Instructions

The CAPE ethical dilemma stimulus cards were developed as an ethics training tool for I-O Psychologists. It is based on the most common ethical issues that are faced by this group in both academe and practice (Knapp, 2010). It is also organized around the five paradigms of ethical action (Lefkowitz, 2017). These concepts were used to generate a broad array of ethical dilemmas that are relevant to academe and practice.

The cards may be administered by a random drawing or by a more focused approach in which the administrator selects 7 to 10 of the dilemmas that are relevant to learning needs. The responder takes one card from the deck, reads the dilemma aloud and responds to it. Then, the responder and administrator (or small group) discuss the ethical issue and comment on how they would respond to the dilemma. After about 5 minutes of discussion, the process continues by selection of a new dilemma. When the session wraps up, consider summarizing what was learned.

Prepare for administration by putting each dilemma on a separate card or slip of paper. Also, decide if you want to introduce the session with a description of the different types of dilemmas that are common to I-O Psychology.
THE CAPE DILEMMA-DECK

Paradigm: Prevent Harm
I/O Concern: Informed Consent
Context: Practice
Situation and Dilemma: Manage Informed Consent to Avoid Harm

1. As an external consultant and executive coach, you meet the spouse of a high-ranking corporate officer. She is a life coach with a Master’s degree in Art History from the University of Milan. She asks you to provide psychological test results to her on the clients you are coaching for the corporation. Based on their informed consent form, your clients will expect you to not release any information. Also, you believe that a move in this direction would fracture trust from your clients and harm their well being. What would you do in this situation?

Paradigm: Prevent Harm
I/O Concern: Confidentiality
Context: Practice
Situation and Dilemma: Dangerous Threats and Confidential Information

2. You are the Director of Organizational Development for an international construction company. You survey an employee who shares information about a ring of employees who are stealing from the company. You promised to keep her name and information in confidence but there are serious threats through the Internet and you decide that you must share the details with your boss. He turns all of the information over to security and gives the employee a severance package for her safety. What would you do in this situation?

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1 This version contains 12 dilemmas from practice and 12 from academe. One item (#6) is based on a combination of practice and academe situations.
3. You are an I-O Psychologist in a large pharmaceutical company that is hiring new employees with degrees in chemistry. Your brother-in-law has such a degree from but has just been terminated from his last job because of drinking at work. He is undergoing severe personal distress. You learn he has applied for a position at your company when the VP of HR asks you for a recommendation. If he came to work, his drinking problem could harm your reputation. But if he did not get a job, he could have an emotional crisis. What would you do in this situation?

4. You are in the process of conducting a literature review to find data for a meta-analysis on the topic of workplace bullying. You discover that another highly published research team has reused data in multiple studies that could impact on the validity of a meta-analysis. If you speak up about this, there will be a hot exchange that could harm you and others professionally. Also, it could halt advances in this critical area of research. On the other hand, you could stay quiet and avoid professional conflict. What would you do in this situation?
Paradigm: Prevent Harm  
I/O Concern: Definition of Client  
Context: Practice  
Situation and Dilemma: Definition of Client in an Assessment  

5. As an I-O Psychologist, you conduct assessments of child care workers for “nannys-are-us.” It has not been your practice to ask candidates to complete an informed consent form because it is well understood that the Company is the client. However, a candidate confesses that she takes an antidepressant to help her with anger management. She asks you to keep this information confidential. If you use this information, she will not get the job and may slide into a deeper depression. If you don’t report on her problems, she could be angry with children. What would you do in this situation?

Paradigm: Temptation  
I/O Concern: Informed Consent  
Context: Academe & Practice  
Situation and Dilemma: Failure to Document Informed Consent  

6. You are a university employee and will get community service credit by conducting an assessment center for promotion of police officers. You get verbal consent concerning the risks of participation. But, during an assessment exercise, a candidate talks about “beating up” an informant so a judge cannot see his injuries. Another participant in the exercise leaks the comments to the department and the candidate is placed on suspension. You could lose your job. You are called to explain what happened to the University Ethics Committee. What would you say in this situation?

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Paradigm: Temptation  
I/O Concern: Confidentiality  
Context: Academe  
Situation and Dilemma: Holding Back Information for Personal Reasons

7. You are in line to be Department Chair and find anonymous letters under your door that could destroy the career of a faculty member who is also competing for the Chair position. He has had personal relationships with several graduate assistants. At a faculty get-together you hear a rumor that confirms the problem, but there is no tangible information about this situation. You are tempted to give the anonymous letters to the Chair because they could make you the only candidate for the job. But, providing unreliable information could make you look manipulative. What would you do in this situation?

