a good standing with CIPHI and do require current membership, which can only be acquired by signing the ethics agreement. This does not mean there are health inspectors out there that are not ethical, at least here in

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Canada. It is a loophole to prevent upgrading job skills, as the membership requires ongoing educational training. So there may a few health inspectors in Canada that may be resistant to continuing education. In these situations, it may be because they are near retirement age, or other factors. Ethics or other courses may be opposed to by these inspectors. A lot of PHI's already consider themselves ethical in their career. This book would not be a good choice for those inspectors that are resistant to taking an ethics course. They would want a short and sweet text on ethics, and not extraneous details like policing ethics that do not pertain to the job.

As a reference it is favourable to have the Canadian charter of rights and freedoms and the Universal Declaration of Human rights within the appendices. If this book were to be used for non-police officials, I would recommend certain sections to be reviewed such as the definitions and background information but to exclude the specific policing perspectives, as this is not necessary for PHI's or other professionals. I do not feel the need to know the Police Services Act of Ontario Codes of Conduct and the IACP Canons and Police codes in detail for my job.

As a PHI, there are sections that have relevant information, such as Chapter 1, 5, 8 and Chapter 9. Chapter 7 is debatable, since PHI's come in all varieties, so racism doesn't exist within the profession. The background on racism is useful, as polite racism still exists in Canada. Chapter 2 is also debatable, as it included religion and analytical ethics, with some relevance to our career. Chapter 3 has useful information, but exclude the section on religion. Our jobs don't focus on religion, although it's useful to know why religions work as they do, from my previous points. Chapter 4 goes into detail in religion, but this is not required for a Public Health course. Religion could be a separate course. Chapter 4 does have definitions for ethics, so some sections are relevant to Health inspector's ethics. Exclude chapter 6 on goodness, some of the issues are not relevant to our profession. Chapter 10 describes freedoms including subjects on erotica and pornography, which aren't common issues for PHI's.

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This book can be used as a reference guide for health inspectors in Canada, although I would recommend specific chapters and not necessarily the entire text book. It is great for the definitions corresponding to ethics, has a great background for ethics and contains valuable reference material in the appendices. This book covers the definitions relevant to ethics, but it does not cover the levels of reasoning associated with the *Sinclair/ Kohlberg paradigm*. This book is beneficial to public servants and those that deal with the law, such as judges, police, lawyers and other court workers.