Paradigm: Temptation  
I/O Concern: Boundaries of Competence  
Context: Practice  
Situation and Dilemma: Validation Without Expertise

8. When your supervisor asked you to validate an emotional intelligence test, you had reservations because you have never done a validation study. On the other hand, you feel that the study will be relatively simple to do. After you commit to the project, you learn that a lawsuit is underway and this validation is an essential part of the defense. Your supervisor says that the validation must be done in six weeks. You are tempted to do the research because you are confident in your ability and want to please your boss. Yet, there is a chance that your validation could be repudiated in court along with your reputation. What would you do in this situation?

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Paradigm: Temptation  
I/O Concern: Institutional Review Board  
Context: Academe  
Situation and Dilemma: Understatement of Risk  

9. You are a Professor and are tempted to work on a cyber bullying study that presents students with significant hazards. The study would engage subjects in a simulated work experience in which they receive vicious bullying attacks. Accurate disclosure in the informed consent form is called for because there is a risk of participants having problems with long-term anxiety attacks. But complete disclosure might lead less-stable subjects to not participate, which would distort results. Colleagues tell you that this study could give you national recognition. What would you do in this situation?

Paradigm: Temptation  
I/O Concern: Definition of Client  
Context: Academe  
Situation and Dilemma: Recognition of The Organization as The Client  

10. You are the Director of an I-O internship program. Your best student conducted interviews with a client company on management practices. She advised subjects that the data provided in the interviews is anonymous and will be “scrubbed” to protect their identities. But a clever manager was able to infer who gave negative information about his practices. He then confronted the intern and terminated her. You are tempted to let the matter pass by, but you feel a need to take action. What would you do in this situation?
11. You are collecting data from students for your dissertation. In the research you will show students how to do well in an employment interview. During one of the training classes, one student brags that he faked his interview for a high paying job as an air traffic controller. You secretly hope that he doesn’t get the job because in class he repeatedly has been disruptive and undisciplined. Then, after the last class he asks you to write a recommendation for him. What would you say in this situation?

Paradigm: Role Conflict
I/O Concern: Confidentiality
Context: Academe
Situation and Dilemma: A Terminated Friend and “Spicy” Computer Files

12. Your best friend on campus was fired in the middle of a semester for falsifying travel reports. As part of the investigation committee, you find letters in his university e-mail files about a romantic trip with the wife of another professor. If you do not report this information, you may be guilty of hiding facts in your report. On the other hand, if you report the information, you will disclose a confidential matter and lose a friend. What would you do in this situation?

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Paradigm: Role Conflict  
I/O Concern: Boundaries of Competence  
Context: Practice  
Situation and Dilemma: A Supervisor with Marginal Competence

13. You are a Master’s Level I-O Psychologist recently hired as an assessor for a large corporation. It’s a good career move, but on the first day of work you meet your new supervisor, who was one of your mentees at the university. You are surprised she got the job as she was barely competent in any area of her coursework. As her job involves high-level executive assessments, you are concerned if she will be able to work within her boundaries of competence. You consider resigning, but the pay is good and you are not one who will quit over a problem. What would you do in this situation?

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Paradigm: Role Conflict  
I/O Concern: Institutional Review Board  
Context: Practice  
Situation and Dilemma: Managing a Program and Serving on an IRB

14. You are an I-O Psychologist in a large hospital and manage an employee development program. You also serve on the Institutional Review Board. Participants in your program have been told that their personal goals and personality assessments are absolutely confidential. However, you discover that assessment results have been accessed through an HR data porta. If you make this problem public, the program will be terminated. But if you do not act you will betray the mission of the IRB. Either way you could get fired. What would you do in this situation?

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Paradigm: Role Conflict
I/O Concern: Definition of Client
Context: Practice
Situation and Dilemma: Confidentiality of Assessment Information

15. A colleague refers you to a financial services company to conduct a personnel audit of all managers. You are to deliver reports on individual IQs, supervisory style, and Internet presence. Assesses are told that the company “owns” the information but they will have full access to the test data. During the audit you find that a manager plans to leave his job and take all of his technical information with him. If you divulge his intention, he will probably be terminated. But if you don’t, you are not fulfilling your commitment to the organization. What would you do in this situation?

Paradigm: Values Conflict
I/O Concern: Informed Consent
Context: Practice
Situation and Dilemma: Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation

16. You are an I-O psychologist who works for a corporation involved in a sexual orientation lawsuit. Your values are consistent with the idea that all people have the right to be treated fairly, regardless of sexual preferences. But you are tasked with representing the company’s interests in court. You feel conflicted about this because you are gay, which is not known by the executives and legal team. You question if you can serve the interests of your employer and be consistent with your values. What would you do in this situation?

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Paradigm: Values Conflict  
I/O Concern: Confidentiality  
Context: Academic  
Situation and Dilemma: Comments on GRE Scores

17. You are a member of the admission’s committee for the MBA Program at your university. The committee members have a solid understanding about keeping all applicant materials (including GRE scores) in strict confidence. But, at a student social, an admissions committee member comments that the new group of students are lacking in academic talent. Especially (says name), “… with a GRE at the 15th percentile … he will be a waste of time.” After the event, you plan to meet with your fellow committee member. What will you say?

Paradigm: Values Conflict  
I/O Concern: Boundaries of Competence  
Context: Academe  
Situation and Dilemma: Neuro-Psych Assessments

18. You are an I-O psychologist working at a university in a remote part of Montana and teach a class in cog-neuro. Your best friend sustained a brain injury at work and is having difficulty getting insurance approval for benefits. There are only a few days left to apply. It is extremely difficult for him to go to an out-of-town clinic to get the assessment done. He asks you to administer the tests. But you have no training in this area of assessment. Nevertheless, your friend’s physician encourages you to do the evaluation and will help you and co-sign the report. What would you do in this situation?

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Paradigm: Values Conflict
I/O Concern: Institutional Review Board
Context: Academe
Situation and Dilemma: Research on the Right-to-Life and the Right-to-Choose

19. You are consulting on a grant about a woman’s right-to-choose and right-to-life issues. While working on the IRB proposal you find that you and another consultant have different values on this topic. However, you are shocked when he proposes the use of a cluster sampling technique that will bias the results. You respectfully point out that it is not sound practice and the other consultant viciously criticizes your competence within earshot of several colleagues. The Dean wants to meet with you. What will you say in the meeting?

Paradigm: Values Conflict
I/O Concern: Definition of Client
Context: Academe
Situation and Dilemma: Selection of Top Students and Adverse Impact

20. You are the chair of a departmental committee responsible for selecting graduate students for an international MBA program. The goal is to accept students with exceptional writing and analytical skills. However, you have a large number of international candidates who are considerably less qualified than those from US programs. Your Dean has asked you to make at least 30 of the offers to international students in order to increase program revenue. However, this goes against your deep value for excellence in academics. Who is the client in this situation? What would you do?
21. You have the goal of gaining a government grant for your department on employee engagement. You submit a proposal to a local HR director but are turned down with a terse note that what your proposal is “unacceptable” because you did not include a plan to gain informed consent from the subjects. You point out that you don’t need to use informed consent forms in this study because the risk is minor, and the subjects are neither students nor a vulnerable population. But she disagrees and threatens you. The pressure and abuse are intense. What would you do in this situation?

Paradigm: Coercion
I/O Concern: Confidentiality
Context: Practice
Situation and Dilemma: Coercion and Confidential Information

22. You are an I-O psychologist hired as a consultant by a chain of restaurants to audit their climate on sexual harassment. You assure your interviewees of complete confidentiality. However, you decide to include anonymous information about harassment in the report because you think that it is honest and accurate. After the report is delivered, the corporate HR manager demands that you tell him who was involved. If you don’t cooperate, you will be fired as a consultant. But if you do cooperate, you will be able to speak out on this problem. What would you do in this situation?
Paradigm: Coercion
I/O Concern: Boundaries of Competence
Context: Practice
Situation and Dilemma: An Overnight Assessment Center Director

23. You are an I-O psychologist with skills in artificial intelligence research. You decide to have a work adventure and take a job with a high-growth consulting firm in law enforcement. When you come to work your recruiter says, “we just got a new client … you are now the Director of Assessment Centers and Senior Advisor on Law Enforcement.” Then, he says, “you have a PhD … learn how to do these things.” He sees your frown and adds, “you signed an employment agreement. We have grounds to sue you if you don’t perform your assigned duties.” What would you do in this situation?

Paradigm: Coercion
I/O Concern: Institutional Review Board
Context: Academe
Situation and Dilemma: Pressure to Skip the IRB Proposal

24. You are a graduate student who has come up with a thesis topic after months of research. Your advisor likes your idea partially because he can collect data for his own convention paper. He tells you to ignore getting IRB approval because it will slow things down. When you express concerns, he tells you to “grow up” and “build a sense of urgency.” Then, he tells you that if you don’t move ahead, he will hold back your graduation for a semester. What would you do in this situation?
Paradigm: Coercion
I/O Concern: Definition of a Client
Context: Practice
Situation and Dilemma:

25. You have been hired by a family business to work on their succession plan. Your primary job is to work with the owner’s son to help him develop his leadership skills. The owner says that he needs to be groomed to be President of the company. When you first meet the son, you find him to be abusive and threatening. Nevertheless, you attempt to help him develop leadership skills. But then you see him berate and scream at employees with uncontrollable anger. Soon afterwards, you receive a call from the father asking questions about his son. Who is the client? What would you say in this situation?

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